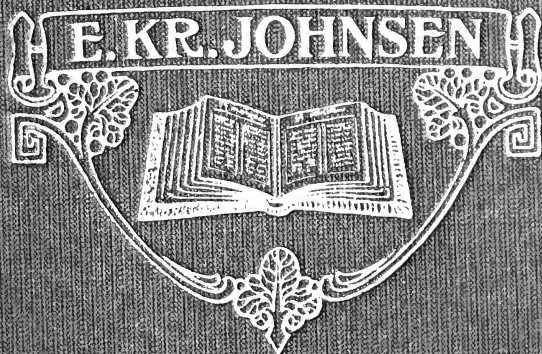


# PAUL *of* TARSUS



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Paul of Tarsus









E. KR. JOHNSEN

# PAUL OF TARSUS

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Paul's Epistles

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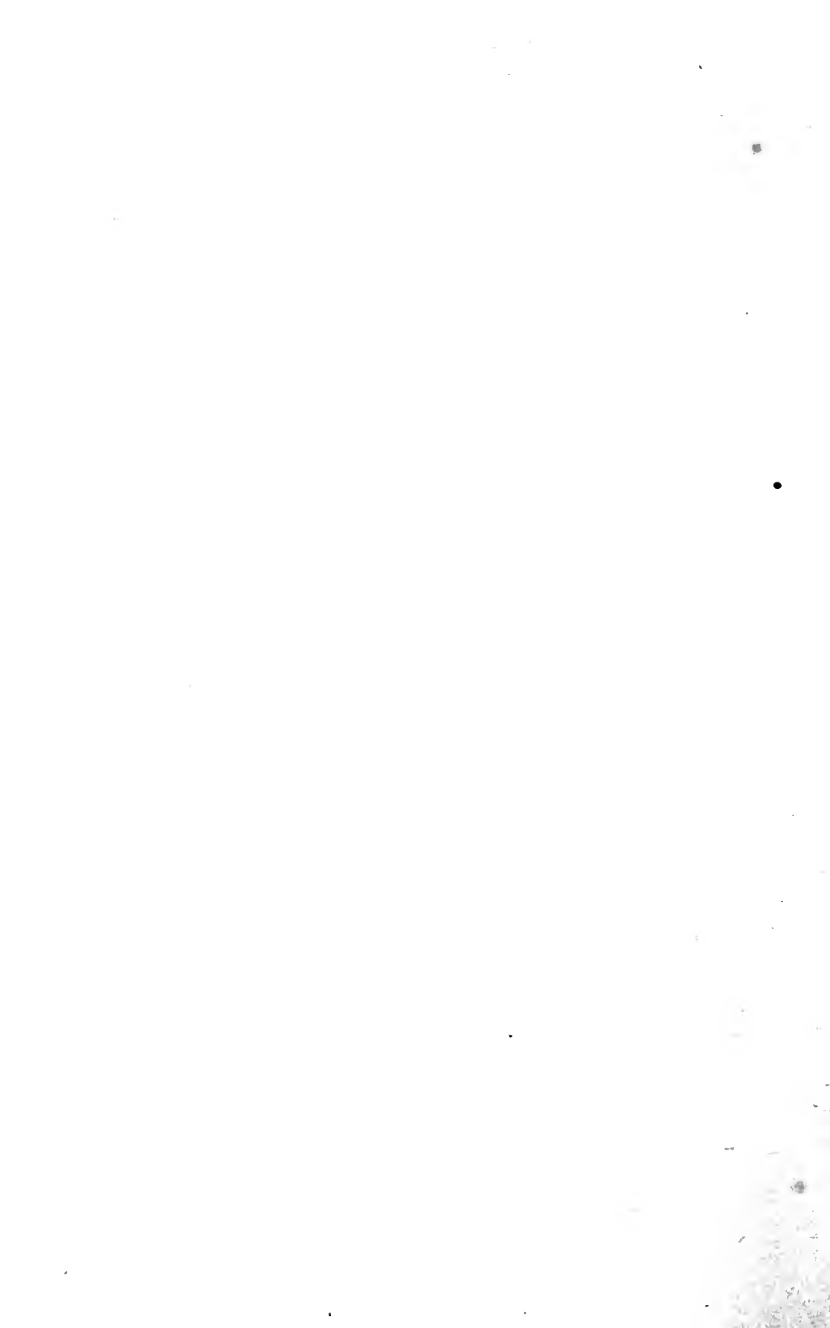
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*My sincere thanks to my friend Mr. Peer Strømme  
for his very valuable assistance with the English edi-  
tion of this book.*

*E. KR. JOHNSEN.*

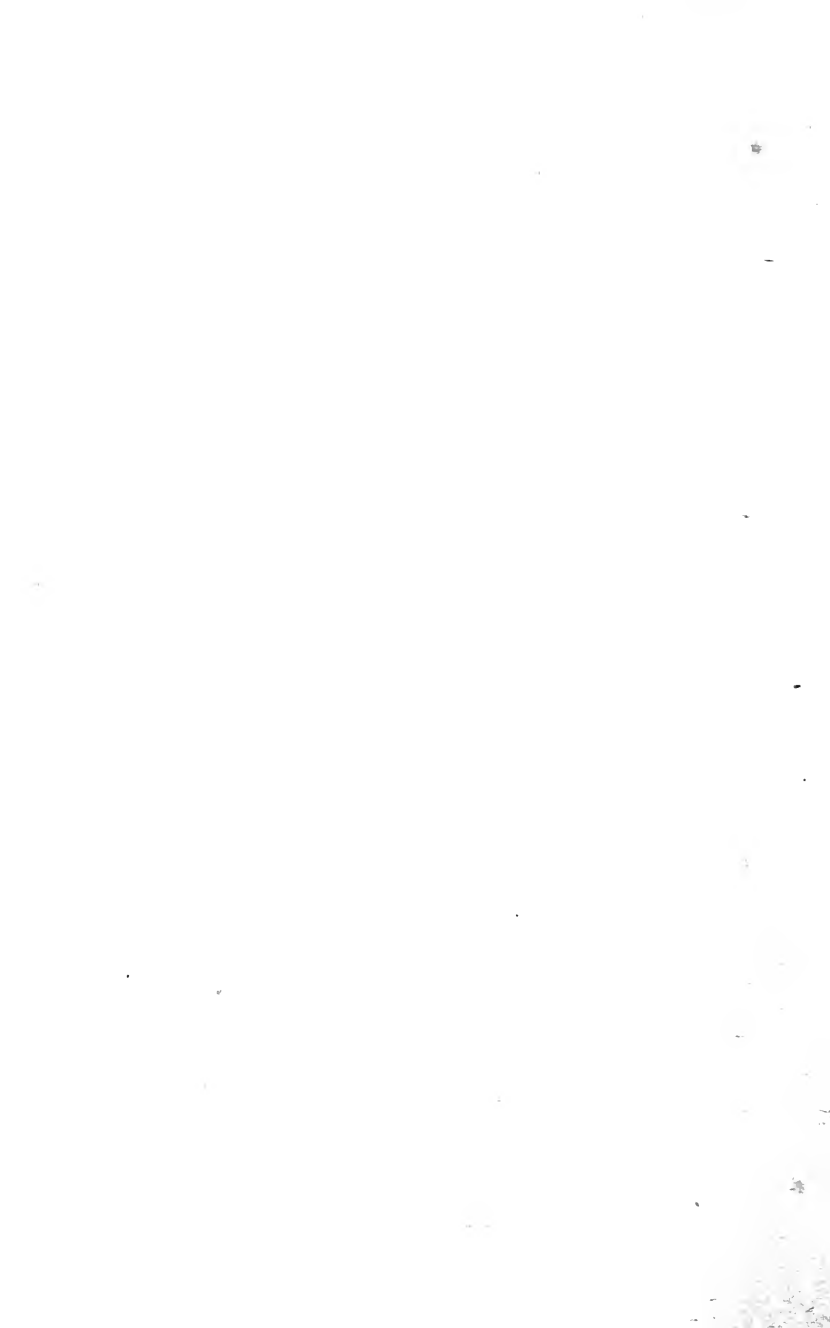
*Luther Theological Seminary,  
St. Anthony Park, St. Paul,  
in June, 1919*



I

PAUL

A Character Sketch



## I. Judaism and Paganism.

*"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. 10: 12).*

In the army of the Lord's witnesses during the time of the New Covenant are many great men whose work is of lasting importance; but above them all looms up the heroic figure of Paul of Tarsus. The Lord had chosen him for a most difficult and essential task in the establishment of the Kingdom; doubtless the most difficult position in which any man has been placed. There was imposed on Paul a task demanding the very highest personal qualities. There was a great fight before him. But he entered it fearlessly, and the Lord was with him.

We often speak of Paul as the Apostle of the Gentiles, or as the first Christian missionary; and this is true enough as far as it goes. But he was much more than this. We shall come nearer to the truth of the matter by noting the passage above quoted from Romans, a passage that embraces in a few words the truth that Paul was to put forward and defend. He was to tear down the wall that for two thousand years had been built up between Jew and Gentile. It was his mission to bring together again those who had gone their separate ways since the time when the Lord let them that turned the truth into falsehood, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, walk according to their own perverted minds, while He chose the believing Abraham and his descendants to be His own peculiar people.

The different peoples had through many generations developed along distinct lines, until there was a wide cleavage in almost every phase of life. And now that which had been separated was to be united. All barriers were to be broken down and the hearts bound together by faith in the one true God and the Glad Tidings concerning salvation in Christ Jesus; faith in the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe, the Jew first, and also the Greek. And the many thus united were to be the new Israel, the Lord's Church on earth. As we see, Paul had been given a stupendous task, one most essential in God's gracious plan of salvation; and the acceptance of Paul's preaching as the truth must of necessity result in a readjustment of life in its every aspect.

This great upheaval in the history of mankind was an inevitable result of the coming of Jesus. His life and death and resurrection mark the turning-point in the history of God's Kingdom, the transition from the Old to the New Covenant; the old order of things was at an end, and the new was to begin. The Kingdom of God had embraced only the Jews. The Law from Sinai had been their bond of union, the means by which Israel was made ready for the New Covenant. Now this was finished, and the new time was begun by the accomplishment of the work of Christ. Instead of being limited to a certain people, the Kingdom of God was now to be found in the Christian Church, which is for all people; and faith in Jesus, who was crucified and rose again, is the tie which binds the believer to the God of love.

No other man saw these truths so clearly as did Paul. The Lord let him penetrate more deeply than any other mortal into the mysteries of His plan of salvation. It was given to others among the apostles to look deeply into certain other matters. The apostle

John, for instance, had received of the Spirit a wonderfully clear insight into the relation between Father and Son. Still, Paul was the one man especially favored with spiritual wisdom. There are varied gifts; but God is always able to find the right man on whom to bestow His special grace.

*Jew—Judaism.* These words need but to be mentioned, and they at once lead our thoughts to a people that in a special degree is distinctive; a people tireless and persistent, holding fast the old inherited mode of thinking and living. Centuries come and go; but the Jews remain, and have the same old religious viewpoint. There is no parallel case in all history. This little people has been knocked about from pillar to post by the great powers, but none has been able to exterminate the Jewish race. Judaism has remained true to itself through all the many kinds of spiritual weather. To be sure, there are many, especially among Jews of the so-called upper classes, who have discarded the old faith; but the masses of the people still hold on to the old moorings.

The religious concept which we call Judaism is very old. We find it in its essential features in the scribes and Pharisees of the time of Christ. It was given form and substance during the period between the homecoming from Babylonia and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Between Judaism and Christianity there must of necessity be a mighty struggle; they neither should nor could be united. The position taken by the Jews toward the Savior makes it clear, also, that the Jewish leaders had at least an inkling of the truth that there must be a war to the death—a truth which Jesus did not hide. His life became a fight against the Judaism of the Pharisees; and He did not spare them and their habits of thought. He says: "Neither do men put new

wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." In these words He points out to His disciples the impossibility of combining the Judaism of that time with the Christian faith. Here there is, then, a conflict between two strong spiritual powers; and the following pages will to a large extent deal with this conflict.

No matter where the Jew was, he always felt himself a Jew; and no matter how prosperous he might be, his thoughts went out to the land which God had given to Israel—that always remained his homeland. And the center of it was the royal city, and particularly the temple. This was the place where God was to be worshiped. To indicate, then, that the city and temple were always in his thoughts, he turned his face toward Jerusalem whenever he offered prayer; and though he might be in a distant country, he did not neglect to send his annual offering to the temple. In the holiday season, especially at the time of Easter, great numbers of pilgrims came to Jerusalem; and among them were to be seen Jews from the most distant corners of the vast Roman empire. People were drawn to Jerusalem by the beauty of the Jewish service. Here was the high priest in his splendid robes, besides the host of Levitical priests and temple servants. Here were the offerings, the singing of hymns, the sounding of trumpets, and the wondrously beautiful temple itself. Nowhere else in the world could the Israelite find anything like this to sound his deepest heart-strings:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,  
 Let my right hand forget her cunning.  
 If I do not remember thee,  
 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;  
 If I prefer not Jerusalem  
 Above my chief joy."



Jerusalem was not, however, merely the Jewish place of worship, but also the spiritual and intellectual center of the Jews in general. Here was the hearth of Judaism; the tie which was to prove itself strong to bind the people together, even when the city and the temple were fallen. This spirit was kept alive and developed by the Scribes and Pharisees. There arose no more any prophets in Israel who with divine authority could punish the people for their sins and lead them in the right paths; and the priests had long since lost their power to direct the spiritual life of the masses. The Scribes and Pharisees had thus become the leaders of thought; and they had their golden age at the time when the Christian Church was being founded. The writings of the prophets had been pushed aside by the Law of Moses. The Scribes, and others learned in the Law, were well informed on all its precepts; and it was their business to apply these to all the affairs of life and to instruct the people in every duty.

These teachers were highly regarded by the people, and were called by the honorable title of Rabbi. Now, according to the rabbinical idea the pupil owed more to his teacher than to his father; the father was merely the author of the child's present life, while the teacher instructed his pupil in wisdom and thus fitted him for the higher life in the world to come. The pupils should therefore look up to their teachers with a reverent fear almost equal to that with which they approached God, and they must in no wise change anything of that which the teachers had told them. It chanced that shortly before this time flourished the two greatest of the Jewish scribes and teachers, Hillel and Sjammai (Gamaliel). Each of these had a host of pupils.

The larger number of the scribes,—that is, those learned in the Law—belonged to the strict sect of the Pharisees, who hated everything foreign and regarded

the traditions of old as the one and only truth; and they applied these precepts with great strictness to their own conduct, and more especially to the conduct of others. Besides this sect, there were the Sadducees, who were more friendly to foreign ideas, and did not put faith in the traditions, but kept themselves to the written Law. Their ideas in regard to the traditions caused them to reject many doctrines taught by the Pharisees, who nevertheless had by far the larger following among the common people.

In a general way the principles in which the people were instructed were these: The Law is of the essence of God, and its precepts limit even God's own acts; in it He has included all things necessary to salvation. Therefore it needs no additions, and it is valid for all time and eternity. To begin with, God had intended all peoples to have this Law, but only Israel was ready to receive it; and so Israel became God's Chosen People to the exclusion of the rest of the world. The Law was thus the tie between God and Israel. None other than Israel has this Law; therefore it makes sure the salvation of Israel, and therefore the Israelite must love the Law as his greatest treasure, and live according to it. The truly pious should devote himself exclusively to studying the Law and keeping its commandments; and so the Pharisee, who was learned in the Law, must be regarded as of the highest rank in piety.

In the Law God makes his demands and these the Israelites must fulfil; then he has the right to be rewarded of God. However, as one may easily commit sin, every man should strive to do so many good works that he may be able with them to pay the debt which he owes by reason of his sins; and if the account shows a favorable balance the man is righteous. The Jews could not conceive of forgiveness when payment had

not been made; and the Scribes had invented many things which were to count as fulfilment of the Law and payment for sin. The final balance would be struck at the time of a man's death; and then all would depend on the question whether or not the footing was greater on the credit than on the debit side of the ledger.— This doctrinal system paved a smooth road for hypocrisy, intolerance and narrowness.

The Law rested as a heavy burden on the people and destroyed the peace of mind and conscience of such as took their duties seriously. The great masses contented themselves with professing belief in that which the teachers told them, and with trying to live according to this teaching; and as for the rest, they comforted themselves with old legends or fantastic stories about the conditions in the coming Messianic Kingdom, and with the thought that they were of God's Chosen People.

Thus they busied themselves with the temple and the Law and the election of Israel; and they were, as we readily see, far away from the principles of the Christian faith.

In the case of these who had been nourished on the Judaism of the Pharisees, to become a Christian meant a radical change; as also in the case of the gentle souls who found comfort in the old prophesies and were waiting for the day of the Lord, on which the Messiah would be revealed. They had grown up in the atmosphere of the Old Covenant, and now all this was to be changed and a new day was to dawn. The transition could not be a step easily taken. We see this most clearly in the disciples of Christ. They had been educated as Jews and their mode of thought was Jewish, and now they were to leave the old and set out on new and unknown paths. We have in the Gospel accounts many examples of the way in which the Master

had to lead them gently and step by step. There was so much which they "could not bear." But little by little their eyes were opened to the glory of the new order above the old; while the Spirit of truth, whom the Lord sent them after His ascension, guided them all the time into a better understanding of the truth.

It goes without saying that the changing of a heathen into a Christian must mean a most radical revolution in habits of thought and life. Most of the peoples to whom the Gospel first came were under the influence of the Greek spirit with its real or pretended superiority over all other forms of culture. Rome was all-powerful in the domain of politics, and ruled with an iron hand from the distant regions of the Euphrates and the Tigris in the east to the shores of the Atlantic, and from the desert of Sahara north to Britain; but Rome had adopted the Greek culture and refinement in the art of living, and the Greek language was spoken, or understood, in most parts of the vast empire.

And now there came a new religion, whose spokesmen were despised Jews, a religion which asked people to believe in a crucified malefactor as the Son of God. It is no wonder that this message, which was a stumbling-block to the Jews, seemed to the Greeks the very perfection of foolishness. But both Jew and Gentile were to experience that in this Gospel dwelt the divine power and wisdom which put to shame the wisdom of the Greeks.

At this time, when Christianity was born, the Greek-speaking world could look back on a culture which was many centuries old. The Greeks prided themselves on being the leaders of the world in the arts and sciences. Their artists, savants and poets had no rivals. The Greek artists beautified the palaces of the rich, the temples and public places with paintings and sculpture which still are the wonder of the world. The scientists

sought to solve the riddle of life by clever speculations, and the poets wrote elegant verse in praise of life and pleasure. This was the boast of the Greek. But the Romans pointed with equal pride to the mighty armies which shook the earth beneath their heavy tread and made people after people subject to Rome. When Caesar commanded, the world obeyed, and this vast empire was administered with admirable efficiency. How preposterous to think that Romans could learn anything from Jews!

Both Greek and Romans had formerly worshiped a number of gods. But at the time of Christ, the faith in these gods had pretty well died out among people of the upper classes and in the large cities. In the rural communities, in isolated valleys, faith in the old gods persisted, and heathen ideas remained alive several hundred years after this time in many places within the empire. People in the upper strata of society had, however, generally lost all veneration for the old gods. To be sure, they had not openly broken with paganism; such a break was regarded as endangering the security of the State. But the philosophers and poets had taught them to think of the ancient godlore as nothing more than poetic representations of different phases of life. The rich and their philosophers looked down with contempt on the great ignorant masses, and were puffed up, and lived in an atmosphere of pride and heartless selfishness.

Other philosophers were to be found among the common people, whom they were supposed to educate. But as a rule these teachers undermined all religion and morality, and caused the people to lose respect for both.

The upper classes were permeated with indifference to the higher things; with an insane love of money and luxury, and a life of gluttony and sensuality. And the lower classes imitated those higher up, and their love of

pleasure degenerated into vulgar bestiality. Paul's description of heathenism in the Roman empire (Rom. 1: 18-32), is not an exaggeration, but merely the sober truth. The great cities with their riches and many opportunities for all sorts of pleasures and temptations had a terrible influence on the people.

The picture of the old paganism might be made even darker without being overdrawn; but enough has been said to make it plain that neither art nor science is able to make a man strong to resist temptation, nor to keep people from living a life of sensuality and wickedness. Still, there are some gleams of light even in this darkness.

The apostle Paul knew some pagans who did the works of the Law; though they did not have the written Law, as did the Jews. But they obeyed the voice of conscience, and led a decent and reputable life. Some such persons there were in the Greek-Roman pagan world. Many felt keenly the want of a god whom they might worship, and to whom they could keep themselves in the many changes and uncertainties of life. They had lost their faith in the old gods, and were looking for a new religion which might bring peace to their souls. In these circles it had become more and more the custom to expect this new religion from one of the peoples in the East. Several of the eastern religions had a certain air of mystery besides a number of clever stories and impressive ceremonies, which held a strong fascination for people who were dissatisfied with their old and empty religion. Thus, several of these eastern religions, such as those from Egypt and Persia, gained many adherents among the Romans and Greeks; and in many places in the empire there were secret societies into which members were inducted with mysterious signs and dedicated to the divinity of the society in question. Many of these east-

ern religions have one common feature in that they say something about atonement and immortality; and the comfort which many find in these ideas indicates what it is that they desire. This need of having a true god to worship is evidenced in many ways, and sometimes finds beautiful expression. Thus we have these words from one of the most noble thinkers of the old world: "When you have closed your door and made it dark in the room, then do not say that you are alone; for you are not. God and your angel are with you, and they need no light to see what you are doing. To this God you should swear allegiance."

And yet this thinker did not know the God who seeth in secret. Neither this man, nor any priest of the secret societies, nor any one else was able to give the cup of comfort to the thirsting soul. But the unknown God, whose saving love they so sorely needed, had the Greeks and Romans also in mind. He sent them an apostle who in a nocturnal vision had seen a man from the Greek peninsula, who approached him and appealed to him saying: "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

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## II. Paul's Childhood and Youth.

*"I am . . . of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews."*

Near the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean, just north of the island of Cyprus, the river Cydnos flows into the sea. It has its source up in the mountains of Cappadocia, and meanders down through varied and beautiful valleys in this country and in Cilicia until it reaches the great sea. The clear and cool waters of the river invite one to take a refreshing bath on a warm

day, but many have paid dearly for it; as witness the experience of the victorious Macedonian king Alexander the Great. A short distance up the river is the city of Tarsus, which even today is a pretty important and lively town, though not by far so large and thriving as it was nineteen centuries ago. Tarsus had been founded by the mighty Assyrian king Sanherib, and had afterwards been the residence of several kings; and when the Macedonians, and later on the Romans, conquered these districts, many Greeks settled in Tarsus, and it became a flourishing trade center. It had its most prosperous period during the first century after Christ.

When the Greeks came to a place, and riches accumulated, the place was apt to become a seat of learning and art; and this was the case here in the capital of Cilicia. Caesar Augustus had greatly promoted the growth of Tarsus by making it one of the free cities of the empire. There were, then, many things favorable to making the city a lively and attractive place of residence.

Wherever one came in those days, particularly in the trade centers, he would find larger or smaller colonies of Jews, who were especially successful in the several handicrafts. Also in Tarsus there were many Jews. Again, wherever Jews were found they formed themselves into a Congregation in order that they might worship God together and be instructed in the Law. The Jewish Church in Tarsus was so strong that it had built a synagogue, in which the Jews assembled, especially on the Sabbath. Among the most highly esteemed members of this Church we find a certain man of the tribe of Benjamin and the sect of the Pharisees. He was a man of some note among the people of Tarsus. He, or one of his forebears, must in some way have deserved the favor of the State, for the Romans



had done him the honor of making him a Roman citizen.

In this city Paul was born. He was a son of the Jew above referred to; and while the exact time of his birth is not known, it is probable that he was born in the year 10 A. D., or very close to that date. On the eighth day he was circumcised and given the name Saul. This was his Jewish name; but the Greeks changed it to correspond more closely with their speech, and called him Pavlos, or Paul.

We can readily see how important it was for his later life, both the circumstance that he grew up in this thriving Greek city and also the fact that he lived in the home of a Pharisee. Here from his childhood he came to know the two distinct races which it was to be his mission to unite in a common faith in the one God. Here he had the opportunity to study the Greek folk-life; and though he could not understand much of it when as a child he played in the streets of Tarsus, it must to some extent have remained alive in his memory. And one may be sure that his father did not neglect to point out to him the wide difference between a Greek pagan and a believing Jew. But even more important to his future work was the circumstance that he had from childhood become acquainted with the Greek language.

In the streets and in the market-place he came to know the Greeks, but in his home and synagogue he was trained according to the rules of Judaism. In his home he saw Judaism in its most attractive form, and a fervent love for Israel followed him through life; he never was ashamed of being a Jew.

Jewish parents held it their sacred duty to keep watch over the training of their children; and these always received in the home their first instruction concerning the Lord God of Israel. The discipline was of

course strict, particularly in the home of a Pharisee of this period. We can not doubt that the father of Paul held fast as a first principle the truth that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10), and early impressed on his son that the child's first duty is obedience to the parents (Proverbs 30:17). Moses had earnestly exhorted Israel to instruct their children concerning the mighty works of God (Ex. 12:24-25; 13:8). These words of the historian Josephus also show how the people of that day regarded the matter: "We lay greater stress on the training of the children than on anything else, and regard observance of the Law and a corresponding godly life as the most important of all duties." (Cf. also 2 Tim. 3:5.)

In the home the little children were taught to say their prayers. According to the rules of the teachers the children also were to pray the chief prayer of the Jews, the so-called *Schmone-Ézre*, morning, noon and night, and to say grace before and after eating. (Cf. also Matt. 14:19; 15:36; Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 10:30; 1 Tim. 4:4.) Thus the children in the homes were to learn to know God the Father, the Creator of the world and Savior of Israel, and to know His holy will, as well as to learn to approach Him in prayer. It goes without saying that the instruction was kept within the rules of Pharisaical Judaism.

Under such conditions young Saul of Tarsus grew up. When he was six years old his father sent him to the school at the synagogue. As a rule the care-taker of the synagogue was also the school-teacher; and of course the main purpose of the instruction was to train the children in the Law; therefore they must learn to read. They were taught also the art of writing, in order that they might make copies of certain parts of the Law. Still, the children were not expected to observe all the Commandments before they reached the age of 13;

but they must from early childhood learn to know the Law and to keep as many as they could of its precepts.

Whether or not young Paul was sent to any Greek school we do not know.

It soon became apparent that the young boy had great talent and depth of character, and so his father naturally decided to give him a chance to study under the best teachers, in order that he might become learned in the Scriptures; for to the Jew this was the greatest thing in life. The father therefore took the boy to Jerusalem and placed him with the famous teacher Gamaliel. This eminent scholar was soon to discover that young Saul of Tarsus was his most willing and highly gifted pupil, a thoroughly trustworthy youth of the greatest promise; for the youthful Saul was sincere in his Judaism, and was in every way a model of a young Jewish scholar.

It was a time of stress in the country of the Jews. The Romans ruled the land, and their yoke was heavy on Israel. The military governors appointed by the emperor were as a rule far from being men of high character. Generally they were cruel tyrants, whose joy it was to lord it over the subject people and to plunder them in order to enrich themselves, so that they could afford every luxury when they retired from office to the life of private citizens in Rome. It is no wonder that it seethed deep in the hearts of the people. Fanatical agitators traveled through the country and fanned the flames of revolt; and nothing but the fear of Rome's mighty mailed fist kept the masses fairly loyal. The popular disaffection found expression in many songs and stories which circulated everywhere; and many prophecies were spread from house to house, reciting how the Lord would soon be moved by the misery of His people, and would send the promised Messiah. And this expectation was all the time growing stronger.

Nor was everything quiet among the scribes themselves. There were two distinct schools of thought, which were pretty sharply opposed to each other. The one school embraced the adherents of the great rabbi Hillel, while the other consisted of the rabbi Shammai and his followers. The first of these two famous scholars was in many respects a commanding personality, and may be said in a way to have laid the foundation of the rabbinical system of doctrine. In his interpretation of the Law he is more liberal than is Shammai, who insisted on the most stringent observance of every commandment. Between these two schools there were lengthy controversies, some of them concerning matters of importance, and some dealing with the merest trivialities. A few of these matters of controversy are mentioned in the New Testament (Matt. 5: 31; 19:7). They fought over the question of divorce, fasting, Levitical uncleanness, the visiting of the sick, etc., but especially on what was and was not permitted to be done on the Sabbath. And the controversies degenerated into quarrels about things of no account whatever. Thus the "fight about the egg" is somewhat famous. According to the Law they must not prepare food on the Sabbath day. But a hen might take it into her head to lay an egg on the Sabbath; and so the question arose whether or not it would be right to eat such an egg. Concerning this point there was a long and learned fight. Shammai and his school were fanatical and aggressive, while Hillel and his disciples were more moderate and yielding. So the intolerant and strict sect came to prevail; and Judaism gradually took on the dark features of hatred and an unforgiving spirit, which meet us in Pharisaism as described in the Gospels.

Saul's teacher, Gamaliel, was a grandson of Hillel and followed closely in his steps. He was a Pharisee, but of the moderate school. He even went so far in his

liberalism that as a member of the Sanhedrin he spoke against being too severe with the Christians (Acts 5: 34-39). It is also said of him that he acquainted himself with the works of the Greek authors, and that he had a ring with a graven image on it, something which gave great offense to many of the strict Pharisees. Generally, however, he was held in high esteem by reason of his great learning and his probity. Under this teacher, then, Saul was initiated into the rabbinical interpretation of the Old Testament books, and into the current doctrinal system.

While Paul was thus being instructed by the great teacher, and also, in accordance with custom, was being taught a handicraft—that of a tentmaker—there occurred something which caused a great commotion. It was rumored far and wide that there had arisen a new prophet, with the fire of Elijah on his tongue; a strange hermit in a cloak of camel's hair, who was to be found in the desert places by the river Jordan. Thousands were hurrying to the place to hear this mighty preacher, who without fear or favor attacked high and low, and was especially severe on the spiritual leaders, the Pharisees. "Soon the Lord will come, and the fan is in His hand; and then woe to all who in impenitence and hardness of heart have called down upon themselves the wrath of God. However, there is yet time to turn and to be baptized as evidence of a new and higher purpose; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This was the gist of the message of John the Baptist.

The bold preacher in the wilderness had not yet paid with his life for his fearless statements, when there had arisen another Prophet, who was to have a much greater influence than John on the life and history of Israel. It was rumored from Galilee that a young carpenter of Nazareth had begun a work more wonderful than

anything before heard of; lepers were healed, the blind received sight, the ears of the deaf were opened. This Prophet could cure all disease by a mere word, and He was able to provide bread for thousands in the wilderness; He even held the command over death itself, and there seemed no limit to His power. Besides, such eloquence as His had never before been heard. Wherever He went the people came to Him; and to some He so endeared Himself that they left all things and followed Him. There was a great showing of popular enthusiasm: A Man who could do these things must be the Messiah, who had been promised and sorely wanted. Now He was come, and now He would be proclaimed King.

For a time it looked as if the great masses would become the followers of this Prophet; but in that case the Pharisees would lose their leadership, and the proud doctrinal structure erected with so much pains by the doctors of the Law would tumble down. This must be prevented at any price; but it was not easy to find anything which could be used against Him. At last, however, they found something to lay hold on, in that He called Himself the Son of God, and thus was guilty of blasphemy, the punishment for which was death. They thus were able to cause the hated Nazarene to be nailed to the accursed tree; but they had gone wide of the mark in estimating the result. One of our present-day Jewish historians, noted for his learning, who is not himself a believer in Christ, writes: "He is the only Man born of woman of whom it may be said with truth that His death accomplished more than His life. To the historical world Calvary became a new Mount Sinai."

These events took place while Saul was in Jerusalem as the pupil of Gamaliel. But he was at the time a mere youth, hardly 20 years old. It does not appear that he

was deeply impressed by the new movement. He was diligently pursuing his studies, in which he was intensely interested, and he did not for a moment question the truth of that which he was taught. It is not certain that he ever saw Jesus. It may be that he purposely avoided the chance of seeing Him. For this "demagog" from Galilee was a dangerous man, it seemed; even the old and learned Pharisee Nicodemus had been caught in His snares. No doubt Saul was often warned to keep away from the Nazarene.

Nevertheless Saul was soon to stand face to face with the new doctrine.

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### III. The Persecution.

*"I am, as touching the Law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church"* (Phil. 3:5-6).

*"And Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord"* (Acts 9:1).

"It was the grandest, and at the same time the purest and boldest social renewal of the world which here was worked out within the narrow circle of some lowly men; not in the spirit of selfishness and violence, but in the spirit of loving service, which had its prototype and earnest of victory in Jesus, the Friend of the poor and suffering." (Otto Pfeleiderer.)

The Shepherd had been put to death, and the sheep had been scattered. The Pharisees had won the victory; and the few disciples who had remained true to the Lord were stricken with panic, and had with heavy hearts hidden themselves away. He whom their soul loved had been put to death as a malefactor. The leaders of the people did not find it necessary to begin

any serious persecution of the followers of Jesus; they hoped that the whole movement would die out now that the Prime Mover was put out of the way.

But though He had died He was still victorious. Death could not hold Him. He rose again with transfigured body, and showed Himself several times to His friends, in order that their faith in Him might not die, but receive new life and strength. His revealing of Himself came to be of especial importance to Peter, who was to be the leader of the new Church. So we see the little flock of believers coming together again, and with renewed courage. It was true that their Lord had died on the cross, but to them it was just as certainly true that He still lived. They had seen Him many times and had touched Him, and He had spoken to them; so there could be no doubt whatever that it was the same Jesus. He told them to be of good cheer, and to go out into the world and preach that which He had taught them; and He promised to be with them always. The Spirit, whom He would send them, should stir them mightily and be a proof of His presence and help; and He let them know that He would sometime come again in great power and glory.

In the time between the resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit the disciples went through a great spiritual evolution. The question: Should Jesus have suffered all this? had been very hard to answer; and they must have an answer which would not only dissipate all doubt that Jesus, despite His death, was the Son of God, but which would fill them with the blessed assurance that by His death He had bought them the right to be God's children. We can see the progress of this spiritual ripening when we read carefully the accounts of it in the New Testament. The eyes of the disciples were opened more and more to the grandeur of the suffering and death of Jesus, and the old pro-



phetic visions stood out in a light which gave them a new meaning. Now the disciples saw that Jesus was in truth the Messiah; now they were willing at all hazards to follow Him.

With the day of the Pentecost the work of the apostles as His witnesses had its beginning. Now they were to be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the ends of the world. Jesus had also prepared them for the experiences which they were to reap in this work (Matt. 10).

So the disciples went about from house to house, and knocked at the doors, and told people of Him in whom only there is salvation. In many places they were well received, while in others they were driven away with mocking and contempt. Then they shook the dust off their feet and went their patient way.

The message which they brought was this: That Jesus was the Messiah; that He was ascended to the right hand of God; that He would come again in the clouds, as had been prophesied by Daniel, to reveal Himself as the Messiah to all the earth, and establish His Kingdom. He might come soon, and then would be the great day of judgment and salvation; then would the world be destroyed and the Kingdom of God come into its own. Persecutions, and revolutions in the social order and in nature, were to presage His coming. They who then lived would be changed; and the dead would arise and receive a new body and be like unto the angels of God. In eternal bliss they were to sit at meat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and receive an hundred-fold recompense for all earthly want and suffering. What now was sown in tears would be harvested in joy. They who now were sad, and who hungered, suffered and were persecuted, should then rejoice and be filled.

The ungodly world should then be condemned and

reap eternal woe; while the sad and suffering were to be redeemed and comforted and refreshed with all good things, for that they had hoped in Him and had suffered and fought for the honor of His name.

However, their preaching could not be limited to drawing these glorious pictures of the future; but as all that they hoped for was intimately connected with the person of Jesus, they must prove by the Word of God that Jesus was the Messiah. The offense of the cross must be taken away; for it was on this point that they always were being attacked. Who could believe that a crucified malefactor was the Messiah? But as the disciples began in earnest to search the Scriptures they found in the old prophets many passages which declared that the servant of the Lord was to suffer much and that through this very suffering He was to carry out God's plan of salvation. In respect to this no passages were more clear than those of the prophet Isaiah in chapters 52 and 53. Here the Man of Sorrows is pictured, feature by feature: "He who took upon Himself our diseases and bore our suffering; who was pierced for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the punishment was upon Him, that we might have peace, and through His stripes we are healed." Were not these words literally fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth? And did not all agree that the servant of God spoken of by the prophet was the Messiah? And how exactly did not the rest of those chapters describe Jesus: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any de-

ceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." — This certainly looks as if written right under the cross of Jesus instead of many centuries earlier; and there were many who through these words had their eyes opened. Here the disciples of Jesus had a strong fortress, and they made use of it, as we see in Acts 8:30.

When any offered the objection that Jesus could not be the Messiah, since He had been rejected by the leaders of the people, the disciples were able to point to that which Jesus said of the Corner-stone rejected of the builders (Mark 12:10); this also being the fulfilment of a prophecy. And the same was true of His resurrection, which had been foretold in Ps. 16:10; 86:13; Hosea 6:2 (cf. Acts 2:27; 13, 35). Daniel, too, had foretold that He was to come again in the clouds as the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13).

Thus the disciples learnt more and more to understand and show that the life of Jesus from beginning to end had been a fulfilment of the Old Testament; and of this side of their preaching we have a mighty example in the Gospel of Matthew.

It could not well be denied, then, that the life of Jesus, and more especially His suffering and death, were in closest harmony with the prophecies; the counsel of God had thus been fulfilled.

But why had God put all this suffering on Jesus? This also is answered by Isaiah in the 53d chapter: The servant of God bore the punishment of our sins as our representative, that we might have the forgiveness of sin and peace. Thus His death was an atonement (1 Cor. 15:3). But if Jesus bought forgiveness, it follows as a matter of course that the first gift which

they received who believed on Him, was the gracious gift of remission of sins.

The men and women who believed these things formed a company of brothers and sisters who in those early times lived in the beauty of a first love. They loved Him on whom they believed; and there was among them a mutual unity and unselfish love of the brethren which has had no counterpart. They had learnt love from the Master; He was the Friend of all the poor and of them that suffered, and the Helper of all who were maltreated, who were oppressed, who hungered and wept. In this brotherhood of Jesus the needy and lost had a refuge in which they found comfort and help, and had a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God, in which God Himself should wipe away all their tears.

In this wise they sought to win souls for Him who was their all; and thus they went their unassuming and loving way, imparting to others that which they themselves had received.

When we compare this preaching by the disciples with the Judaism of that time, the immeasurable distance between them can not escape us. The very essentials of life and doctrine were changed. In the preaching of the disciples there was no room for the Law as a way of salvation; in its stead was placed, His person and His work.

How should they, now, harmonize this new preaching with the Law and the temple service? These also were given of God. This question must sometime be answered. The service in the temple and prompt observance of the Law were uppermost in the mind of the Jew; and the deeper his character, and the more earnest his desire to lead a life which would please God, the more difficult would be his position. Right here a thorough understanding must be arrived at; for the

preaching of the disciples must have far-reaching results.

It was not an easy matter to grasp at once that the old things had passed away, and that all had become new. The Lord led the disciples onward step by step. First of all their hearts must be confirmed in the new order; then gradually, as occasion offered, the new structure would be built up.

But the Pharisees and scribes were trained thinkers; and they understood very well what the new preaching meant. To their minds a crucified Messiah was the most unreasonable of all unreasonable things, their principal stumbling-block; for it overthrew everything which the Jews had hoped and wished for in the Kingdom of the Messiah. They expected their Messiah to liberate the Jewish people from the humiliating bondage under Rome, and make the Jews a greater and more honored nation than they ever had been. But if the crucified Jesus was in truth the Messiah, then all their life and all their labor were even worse than useless. Therefore the death of Jesus was to their way of thinking a divine judgment against any idea of Him as the Messiah, and thus a declaration in fact that the Pharisees were right in rejecting Him. The Pharisees had difficulty in making reply when the disciples advanced proof from the Scriptures that Jesus must die to atone for the sins of His people, and that His suffering was in no sense in conflict with His mission as the Messiah. But by very reason of this difficulty they were the more angry; and their every sentiment protested against the doctrine that Jesus the crucified, on whom the curse of the Law was executed by an ignominious death, could be the one to bring the Messianic salvation, and even the Messianic righteousness. That which came by One who was accursed under the Law could not be a righteousness according to the Law, but must be something

entirely new, a righteousness without any regard to the Law. But righteousness according to the Law was the foundation under the whole doctrinal structure of the Pharisees, and this would then be completely undermined; and if Jesus, the Accursed under the Law, were truly the Messiah, then all the ideas and prerogatives of Judaism, built on the Law, must fall, and the whole religion of Pharisaism must go down and be replaced by the new order of things. It was not to be expected that this could come to pass without meeting resistance. History tells us of many bloody wars that have been fought for lesser things than these.

A fight was unavoidable. But the young Christian Church was to have some years of peace in which to gather strength, as the leaders of the people thought it the part of wisdom for a time to await developments. At first they regarded the Christians as being merely a fanatical Jewish sect, and such sectarianism was not unknown among the Jews. But as long as it had no great hold on the people nothing was done about it. Besides, the first Christians were as diligent as any in visiting the temple and observing the duties laid upon them by the Law; they led a sort of double life. In their inner selves they were free from the Law and the Old Testament service; but in their outward life they regarded themselves as in duty bound to observe the old precepts and rules. The time was to come when they would understand that the New Covenant in Christ must destroy the old order. But as yet they tried to a certain extent to combine the two; and they hardly felt the contradiction in this attempt. Therefore they gathered with the brethren and sisters for instruction, edification and the breaking of bread, but they also took part in the old temple service.

Peter had done some acts of healing; and those in authority considered it opportune to give the Christians

a warning against such doings. Then when the warning was not heeded they caused the apostles to be scourged and strictly forbade them to preach. But this made the apostles all the more zealous; for the thought filled them with joy that they were regarded as worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake. (See Acts 4-5.) Still, the leading men among the Jews thought it the part of wisdom, for a time at least, to follow the advice of Gamaliel—the policy of watchful waiting.

It is not easily determined exactly how many years of peace the new Church enjoyed. At any rate, before long the troublous times began; and this change in the order of events is connected with the name of Stephen. He was one of the deacons of the Church in Jerusalem; and it was he who occasioned the breach of the peace.

The Church in Jerusalem had grown quite rapidly. The little flock of Galileans had been augmented by many Jews from Jerusalem and Judaea; and also by a number of Jews who had grown up in the Greek countries, but now made their home in Jerusalem. These so-called Hellenistic Jews had always kept close to the faith of their fathers. The native Jews, however, looked with some suspicion on those who had grown up among the Gentiles; and the immigrated Jews had therefore built their own synagogues in Jerusalem and had their own services. Such a synagogue had been built by the Jews from Cilicia and Asia Minor; and it was the general meeting-place of all Jews from those parts. To this synagogue belonged both Stephen and Saul.

There arose a controversy among them with regard to the Christian teaching, and Stephen appeared as the spokesman of the Christians. We do not know the details; but the upshot of the matter was, that Stephen was charged with blasphemy against God and Moses, in that he said that Jesus would destroy the temple and abrogate the Mosaic Law.

The charge was not true. Stephen had not been guilty of blasphemy; nor had he said that of which he was accused by the false witnesses. He made a speech in his own defense and state precisely what he had said: By their impenitence and stubbornness the Jews had all the time violated the Lord's Commandments, despised and persecuted His messengers; and this they had done also to the Lord's righteous Servant spoken of by the prophets. When He came to His own they would not receive Him, but became His murderers. They had made themselves guilty of murder and treason toward Jesus, who was the promised Messiah; therefore the punishment of the Lord would come upon them.

These bold accusations caused the anger of the Jews to break all bounds; and it became even more bitter when Stephen at this time had a divine revelation: He looked into the glory of Heaven and saw his Savior, whom he had fearlessly confessed; and he told what he saw. Then the Jews were beside themselves with the anger of fanaticism. They stopped their ears and howled and shouted to drown the speech of Stephen, that his words might not befoul their ears. Then they drove him out of the city and stoned him. Yet into the very jaws of death he held fast to his Savior, for he was of like mind with Jesus. His last words were: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"; and soon thereafter he saw the Lord face to face.

At these doings Saul was present. No doubt he took part in the controversy, the trial and the shocking murder.

This event came to have far-reaching results. During the trial thoughts were born which presaged a momentous upheaval. There was some connection between the destruction of the temple and the coming of Christ; the Jews were to be thrust aside and the Law be put on an entirely new footing. Such ideas as these could



not fail to provoke disgust in the Jews; and the whole Christian Church became involved in the judgment executed on Stephen.

The Christians now found themselves in an entirely new position. They had been tolerated by the Jewish leaders, but now they stood face to face with hatred, persecution, death. They were held by the guardians of the Law to be apostates who should be wiped out; for they did not make the future of the people dependent on the Law, but taught the rejection of Israel, the destruction of the temple and the abrogation of the Law. These were the doctrines ascribed to them by the Pharisees. Now the Christians were to learn the truth of the Words of Jesus, that the disciple is not above the master; if the Jews had called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household. The Christians were to see themselves as sheep among the wolves, be delivered up to the councils, and scourged in the synagogues. Brother should deliver up brother to death, and the father the child; and the children should rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. They should be hated of all men for Jesus' sake, and be driven from place to place.

A complete system of persecution was organized. The sanhedrin gave written authority to the worst zealots to hunt out all who seemed open to suspicion, to stir up all people against them and drag them before the local judges, in order that they might be punished. None was more zealous than Saul against the Christians. For to him religion was everything; he put his whole soul into whatever he undertook, and never did anything by halves. During the trial of Stephen he had heard views stated which meant open revolution not only against the Judaism of the Pharisees, but against the Law of God, the most holy and precious thing in all the world. Pharisaism expressed to his mind the

gist of the Law. Besides, the boldness with which Stephen defended himself seemed to Saul nothing short of shameless wickedness. So he was in entire accord with the idea that these dangerous doctrines must be weeded out, and he thoroughly approved of the murder of Stephen; he found pleasure in it. From the bloody scene outside the city wall he turned against other adherents of the hated doctrine, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." And not satisfied with what he could do in Jerusalem, he went to the high priest and secured from him letters authorizing him to go to Damascus, where there were many Jews, and to which city many Christians had fled during the persecutions. It was his purpose to hunt out such as were of the same way of thinking as Stephen, whether they be men or women, and bring them bound to Jerusalem. He "thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9), and he did everything in his power to sow the seed of dissension and hatred and pursue the Christians to the death.

After this first violent attack the persecutions abated somewhat, but did not entirely cease. The Christians could not feel entirely safe; the avenging hand of the Pharisees might reach them at any time. These were times of trouble and anxiety for the Lord's Church. The political situation, also, was favorable to the Pharisees. Agrippa I was appointed king of Judaea, and he sought to win the favor of the Jews by making common cause with the Pharisees and persecuting the Christians. James, the brother of John, was put to death. Peter also was cast into prison, but God delivered him by a miracle.

This persecution had great results for the Christian cause. The ruling Judaism had turned away from the Christians and begun to make war on them; and these

must now learn to stand alone. They could no longer claim to be a Jewish society, for Judaism had rejected them. They were being persecuted in the name of the Law; and so it must be clear to them that their relation to the Law was a different one from that of their persecutors. Even one who was expelled from the Jewish Church might be saved; for the hope of Heaven was not grounded in the Law, but in the Lord.

In other ways also these persecutions were to promote mightily the cause of the Church of Christ. They scattered the Christians in all directions; and wherever the Christians came they made use of every opportunity to tell people about Him on whom they believed, and for whom they lived. These exiles from home became just so many evangelists.

In these troublous times it came home to the Christians that among them the ties of nationality were being loosened, and to many this was something of a surprise. The words of the Lord were being fulfilled. Generally the wandering evangelists preached only to the Jews (Acts 11:19); but Philip had gone to Samaria, and there he was doing a great work. Many of the Samaritans received with gladness the good tidings; and when the Church in Jerusalem had learnt what was doing in Samaria they sent Peter and John to this district to look into the matter and to give Philip their assistance.

Shortly after this the first Gentiles were added to the Church. The Lord brought together this same Philip and a chamberlain in the service of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, the guardian of all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship. On his way home this man was reading the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the suffering Messiah; and he asked Philip: "Of whom speaketh the prophet, this?" This gave Philip the chance to speak to him concerning Jesus; and the chamberlain believed and was baptized.—Even more important

in its results was the conversion and Baptism of the Roman Cornelius by the apostle Peter. The Lord had to prepare Peter for this through a vision; and when Peter understood that it was God's will that people of Gentile birth also were to become members of the Church, he baptized Cornelius and the people of his household, as soon as the Lord had poured his Spirit out upon them and thus shown it to be His will to admit them into the Church. To the Jewish Christians present this proceeding was a great surprise (Acts 10: 45). Also to the brethren in Jerusalem the action of Peter in this matter seemed very bold, until he had come home and explained the whole affair in detail. This put their doubts to rest; and they glorified God, who to the gentiles, also, had granted repentance unto life.

In the providence of God it came about that in these times of trouble arose the greatest among the sons of the Church. Saul, who had persecuted the Christians, became the obedient and devoted servant of Jesus.

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#### IV. A New Man.

*"The Commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death" (Rom. 7:10).*

*"For I through the Law am dead to the Law . . . nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:19-20).*

Many thousand Jews have gone over from Judaism to faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and the promised Messiah, and have become loyal members of the Christian Church; and every such conversion marks, as it were, an epoch in life. Above all the

others, looms Saul; his conversion was not merely a turning-point in his own career, but became a pivot on which hinged the history of the Church itself. He who had been the bitter enemy and persecutor of the Church became then its most devoted friend, its most zealous defender and its strongest leader.

Often the great change occupies but a short time; a man is mightily moved by the grace of God, is translated from death to life, the wonderful miracle of the new birth takes place, and the most radical change possible in a man's life has been accomplished. Thus it was in the case of Saul. It should be said, however, that the process took a somewhat longer time than it is often represented as having taken.

But such a change does not come about without having been preceded by certain preparatory steps. In the inner and the outward life there are many threads which God sees, which His hand finds, and by which He draws the heart to Himself and prepares it for His work.

In the case of Saul religion had always been the one thing of importance. His depth of character would not permit him ever to be satisfied with the superficial religion of the Pharisees, as this is laid bare in Matt. 23. Saul was a Nathaniel without guile; his zeal for God was an honest impulse, and no divided allegiance would do for him in religious matters.

But the Law and the ordinances of the fathers had been his religion; and through these precepts he wanted to become righteous before God, and he knew of no other way. He made the effort with all his might; and he says of himself (Gal. 1:14), "I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." For he strove to win God's favor, to become righteous, and to find peace with God. But in this hard

and exhausting labor under the Law he was to harvest something entirely different from what he had expected, and to have experiences of which he never could have dreamed. So far from becoming righteous by his efforts he became more and more unrighteous; and instead of finding peace and joy he found fear and unspeakable agony of soul. All his works only made his situation the worse. Later on, particularly in Romans 7, he describes in a most gripping way the agony of soul which he suffered during these years.

It was by coming in under the Law that he acquired a true knowledge of sin and its power: "Sin, taking occasion by the Commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. The Law said, Thou shalt not covet, and sin took occasion to deceive me and slay me. Sin revived, and I died; and the Commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. —Was, then, that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the Commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin."

And in this condition, in which he saw the Law in his members at war with the Law of God, the effort to do works pleasing to God was wholly vain. When he was in the flesh the sinful lusts, which came to life through the Law, were active in his members to bear the fruits of death. He was captive under the Law of sin. It was made clear to him that the Law works wrath; that the carnal mind is enmity against God and can not obey His Law. So the outcome is this, that what things soever the Law says, it says to them that are under the Law, in order that every mouth shall be stopped and all the world be guilty before God. He hungered after a word of comfort from the Law, say-

ing that now he was righteous; but through the Law came the knowledge of sin. The Law did not declare him righteous, but said: "Accursed is every one who does not observe all things written in the Book of the Law to do them." And his heart and conscience said Amen to the harsh judgment of the Law upon him.

These were sad experiences:—to exert one's self to the utmost, with no other result than agony of soul. It could not come into the mind of Saul that the attainment of righteousness in this manner was an impossible undertaking; such a thought was directly contrary to the Jewish way of thinking. So, when he did not reach the goal and obtain the righteousness for which he was striving, the fault was not in the Law, but in himself; he did not strive with sufficient strength and earnestness.

Such was the condition of Saul when he came in contact with the Christians. The thought of the humble position and the inglorious death of Jesus caused Saul's mind to revolt against the contemptible sect formed by his adherents. Jesus had Himself assumed what the Pharisees held to be a questionable attitude toward the Law; and he had in the most scathing terms repudiated their traditions. The story that Jesus was risen from the dead was regarded by Saul as nothing but a fiction by the crazy disciples (Matt. 28:5). At best, Jesus was but a fanatic; and Saul, with his teacher Gamaliel, hoped that time would bring this to light. The heretical doctrines which were being spread abroad in the name of Jesus of Nazareth could not, however, be tolerated. The resentment of Saul became bitter hatred at the thought that this sect regarded Jesus as the Messiah; this hatred increased when it came to light at the trial of Stephen that the Christians even looked forward to the possibility that the temple might fall. For such teaching as this seemed to Saul downright treachery to

the people and a revolt against God. Furthermore, these years were pregnant with the idea of a national rehabilitation; and it goes without saying that Saul also, who was in all things a Jew, was gripped by this idea and expected a great and mighty Messiah, a Prince of the house of David, who was to deliver His people. But the Nazarene had held Himself aloof from all this.

Nevertheless, these thoughts also were a source of agony to Saul. To be sure, the Pharisees expected the Messiah to come soon and deliver God's people; but at the same time they were firmly persuaded that only a righteous people might see the day of the Messiah. And where could such a righteous people be found? A people such as God demanded, and who proved themselves worthy to receive the Messiah? The strenuous efforts of the Pharisees to create such a people had failed of results; and the Pharisees themselves bitterly denounced the ignorant masses, who knew not the Law.—Again, if Saul was to be honest with himself, how did he measure up to the ideal of righteousness? He was far from having reached it. With all his efforts to become righteous and to overcome his sinful lusts he had not been able to attain anything of that for which he had been striving. It rather seemed that his sin and guilt were growing greater. "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Can God have rejected his own people?

These were the thoughts troubling the heart of Saul. He could not allay the pain of it. Then, during the persecutions, he came into closer contact with the Christians. It was his business to hunt them out, make complaint before the Jewish court, and secure their punishment. In doing this he had to hear their defense and get an insight into their way of thinking; and it dawned on him that these people, whom he had so heartily hated, were far different from what he had



imagined them to be. It must have made a deep impression on his feelings when he saw the heroic martyrdom of the Christians. Was it possible that insane fanaticism or godless dishonesty could produce such a sure and joyous faith, which did not shrink from any sort of persecution or suffering? They put their trust in God, and were in possession of a peace which he could not explain. And when in the course of their trial before the courts he attacked their faith in the suffering Jesus, they answered by reading Isaiah 53 and other portions of Scripture; and it almost seemed also that they had the Word of God on their side.

All this must have caused pain and doubt in the soul of Saul. He was a man with a deep insight into the human heart, and at this time his conscience was darkly troubled; and such thoughts as these would naturally present themselves: Righteousness is, possibly, not to be found in our own works, but may be a gift of God to us, springing out of the atonement by the death of the Messiah. It is not, then, the part of a man to acquire this righteousness by his own works; but God has ordained that we may come, sinful as we are, and, trusting in His mercy, we may in faith grasp the gracious gift of righteousness, and thus find salvation. Then, since no effort of ours will bring about the needful righteousness, it may be that such righteousness was not a condition of the coming of the Messiah, but that, on the contrary, the Messiah must come in order to bring about the righteousness pertaining to His Kingdom.

Thus there no doubt was war in the heart of Saul while he busied himself in persecuting the Christians. He had the delusion that he was serving God by zeal in these persecutions; then came the Lord's own good time in which to show him that he was an enemy and persecutor of God's Kingdom.

On one of his journeys Saul found himself near the city of Damascus. In this city was a large Jewish colony; and he knew that there were in this city many Christians who feared him as their worst enemy, and trembled at the thought of his coming. However, it was ordained that he was not after all to come as an enemy.

In the middle of the day, as he was near the end of his journey, he suddenly found round about him a brilliant light from Heaven. Overwhelmed by terror he fell to the earth; for he understood that God was in this light, and he heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Completely unnerved he asked: "Who art thou, Lord?" and he received the answer which he most feared: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul could not for a moment doubt that it really was Jesus who spoke to him; and hence it was true that He was risen from the dead; and then all the other things told of Him were true also. Saul now saw himself in a new light which frightened him. He saw that his great crime was this: That he had persecuted God's Messiah. No wonder that, trembling and astonished, he now said: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He was conquered; and he understood that he would but receive his just deserts should the Lord deal with him as a vessel of wrath. But the Lord did not do this. He commanded Saul to arise, and go into the city; there it should be told him what he must do. He must have time to reflect on his experience, and to be ripened for that which was to come.

The vision vanished; and when Saul began to recover from the shock of this wonderful revelation he discovered that he had become blind; and they who had been with him and had been terrified by what they had witnessed, now led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

His blindness lasted three days; and these were days which Paul never could forget. His heart was full, and he could neither eat nor drink. His old Jewish view of religion had toppled over in an instant. He now knew that the Man whom he had regarded as the seducer of his people, and whom he therefore had persecuted, was in very truth the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. What things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ. Nay, he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ (Phil. 3:7-8). He now saw that he had been making war against God.

While blind to the world outside he looked the more closely into his own soul; and in his heart there was the sorrow after God. The revelation which he had received contained no direct promise of mercy. While it had conquered him and compelled him to acknowledge Jesus as his Lord, it had created in him a stronger feeling of his own guilt; and this now came to mean much more to him than had been the case while he was striving for righteousness under the Law. Now he comes, a penitent sinner, and seeks refuge with Him whom he had persecuted. According to the testimony of Jesus Himself (Acts 9:11), Saul now prayed and called on the name of the Lord.

While Saul was thus humbled in the dust the Lord revealed Himself to one of His faithful disciples in Damascus named Ananias and told him to go to Saul; "for, behold, he prayeth." To Ananias this message came as the greatest surprise; he could hardly believe his own ears. So he asked again if the Lord really was speaking of that man who had done so much evil to the saints in Jerusalem. To this the Lord answered: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel;

for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Ananias had never gone any errand more gladly. Saul longed for his coming; for the Lord had told him that a man named Ananias would come and lay his hand on him and restore his sight. Thus the persecutor and the persecuted were brought together. The greeting of Ananias must have sounded strange in the ears of the blind Saul: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Ananias then put his hands on him, and immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith.

A similar experience took place in the heart of Saul. His eyes were opened to the measureless depth of God's mercy; to the fullness of grace, with forgiveness of sins, with righteousness and peace and joy, and without any works of the Law. Saul at once arose, and was baptized.

In this holy act the mystery of the new birth was completed in him; Paul therefore always remembered with joy the day on which he was buried with Christ in Baptism, and was cleansed with the washing of water by the Word, and was raised again in Christ, unto whom he was baptized.

Several years later he wrote to the Church in Rome: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism *into* death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6: 3-4). This intense joy in the grace of Baptism remained with him all the time, until, old and worn-out in the Master's service, he was about to seal his faith with his death. Then he sent a letter to

Titus, his own son after the Christian faith; it is as though the events here described are passing in review before the inner eye of the old apostle as he writes: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

Thus God had of His free grace had mercy on the persecutor, had revealed Himself to him and changed him into a Christian. Saul had tried to become righteous through the means then in vogue, through a zealous observance of the Law. But instead of finding peace he was the more troubled with doubt. Now, however, he had found peace through entirely different means. The two were not harmonious, but antagonistic. That which had been his stumbling-block, the accursed death on the cross, now became the corner-stone of his new religious structure. The cross of Christ becomes the burden of all his preaching; it becomes his joy and pride (Gal. 6:14). That in which he had trusted—his Jewish birth, circumcision, righteousness according to the Law—had now lost all value (Phil. 3:7). Faith in the crucified Savior became his life, his all. The love of Christ was that which is to support him through life and death (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:14; Phil. 3:10). He was a new creature, free from the bondage of the Law. His feeling of guilt, which heretofore had given him no rest, was now conquered; and he found in himself a new spirit which filled him with grateful love toward the Savior, who had given him peace.

From these experiences springs a new religious and moral life, a new religious and moral outlook. He has

a new insight into the divine economy, a new world of religious thought takes shape in his soul; he becomes the founder of the true Christian science.

Saul had become a new man. Ananias had admonished him to testify concerning the salvation which he had received. Saul himself felt impelled to do this; for it was his duty to give a clear account of the change which had taken place in him. He owed it to the Christians to let them know that his conversion was genuine, and not a mere means to trick them the more easily, and he owed it to his former friends to let them know beyond mistake that he had left them for good and all, and had accepted the Christian faith. Therefore he made no secret of it; he preached fearlessly in the synagogues that Christ was the Son of God, and he defended the faith against the attacks of the Jews.

Still the Lord had not as yet called Saul to be an apostle. The words of Ananias implied that he was to be a witness to Jews and Gentiles; but to be an apostle he must be called by the Lord Himself. Something more than the change which had taken place was needed to make of him an apostle; and the preparation for this high calling could not be completed in a few days. To begin with, he needed time for quiet meditation on the many new questions; and new divine revelations were necessary to confirm him in the faith and give him a deeper insight into the divine plan. This time of rest and preparation lasted three years, which he spent in Damascus and in the northern districts of Arabia.

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## V. - Labor and Tribulation.

*"And he said unto me: Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22: 21).*

*"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 12: 10).*

Saul was become a new man. Zeal for the cause had made him at one time the most bitter enemy of the Christians. But now he was vanquished and had broken with his old life and way of thinking. The old things were passed away, and all was become new. To mark this he also changed his name, for after this time he called himself Paul.

Naturally it now was near the heart of Paul to do something for the Lord's cause, to offset the evil which he had done. Now he wished to serve the Lord Jesus with his whole heart, with his every thought and word. No doubt Ananias had told him of the great work for which the Lord had destined him. But Paul made haste slowly. He did not choose his own way and time, but patiently and humbly awaited the Lord's own appointed time.

During the three years of waiting he lived in retirement. He needed to do this in order to ground himself thorough in the new faith. Yet even now he was to learn by experience that it costs something to follow and confess Christ. The Jews were greatly disappointed in him; and when he openly professed himself a Christian he became the object of their hatred, and saw himself under the necessity of escaping it by making his home for a time in Arabia. However, the situation soon became somewhat less dangerous, and he returned to Damascus.

One might have expected Paul after his conversion

to have gone to Jerusalem in order to be with the Church at that place, and to become acquainted with the disciples, who had been eye-witnesses of the Lord's life, death and resurrection; but he had his valid reasons for not doing this. It was clear that it would not be possible for him to avoid meeting the men who had sent him out to persecute the Christians; and he knew the sentiment prevailing among the members of the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees well enough to harbor no illusions as to what they would do to him. He knew also that even his brethren in the faith would look upon him with some suspicion. It was not to be expected that they would at once have full confidence in him. But there was a still deeper reason why he kept so long away from Jerusalem. He was aware that the Lord had chosen him to be an apostle; and Paul did not wish it to appear in any way as if he had received his instruction from any of the apostles, or from any man. He would then have been regarded as no more than a pupil of the other apostles, somewhat after the manner of Mark and Luke; but if he were to be an apostle he must have his instruction and commission from the Lord Himself. So when he kept away from Jerusalem for three years it was to avoid putting himself in a wrong position with reference to the other apostles and disciples.

After the lapse of these three years Paul saw that now he must take up his life-work; and he felt the need of going to Jerusalem and become acquainted with the Church and its leaders, and at the same time give these the opportunity to learn what manner of man he was. While he wanted to know them, it was just as necessary that they should know him, in order to do away with any feeling of suspicion or any ill will toward him and his mission. So he went to Jerusalem; taking with him Barnabas, who was well acquainted with the



apostles and could introduce him to them. Between Paul and Barnabas there must have been a friendship of long standing.

It was, of course, most important of all to meet the apostle Peter, who was the strong leader in the Church, and come to an understanding with him; for Paul understood even now how much it would mean for him and Peter to know each other and be able to work in complete harmony. These two foremost men of the apostolic age spent two weeks cultivating an intimate acquaintance with each other; and there need be no doubt as to the matters which they discussed. To both of them the meeting was a great event. Many episodes in the life of Jesus and all sorts of personal details were related to Paul, and he was told of what Jesus had said in His speeches. All this became very useful to Paul in his later work. And as for Peter, it must have been worth much to him that he had learnt to know this strong, independent spirit which dwelt in Paul.

Incidentally Paul met also other members of the Church. But he did not become intimately acquainted with any except James, the brother of Jesus, who, because of his ability and also because of his near relationship with the Lord, was a man of note in the Church.

Paul made use of the opportunity to preach to his own misguided people, whom he so earnestly wished to save, and particularly to the Jews who, like himself, had been born in the Greek provinces outside of the Jews' own country. But he met only opposition and hatred, so that it was even dangerous for him to remain in Jerusalem.—Several times he went to the temple to worship; and one day while he was thus devoutly praying he went into a trance, in which the Lord said to him: "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concern-

ing me. Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Now Paul had received his commission as a foreign missionary from the Lord Himself, and was able to set forth as one having authority from God. But he had not as yet received instructions as to where he was to begin, and he would not decide this for himself; he had time to wait until the Lord should point out to him just what to do.

He as well as the brethren understood that Jerusalem was not the place for him; to remain there was in fact dangerous. So, after a stay of two weeks he went away. Barnabas went back to his work in Antioch, while Paul made his way to Tarsus, his native city.

Paul now revisited the scenes of his youth. No doubt there had been many changes. He had come back not as a learned rabbi, but as a humble Christian; and we may be sure that during this visit he did not fail to preach Christ. He made but a brief stay, however. Barnabas knew something of Paul's great power; and the work in the Church at Antioch, under the leadership of Barnabas, was too much for one man. Barnabas therefore went to Tarsus to secure the assistance of Paul, and came back to the Syrian capital bringing Paul with him.

In Antioch Paul found a large Christian Congregation, in which there also were many former Gentiles. Here the two friends labored together for a year. People were coming to their meetings in steadily increasing numbers, and it was necessary to increase the force of teachers. Then, in the year 44, during the reign of Emperor Claudius, there was a disastrous famine, especially severe in Judaea. So there was much suffering among the Christians as well as among the Jews in and about Jerusalem. The prophet Agabus had foretold these things to the brethren in Antioch; and

these had collected funds for the needy Christians, and Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem with the money.

They disposed of this matter and then returned to Antioch, where they for a time continued their labors with much success. The Church prospered and soon had its work in such orderly trim that the leadership of Paul and Barnabas was no longer needed; these men had other work to do. The Lord made it known to the Church at Antioch that now the time was come to send them to preach the Gospel of life in new places. It was an impressive event in the Congregation when with fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands Paul and Barnabas were consecrated and sent forth on their mission. This was in the year 45 or 46.

Here we have the beginning of Paul's real work as a missionary. He set out on this first journey accompanied by Barnabas, and by Mark, whom they had brought with them from Jerusalem.

First they went down to the seaport Seleucia, and then by boat over to the island of Cyprus, which was the home of Barnabas; and they traveled the whole length of the island from Salamis to Paphos. Though they did not stay here long the Gospel had one very notable victory, in that the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus became a convert to the Christian faith. A certain Jewish sorcerer named Barjesus had by his wicked arts wormed himself into the confidence of the proconsul. This sorcerer called himself Elymas, i. e., the wise. In those times such persons were highly regarded, something like the alchemists of a later age. When Barjesus noticed that the proconsul, or governor, was inclined to accept the teaching of Paul he resorted to all manner of trickery to keep him from doing this. The wily sorcerer was afraid of losing his influence with Sergius; and he did in fact put himself in a sorry

plight. Paul laid bare the man's hypocrisy and wicked cunning; and Barjesus was for a time struck blind. Thus it was made clear to the governor that the spirit and power of the Lord were with Paul.

From Cyprus the missionaries crossed over by boat to Attalia in Asia Minor. Paul's plan was to go to the interior province Galatia, where he wished to preach the Gospel. He was not concerned about his own comfort or security when he decided to visit these parts; and even on this first trip he was to experience something of the dangers to which his calling exposed him. Mark, also called John, went with the others as far as to the city of Perga in Pamphylia, from which place the road led up among the mountains. Mark seems to have soon tired of the missionary's strenuous life; and having also heard, no doubt, of the many dangers threatening on the proposed journey through the country, he lost courage, and left his companions and went home to his mother Mary, who lived in Jerusalem and was highly esteemed by all. To Paul this desertion of the work by Mark was a sad disappointment; but it could not stop him and Barnabas. They continued their journey through the mountain passes of Pisidia. The roads were bad; the Romans had neglected such work in these districts. Nor had much been done for the security of travelers. There was but a small garrison of Roman soldiers; and the reputation of the natives had never been of the best. Robberies and attacks on the caravans passing this way from the interior down to the coast were matters of daily occurrence; and a journey through the country was thus fraught with danger, especially for travelers who could not afford to have a guard with them. In the forests and ravines robbers were hiding. For the greater part of the way the road lead along the banks of the river Cestrus, which here was a swift mountain torrent. There were but

few bridges; and when swollen by recent rains the river could not be forded without great danger. The usual thing was to build a sort of raft on which to float the luggage, and then swim across the river. When describing his travels (2 Cor. 11:26-27), Paul doubtless had in mind some of the experiences of this journey: "I have been in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Such were at that times the troubles of a poor man journeying in these wild regions. It may be that the two men were attacked by brigands, and that it was their poverty which saved them: They went bravely on through the dark forests, climbing the mountains and swimming the rivers. They knew that they went in the name of the Lord, and that He who had commanded them to go held their lives in His hand. He had not promised them ease and comfort; but He had said that He would be with them, and so they could trust Him to care for them. And the two wanderers have doubtless strengthened each other by speaking together of their Lord and Master, and exchanging experiences, and thus shortening the weary days.

Their first goal was Antioch in Pisidia, about one week's journey from Perga. Antioch occupied a beautiful site in a fertile region up on the highlands of Pisidia. Back of the city were great, snowclad mountains; and before it were broad fields with well-kept gardens, and to the west near by a fine, large lake. From the heights near the city one had a grand view, when the setting sun shed its golden light over plain and mountain, and over the city with its grand marble palaces and temples. There was in Antioch a Roman colony. A number of

veterans had their homes here, and the city was the seat of one of the Roman courts of law. In beautiful temples the powers of nature were worshiped. Sacrifices were offered to sun, moon and stars; and at night there were torchlight parades, with the wildest drunken orgies and unbridled licentiousness. It was to the Churches in these parts that the apostle afterwards wrote (Gal. 4:8-9): "When ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. . . . And now, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, wherunto ye desire to be again in bondage?"

Besides the large heathen population, there was in Antioch a colony of Jews who were different from their neighbors in life and faith, and who kept to themselves and worshiped God in their own synagogue. Occasionally Gentiles also attended their meetings; and some of these Gentiles were persuaded and accepted the Jewish faith. It is probable that there were several such proselytes in Antioch.

There is no record as to where the two missionaries found a lodging. We may assume that Paul at once looked about him for work by means of which he could earn a living, as he intended to make a somewhat lengthy stay in this city. When the Sabbath came the two friends went to the synagogue. While the noisy business went on as usual among the Gentiles, it was the custom of the Jews always to rest on the Sabbath and come together for religious services.

Paul always went to the synagogue when occasion offered, in order to hear the reading of the holy Scriptures, and also in order to speak to the Congregation. It was customary for the rulers of the synagogue to ask any stranger present to address the people, especially if the stranger was understood to be a rabbi. Thus Paul was asked to speak wherever he went. And he liked best to speak in the synagogues; for the Roman

law did not permit the preaching of a new religion, while Judaism was tolerated by the State.

In Antioch it came about as Paul had expected. After the reading of the usual Scripture lessons and prayers the leaders sent a servant to Paul and Barnabas, saying: "Ye men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Paul then stood up and, beckoning with his hand, spoke to the audience of Jews and proselytes. His sermon is reported at some length in Acts 13; and thus we get a fairly accurate idea of his style of preaching to audiences in a Jewish synagogue. He calls their attention to the manner in which God has led His people, from the time when He brought them out of bondage in Egypt, and until He sent them John the Baptist, the mighty preacher in the wilderness, who was to prepare the hearts to receive Him whom God would send to save His people. Then Paul briefly and graphically outlined to them the life of Christ, especially His passion, death and resurrection. He described the shameful treatment of Him by the Jews; who were not able, however, to bring about His destruction. For He rose again, according to the promise made, thereby proving that He was indeed the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Therefore His messengers preach salvation and remission of sin in His name; and all who believe on Him have through Him the righteousness which no man can earn by works of the Law. This great message was now come to those in Antioch; and they must receive it, that it might save them, and that they might not by despising it call down upon themselves the wrath of God.

This strong sermon by the apostle made a deep impression on his hearers, dealing as it did with the free grace of God toward all men; and when they came out of the synagogue they surrounded the two strangers and thanked Paul for what he had said. This new

preaching had especially appealed to the Gentiles; it was something so widely different from the stringent, cold precepts of the Law. Many Jews, also, were impressed by Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament. Paul and Barnabas were therefore earnestly urged to stay with them and continue their preaching.

This reception of his message must, of course, have greatly cheered the apostle. From day to day many came to him to talk with him about the one thing needful; and he diligently used the opportunity and admonished them to continue in the grace of God.

When Paul and Barnabas came to the synagogue on the following Sabbath they found a packed house awaiting them. The fame of the two preachers had spread over the whole city, and everybody wanted to hear them. But the rulers of the synagogue were in a dark mood which did not promise well. They regarded it as an affront to themselves that so many came to hear these new preachers; when they themselves had preached the synagogue had been more than large enough. The past week had given them time to weigh carefully the sermon of Paul, and they had come to the conclusion that he had preached a dangerous doctrine. They dared not deny him the right to speak; but whenever he said anything which they did not like they "spake against him, contradicting and blaspheming." The situation became painful. No good could come of prolonging it; so the apostle closed his speech with this bold declaration: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so had the Lord commanded us, saying: 'I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.'" Then all was still in the synagogue, it had gone as long since foretold by the Lord through the



prophet Isaiah. But the divine words which silenced the stubborn Jews filled the believing Gentiles with joy. They were glad, and glorified the Word of God; for that the doors of His Kingdom now were open to them.

This episode led to an open break with the synagogue. The apostle saw with his own eyes how the Jews rejected the Kingdom and its blessings, while the Gentiles received it with gladness. The two missionaries were obliged to find another meeting-place, where they could preach without danger of inciting a revolt. Their labors brought forth a rich harvest; before long there was a small Christian Congregation in the city. But not only this; for Paul and Barnabas visited also the neighboring districts, where they preached and organized Churches. And, as Luke says: "The Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."

In this way the two friends spent at least a year in Antioch and its vicinity. It was not to be expected that the Jews would be satisfied with the turn of events. Not only were they left behind by the strange preachers; but the worst of it was, that if what these strangers said were true, then the Jews were in nothing better than others; the Law and all else on which they built were of no account. And when they understood, also, that they could accomplish nothing by speaking to the people, who did not want to hear them, they resorted to trickery; and as usual, this proved effective. There were in the city certain "devout and honorable women," whom the rulers of the synagogue succeeded in inciting to fanatical opposition against the Christian missionaries; the rulers trusting that the women in their turn would bring the men over to their same way of thinking. The plan was successful. The leading men of the city were incensed against the missionaries; there was a riot, and the two friends were brought before the court and

ordered to leave the city. So they went their way, while the mob followed at their heels, mocking and reviling them.

From Antioch the apostle went southeast to Iconium in Lycaonia. The road led over a great stretch of level desert; hot and dusty in the summer season, while the winters might be bitter cold, with flurries of snow. In a beautiful oasis on the edge of this desert was the city of Iconium, which still is a pretty, flourishing place. At the time with which we are dealing it was a large and thriving city. There was a Roman garrison and Roman civil officials, and the city was the capital of Lycaonia. It was on the great highway leading east, and this made it an important trade center. Here were also many Jews; and these had built a large, fine synagogue, in which they and numerous proselytes came together on the Sabbath. The city was three or four days' journey from Antioch.

Here also the apostle found a good field for his labors. The people had but little faith in their old gods, and were looking about for something on which to build up a new religion.

The two missionaries began their work in the same way as in Antioch; they went to the synagogue and were invited to speak. Paul then preached to them the same Gospel message which he had preached in other places, and we are told that many Jews and Greeks believed the Word and accepted the Christian faith. It goes without saying that the preachers incurred the enmity of many of the Jews, but these do not seem to have been able to do them any harm; the friends of the apostle were too many and too powerful. A long time therefore they abode there, probably at least for one year; and they preached boldly and gladly, for the Lord "gave testimony unto the Word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

Thus all might see that the Lord was with His messengers; and soon there was in this place a large and flourishing Church.

However, the apostle was not to finish his work here and go his way in peace. The Christian Congregation soon had a larger membership than the Jewish synagogue; and the Jews could make no more proselytes, as all the people wanted to hear Paul and Barnabas. The Jewish leaders then kept up the agitation against the two dangerous preachers, until the whole city was divided into two factions, those who were with Paul and those who were against him. When the Jews had brought their party to the proper degree of fanaticism they started a riot, their purpose being to put Paul and Barnabas to shame and then stone them. But these two men were warned of what was doing and made their escape; so when the mad mob with the Jewish rulers at their head came to the place where they had expected to find the apostle, he had disappeared. Now the two men must try to find a place in which they might be reasonably safe from the fury of the Jews; and they therefore journeyed to the southeast to the isolated and little known city of Lystra.

In this mountainous district were no Jews; and as usual in isolated valleys, the people had little culture and much superstition. They spoke their own peculiar dialect, the vernacular of this part of Lycaonia, but seem to have understood also the spoken language of the Greeks. So the two men were well hidden and could now labor in peace among the heathen. They arranged meetings, and the Word of God made its way into the hearts of the people. One day when Paul was preaching, he noticed a certain man who seemed to be especially attentive to every word. He was "impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb." Paul pitied the poor man, and interrupted his sermon, turned

to him and said with a loud voice: "Stand upright on thy feet." And the miracle happened. The lame man felt the stream of life course through his withered limbs, and with shouts of joy he leaped up and walked. The spectators went wild with enthusiasm; and there arose a rather humorous situation, at the recollection of which the apostle must often have smiled. When the people saw the lame man leap and walk, they shouted to one another in the speech peculiar to Lycaonia: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." No such thing had ever been seen, and the people could think of no better explanation. They had a legend that the father of the gods, Zeus, and his messenger, Hermes, had at one time long ago taken upon themselves the likeness of poor men and had wandered about in order to study the way of thinking among mortals. They went from house to house, and were everywhere turned away. At last they came to a poor hut, where lived a happy man and wife, Philemon and Baucis. There the gods were well received and treated to the best that the poor place afforded. Next day the good man and wife learnt that their guests were two of the gods of Olympus; and these promised to grant them any wish that they might agree on. So Philemon and Baucis wished that they might live in good health to a ripe old age, and then die on the same day.

Now, when the simple-minded and superstitious people saw that the cripple had been healed, they jumped to the conclusion that Barnabas, who was an imposing figure and had little to say, must be Zeus, and that his eloquent companion must be Hermes. The greatest enthusiast among them all was the priest in the temple of Zeus, just outside of the city. He insisted that great sacrifices should be offered in honor of the two gods who had come to Lystra. The people hurried away; and before long they came back with song and music,

bringing with them garlanded oxen, and now there was to be a great sacrifice in honor of Paul and Barnabas.

These two men had hardly understood what was in the wind; but when they saw the concourse of people with the sacrificial oxen they were terrified, and made all haste to stop these proceedings. Paul explained to the people that he and his friend were not gods, but merely ordinary mortals like themselves, and that the gods in whom the people believed did not exist. Then he began speaking to them about the living God, who had created heaven and earth and all things in them; who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, but who in His great love still thought of them, and gave rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with gladness.

Paul barely succeeded in preventing the sacrifice. The missionaries were received with open arms. People liked to hear them; and so they remained a long time, preaching the Word in the city and in the surrounding country districts.

Thus they worked for a long time without hindrance. But at last the Jews in Antioch and Iconia learnt the whereabouts of the missionaries, and came to Lystra and again began to incite the populace against the two men; and they succeeded in their design, gaining over to their side a large number of those easily influenced citizens of Lystra. As soon as they were many enough they proceeded to carry out their plan. There was a riotous demonstration: the Jews forced their way into the house, laid hands on the troublesome apostle and dragged him out into the street. Now the day of reckoning had come, and it was not possible for Paul to escape. A hail of stones was thrown at him, and he thought, no doubt, that his last hour was at hand. He probably remembered the day when he himself had been a pleased spectator at the murder of

Stephen just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Now the same thing was being done to him; but in his heart were peace and joy, and he commended his soul to God.

The Jews had satisfied their fury, and the apostle was lying there bloody and mutilated, and they supposed that he was dead. Then they dragged the body out of the city and left it as food for the vultures. They then felt more at ease, having rid themselves of their most dangerous enemy.

When the infuriated mob had left the coast clear, Barnabas and the other Christians went out for the purpose of caring for the body of the murdered apostle. Their grief because of the loss of their best friend and defender was turned to joy when they noticed signs of life in the torn and bleeding body. They bound up his wounds and moistened his lips, and he came to consciousness; and loving hands supported him back into the city, where he was well cared for in the home of one of his friends.

But Lystra was no longer a safe place for him. If it became known that he was alive the Jews would manage to find him again. So on the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. He had now fully experienced the truth of that which the Lord said of him in Damascus: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." All his life he carried the scars received in Lystra; and later on he reminds the Churches in these parts of these his badges of honor: "From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6: 17). These were his signs of honor.

Derbe was a little town near the eastern border of Galatia. The apostle was broken in health, but this was an excellent place in which to regain his strength. The town was beautifully situated on the shore of a fine, large lake, and Paul always remembered with

pleasure his stay in Derbe. It came to be a blessed time for himself and for the Congregation which sprang up around him, now that his health was being restored. We do not know where he lodged; but it probably was in the house of a Jewish widow named Eunice, whose husband had been a Greek. With her was her mother, a good old Jewess named Lois; and also her son Timothy. This family later earned a good name among the Christian Churches; and Timothy became Paul's dearest and most trusted disciple.

At any rate Paul was cordially received in Derbe, in spite of the marks of his recent maltreatment; and the kindness now lavished on him must have cheered him wonderfully. In Gal. 4:13-15, he expresses to these people his deepest gratitude: "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 hear your record, that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."

Neither Jew nor Gentile seems to have harmed the apostle in any way during his stay in Derbe, though there were many Jews in this city. His work seems to have been more successful here than at any other place in Galatia. He stayed several months and built up a thriving Church. Luke says (Acts 14:21) that he "preached the Gospel in that city, and taught many."

The apostle was now at the last station of his first missionary journey. Nearly five years had elapsed since he and Barnabas set out from Antioch in Syria. It is no wonder that they were longing for home. Besides, there were other places in which they wanted to do some mission work; so they brought this first ex-

pedition to a close. It would have been easiest for them to follow the main road east to Antioch in Syria by way of Tarsus. But Paul was more interested in doing his duty than in taking his ease. Naturally, he also wished to visit once more the Churches which he had organized and learn how they were getting on. He himself had been driven out from some of the places; and of course the Churches had contended with many difficulties in the early days of their history. They were exposed to hatred and persecution on the part of the Jews; but while persecutions may harass, they can not destroy a Church of the Lord. Still, the Churches might need encouragement and comfort in these troublous times; and more than anything else they needed guidance. So Paul decided to go home by way of Lystra, Iconium, Antioch and Perga. The visit to these Christian converts, moreover, cheered him greatly; for he saw everywhere that while they had suffered much, they yet were running a good race. They had remained loyal to the Gospel; and they were glad to see the apostle again, though it were but for a short time. Everywhere he spoke words of good cheer, though he did not hide the truth that we must enter the Kingdom through many tribulations; for which reason it is the more important that we remain steadfast in the faith. He himself had suffered much on his journey, and the birth of these Churches had caused him much pain. He had been hunted as if he were a wild beast, been reviled as an outlaw. But one must not lose heart; the joys of God's Kingdom would be cheap at the cost of much suffering.

The apostle was glad to find that in the Churches there were some persons who were strong in the faith, and whose Christian experience and insight were such that he could safely place the leadership in their hands. With prayer he ordained them to the office, and com-



mended them to the care of the chief Shepherd, on whom they believed. Thus Paul and Barnabas sought to strengthen the Churches and to encourage them to remain true. Then the two missionaries reached the coast, whence they went home by boat from Attalia.

There was great rejoicing in Antioch in Syria when the two men came home after an absence of five years. The Church held a mission festival. All were glad to see the beloved evangelists; and their joy was increased when Paul in his own striking way related, how that God had done great things through Barnabas and him, and had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. This was the gist of his report, and it surely was something for which to rejoice and thank God.

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## VI. Dangerous Times.

*"I went up (to Jerusalem) by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain" (Gal. 2:2).*

Now that they were come back to the Church in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas would doubtless have been very glad to rest for a time from their strenuous labor; but it did not last for long. For the apostle had before him a new fight, more dangerous than the former ones; a fight which threatened to destroy not only himself, but his work; to discredit his teaching and tear down his Churches; a fight not with enemies on the outside, but with enemies within the Church itself; and these enemies were men who made a strong pretense of great piety.

This fight was to last while the apostle lived, and to cause him much sorrow and aching of heart. Still, even these things were in many ways to benefit both himself and the Church; for through them the vision of Paul was clarified, and the new view which his conversion had given him of the Christian religion was strengthened. The Gospel of free grace, as preached by Paul, came to stand out more and more distinctly; and a clearer light was thrown on the truths that Christ is the End of the Law for righteousness to all that believe; and that Christ, who died, but now lives, is the only Fount of life and salvation.

The Lord had richly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during these years. Congregations were founded by them; and in the desert of heathendom there were oases in which the new Christian life showed a fine growth. Converted Jews and Gentiles dwelt together in brotherly harmony and rejoiced in the salvation which they had received. Especially was this the case in Antioch; and none thought that this brotherly love of Jew and Gentile could in any way be wrong.

The Christians in Jerusalem had rejoiced over the extension of the Kingdom of Christ through the missionary efforts of Paul. But gradually there came a change over them. Conditions in Palestine had become more peaceful; the Christians were no more being persecuted as before. There was no longer any great danger in belonging to the Christian Church.

At this time there came into the Church in Jerusalem certain new members, who had belonged to the party of the Pharisees. They may have been impressed to some extent by the preaching, or they may have been attracted by the life which the Christians led. They became very active members of the Church, and kept careful watch of Paul, in whom they had little faith: for their religious view was widely different from

his. To them Christianity was merely Judaism with certain improvements. Their conversion to Christianity had not meant any radical change; they remained Jews, though they had adopted some Christian forms. Therefore we call them Judaists and speak of their brand of religion as Judaism.

These people, as already stated, kept an eye on Paul and his work; they saw that the Church was coming under the control of former Gentiles; these were already in the majority. And what was still worse, these new Gentile-Christian Churches were not being managed from the headquarters in Jerusalem, but rather from Antioch. The other apostles, appointed by the Savior Himself, had no authority over these Churches; their autocrat was Paul, who had scarcely seen the Savior.

Before long it came to light that there was difference of opinion on this matter in the Mother Church at Jerusalem. Some of the Christians gladly supported Paul, while others did their best to undermine his influence. No doubt the greater number were uncertain as to what position they should take in the matter.

Narrow-minded slaves under the Law never are slow to find fault. These people wanted to make sure of what they had heard; so they decided to obtain a nearer view of the Pauline methods, and of conditions in the Churches which Paul had founded. So some of them went to Antioch. This was an ideal place for the mischief-makers, as the Congregation was made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and the city was the center of Paul's activity. This was a good place in which to observe the liberty obtaining wherever the preaching of Paul had come to rule the hearts. Here the Law and the rite of circumcision formed no barrier between Jew and Gentile; all were one in Christ.

It is probable that the meddlers came while Paul

and Barnabas were absent on their missionary journey; and they at once began to sow the seeds of dissension. They addressed themselves to the Jewish Christians and explained to these how that they had done wrong in becoming as one with the Gentiles; they should have remembered that they themselves were Jews, and they should have kept themselves aloof from the unclean and uncircumcised Gentiles. These Gentile Christians were not to be regarded as Christian brethren on an equality with the others, unless they accepted circumcision and the Mosaic Law; for salvation must come through adoption into the Jewish nation, God's own Chosen People. They urged also that Paul's idea of Christianity and the Christian life was a new invention of his own; and in support of their contention they pointed to the Mother Church in Jerusalem, explaining how the other apostles carefully observed the precepts of the Law of Moses in its every detail. And so they made it appear that the other apostles were opposed to Paul in this matter; and they kept up a persistent agitation to bring about discord.

It is no wonder, then, that many began to waver.—It was easy to understand that the opinions held by these men from Jerusalem did not accord with the preaching of Paul; and the question forced itself on every conscientious soul: Who is in the right, Paul or these men? If these were in the right, then the preaching of Paul was worse than of no account. And, then again, a strict observance of the Law impresses many as being the highest sanctity, while it is more difficult to see the worth of Gospel holiness and liberty. It was especially difficult for the Jews to free themselves from bondage under the Law; something of it would remain with even the best of them. Such was the situation when the old Mosaic and the new evangelical view first came into collision in the Christian Church.

The strife was becoming more bitter day by day; and if it were not settled, the results would be disastrous. If Paul had yielded to the demands of the Judaists, it would have put a stop for all time to his work as the apostle of the Gentiles, and that which he had built up would fall; Christianity could not have become the world religion, but would have been merely the faith of a Jewish sect. For it would have been utterly impossible to change the Gentiles into Jews and then make them over into Christians. On the other hand, if Paul had entirely ignored the Jews, the young Christian Church would have been hopelessly disrupted; there would have been two distinct Churches, one of Jews and one of Gentiles. It was therefore necessary to have it clearly brought out, just what stand the other apostles would take toward the preaching and work of Paul. Thousands of Gentiles had through him been converted; and these had the right to know whether or not they deceived themselves in regarding their salvation as sure, and whether or not they were in truth Christians and brethren, though they were not circumcised and did not observe the precepts of the Jewish Law.

Paul and Barnabas fought hard against the Judaists; but they as well as the other members of the Church understood that the controversy must some time be settled. So it was found necessary to visit Jerusalem and arrive at some agreement with the Mother Church at that place and with the other apostles. Paul was strengthened in this purpose by a revelation from Heaven. He went, therefore, taking with him his collaborer Barnabas. These two had all the time worked together in fullest harmony through good and evil report; besides, Barnabas was well acquainted in Jerusalem, and was held in high esteem by the Christians in that city. Paul took with him also Titus, a young

Gentile Christian, of whom he had great expectations. He wanted the brethren in Jerusalem to see one of his Gentile converts and thus learn something of the fruit which his work already had borne.

As soon as the three men had arrived in Jerusalem a meeting was arranged to discuss the matter on which they desired the Mother Church to pass, and the situation was at once made clear. The "false brethren," the Judaists, grasped the opportunity to make a violent assault on Paul, and to demand that the Gentile converts should be circumcised and be held to obedience under the Law of Moses. First of all Paul was to be brought to his knees; for which reason they insisted that he should show his obedience by allowing Titus to be circumcised. For it had greatly offended them that an uncircumcised man came among them; to fraternize with unclean persons of Gentile birth would degrade the Church in the eyes of all Jews. They had religious fanaticism and national prejudice on their side, and these were a strong support. The Jewish leaders spoke with authority; and they, no doubt, struck a popular chord. For it went against the grain with most of the Jews to recognize the heathen converts as entitled to full brotherhood. The Jewish Christians might admit the Gentiles to some sort of inferior brotherhood with them; but Paul was not satisfied with that kind of conditional recognition.

So it devolved on Paul to defend his gospel against the spokesmen of the Jews. He understood the importance of the matter. He must make it plain that these Judaists and their doctrine did not rightfully belong to the Christian Church; that they were false brethren, who had come into the Church for the purpose of destroying Christian liberty and again bringing the Christians into bondage under the Law. Paul could see through their purpose in all its bearings; and therefore

he stood firm in his opposition, that the truth of the Gospel might remain with them. In this matter he could not yield; to have done so would have been to sacrifice the richest treasure of the faith; the full, free Gospel of grace.

The other members of the Church, as well as the apostles present, followed the discussion with great interest, but without taking any part in it. When Paul had paid his respects to the Judaists he took up the other phase of the question: He and Barnabas described their labors and life out in the mission fields so forcibly and clearly that the Church could not fail to see that these men had labored in God's own cause. Against their plain statement the opposition had no leg to stand on; the facts spoke more loudly than any words. None could deny that Paul had done the Lord's work. And had not the Lord Himself prophesied concerning the fullness of the Gentiles, and foretold how they, in the last days, were to come from every land and find a home in the Kingdom of God? Jesus had indeed many times made mention of the faith of certain Gentiles as against the unbelief of Israel. Besides, Paul spoke but the truth when he declared that even the Jewish Christians did not build their assurance of salvation on the Law, but built all their hopes on Jesus, His death and resurrection. The same was true of the Gentiles also.

Thus the case stood. A decision must now be arrived at; and the future of the Christian Church hung in the balance. This was doubtless the most critical moment in the history of the Church. On the one side stood Paul, strong and unshaken with his free Gospel, which to most seemed more or less strange if not dangerous. And on the other side were the Judaists, fighting with all their might for the old Jewish ideas. To approve the preaching of Paul seemed to them like

signing their own death warrant; or even the same as the fall of the Law itself, and the surrender of their last hope that the Jews were to be foremost among the people. For if the Pauline Christians were fully recognized as brethren, the Gentiles would be as near to God as were the Jews; to them such a thought was revolting. They could not grasp the idea that they, who were of the seed of Abraham, and who had the Law and the Covenants, now were at one with the Gentile believers. The Jewish privileges were to be as nothing; and the Gentiles were to be their equals, and this without being circumcised and without being under obligations to observe the Mosaic Law. The force of habit is strong; and these Jews had always felt bound to observe conscientiously in every detail the Law and the old traditions.

How was one now to find the right way through these entanglements?

At the crucial moment Peter placed himself squarely on the side of Paul; and Peter was a tower of strength. His love of Jesus gave him an insight into the heart of Paul, who was inspired by the same love of the Savior. Thus took place the meeting between the two greatest men in the early Christian Church. The bond between them was their common love of the crucified and risen Savior, a bond that was stronger than all things else; it made the matter clear to Peter, and all doubts were swept away. In his address Peter referred to his own experience. God had sent him also with the Gospel to the Gentiles, that these might believe; and God had made no distinction between Jew and Gentile; He had cleansed the heart of the Gentiles also through faith, and had given them His holy Spirit. To impose the yoke of the Law on the Gentile Christians would therefore be to tempt God; especially since the Jews themselves were unable to bear this



yoke. Besides, the way of salvation was the same for all; "for we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they." Peter, therefore, most wholeheartedly gave Paul the hand of brotherhood.

This act of Peter did him all honor. Once he had in an evil hour denied his Lord and Master; but now he stood firm and thus saved the Church in its hour of greatest danger. The place of honor in the Church which Peter holds belongs to him by right.

When Peter had spoken many followed him: first of all James, the Lord's brother. It was his opinion also, he said, that no unnecessary burden should be laid on the Gentiles who became Christians; still it was to be hoped that out of respect to the Jewish brethren the Gentile converts would abstain from meat offered to idols, and from things strangled, and from blood, and from fornication. To this demand Paul made no objection; for what James demanded was something which really went without saying, and which was in no way an infringement of Christian liberty.

John also was of one mind with Peter and James, and the Congregation followed its leaders. Thus the meeting became a complete victory for Paul. His work as a missionary was endorsed, and his apostolic authority and the rights of the Gentile brethren, who were free of the Mosaic Law, were recognized by the Mother Church and its leaders. The future work was divided in such a way that Paul was to go to the Gentiles and the other apostles should labor among the Jews. The agreement was solemnly ratified; and Paul did not forget the request put up to him before his return to Antioch, that he should collect substantial help for the poverty-stricken Jews in Jerusalem.

This Council at Jerusalem thus came to have great importance for the ages following. It marked the

transition from the Jewish-Christian Church to the Church universal, the liberation of Christianity from the bonds of the Old Covenant, and its recognition as an independent religion in which is no distinction of Jew and Gentile, but in which all are one in Christ. This was a moment of overwhelming importance; one of the clearest of proofs that the Lord cares for His Church on earth. Those present at the meeting saw clearly how that the grace and power of God had been with these men in their work; and as they in faith looked to the Lord, His Spirit led them to pass resolutions the importance of which but few of them could then fully understand.

The fight against the Judaists was not, however, ended. They had, to be sure, lost the skirmish in Jerusalem, but they could be counted on to find means of making a fresh attack.

After the meeting there was for a time general rejoicing over the outcome, especially in Antioch; but none was more happy than was the warm-hearted Peter. His happiness did not permit him to remain at home; he must needs pay a visit to the brethren in Antioch. Here he found the Jewish and Gentile Christians dwelling together in perfect harmony; and the many regulations of the Jewish Law did not prevent them from eating at the same table and cultivating mutual friendship. Paul and Barnabas had themselves set the good example. When Peter came he joined them in this, with no thought whatever of anything wrong. For they all were brethren in Christ; and clearly, if there were to be any brotherhood at all the several factions must be willing to yield and give way, where necessary, in non-essentials. And at the meeting in Jerusalem it had been agreed on that the Gentile Christians were to be free of the Jewish Law; and, very naturally, the Jewish Christians of Antioch

placed themselves on the more liberal standpoint of the Gentile brethren.

Rumors of these doings in Antioch soon reached Jerusalem; and the Judaists again began to get busy. They urged that the conference of the apostles had agreed, to be sure, that the Gentile Christians were not to be held strictly to the Mosaic Law; but this did not mean that the Jews also were to be exempt. These were Jews and circumcised, and therefore under obligation to live as Jews and keep aloof from the life of the Gentiles. Many members of the Mother Church at Jerusalem again began to have their former scruples in this matter, and among them was James.

Some of the brethren were sent to investigate conditions in Antioch. These at once caused trouble in the Congregation; for the liberal spirit prevailing among the Christians in Antioch was something which they could not understand. Their Jewish principles were more strict; and they urged on the Jewish Christians that these were doing wrong in thus associating on equal terms with the Gentile Christians, and demanded that they keep themselves apart. It seemed, unfortunately, as if these demands were supported by the Church in Jerusalem; and so the Jewish Christians in Antioch dared not resist, but gave way to the insistent demands. Many of the Jewish Christians began to waver; and the messengers from Jerusalem brought such influence to bear that even Peter drew away from Paul. And even Paul's faithful friend Barnabas was induced to follow Peter's example. It is not known whether or not Paul himself was present in Antioch at this time.

Thus the wound was opened again almost as soon as healed. Trouble was at the door; and this time it was the more threatening as even Peter and Barnabas had broken with the Gentile Christians. So some of

these began to think that it probably were best for them to begin living after the manner of the Jews.

It now seemed that the structure which Paul with so much labor had built up in Jerusalem was to be torn down at home in his own Congregation; that the Church was to be divided into two camps. The Jews would then look down upon the Gentile Christians as brethren of a lower estate. This new movement was a severe blow to Paul, and the conduct of Peter and Barnabas especially pained him grievously. However, the movement must be stopped; should it gain force it would soon disrupt the Church. So Paul rose against it with his whole might. He called the Congregation together; and he openly attacked Peter, charging him with hypocrisy, and with having by his want of firmness done great harm to the Church. He knew Peter well enough to feel sure that he was, in spite of his wavering attitude, an honest man, who loved the Lord, and who was big enough to accept correction. So Paul did not accuse Peter of moral cowardice or weakness; but he points out that Peter had not looked deeply into these matters, and therefore had not been consistent. For Peter had taken the lead at the conference in Jerusalem, and had recognized the Gentile Christians as full brethren; and when he came to Antioch he had heartily accepted the mode of life there in vogue in the Church, and had thus admitted that non-essentials should not cause division among Christian brethren. But when the messengers came from Jerusalem he began to waver and hold himself aloof, and had thus brought a strong moral pressure to bear on many of the Gentiles, who looked up to Peter with the greatest respect. This was the complaint which Paul had against Peter. Paul urged, moreover, that things go wrong when one does not follow strictly the truth of the Gospel; and he reminded Peter of their

common experience. For both were Jews, belonging from their birth to the people of the Covenant, thus having the Jews' advantage over the Gentiles. They had the Law and had tested it as a Means of Salvation, and had reached the result that man "is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Christ Jesus." And this was the very reason why they had accepted the faith in Jesus; they had grasped the truth that "no flesh is justified by the works of the Law."

Every other form of doctrine trifles with the grace of God; for the death of Christ would be meaningless could righteousness be obtained through the Law.

Paul laid such great stress on these religious truths; for he knew that if they were fully accepted there would be no further trouble in regard to the intercourse between the Jewish and the Gentile members of the Church. For if Christ is the end of the Law unto righteousness, He is this to all people; and if He is the one and only way of salvation for all, the Law has no right to divide those who are one in Christ; for in Him all are equally free. The Jewish Christians should, therefore, not let their conscience be burdened by the precepts of the Law.

This powerful speech by Paul, the outlines of which are set down in the 14th and following verses of Galatians 2, cleared the atmosphere. His words were not to be misunderstood. Now the people saw clearly that Paul was in the right. The Church breathed more easily; for the truth makes free.

These events took place in the year 50 or 51.

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## VII. Through Asia Minor to Greece.

*"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy"* (Rom. 11: 11).

As soon as the excitement in Antioch had subsided, and peace had been reëstablished, Paul decided on a new missionary undertaking. He planned to visit the Churches founded by him throughout Asia Minor. So he asked Barnabas to go with him on this journey also. They had worked together for years, and Barnabas had been with him on the previous journey. But it now developed that Barnabas was less willing than he had been. He declared that he would not go unless his cousin Mark went with them. Paul could not agree to this arrangement, as Mark had greatly displeased him by deserting him at Perga on their first missionary journey. It is possible also that Barnabas did not like to travel with Paul at this time, just after the trouble in Antioch. Paul was not in the habit of sparing those who needed correction; and no doubt he had told Barnabas some wholesome but unpleasant truths.

Paul's absolute refusal to take Mark with them led to a painful break of the old friendly relations between Paul and Barnabas. Each of them felt aggrieved and went his separate way. The account in the Acts of the Apostles does not make it clear on which of the two the greater share of the blame must be placed.

Paul must then look about for another companion; and he found such a one in Silas, who had been sent from Jerusalem to Antioch with the resolutions adopted by the big conference in the Jewish capital. So these two started out, in the year 51, on Paul's second great missionary journey. Barnabas and Mark went as missionaries to Cyprus.

Paul this time went through Syria and Cilicia; following, probably, the main highway, leading through the so-called "Gate of Syria," a narrow mountain pass in the wild region between Syria and Cilicia. This highway is still in use. At the time in question this road was of immense importance, as it was the main highway of trade between the Mediterranean countries in the West and the wealthy and populous regions of Syria and Mesopotamia. The road was fairly alive with trade caravans, Roman troops, officials and journeymen artisans.

At the stations along the way were villages and cities; and in many of them there were Christian Congregations founded by evangelists from Antioch. Sometimes our two travelers left the main highway and followed roads branching off to towns in which there were Churches. It was Paul's purpose to visit all the Congregations round about in these countries. He knew that they needed to be confirmed in the truth, in order that they might not be corrupted, should the cunning Judaists visit them and try to lead them wrong.

As the two missionaries advanced through Cilicia the road led upward higher and higher. It found its way among the mountains, along the banks of roaring torrents, through dark forests, through fertile valleys and over arid plains. The Romans had shown great skill in building and maintaining this highway of trade,

Many mighty military conquerors had led their troops through these regions. Here had marched the armed hosts of Darius and Xerxes. Here Alexander the Great had later on led his invincible Macedonians to the East; and at a still later date the Roman generals had led their intrepid legions over this road eastward to make conquest of distant lands. But just now we have before us only two peaceable travelers

making their way westward on foot,—and still they were to write their names indelibly on the pages of the world's history. Here we have a tour of conquest by the mightiest spiritual captain who ever trod the scene of history. His sword was sharper than any two-edged weapon of war, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart; and the arm which wielded this sword was strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. He had on the whole armor of God, so that he was able to stand against the wiles of the Devil and against spiritual wickedness in high places. His loins were girt about with truth, he was protected by the breastplate of righteousness, and on his arm was the shield of faith; on his head was the helmet of salvation, and his feet were shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

None of the many whom the two wayfarers met knew anything about this insignificant-looking Jewish artisan. They saw nothing great in him; but the Lord knows His own, and He could measure the greatness of this tentmaker.

The travelers were on their way to visit the Churches of Galatia. After passing across the Cilician mountains they descended to the great plain which forms a large part of the central district of Asia Minor; and there they visited Derba and Lystra and Iconium in Lyaconia, and then Antioch in Pisidia. In these cities Paul had founded Churches on his former journey, and his purpose now was to strengthen them in the truth. Especially did he lay great stress on instruction concerning their attitude toward the Jewish Law; and he told them about the resolutions agreed on by the conference at Jerusalem, so that they might stand fast in the event that any should come and try to force upon them any Judaistic heresies. His ef-



forts bore rich fruit; the old Congregations were strengthened, and new ones were founded. In Lystra Paul was joined by the pious and talented Timothy, who under the direction of the apostle prepared himself for the work of an evangelist; and he became one of Paul's best co-workers.

After having thus visited the Galatian Churches it was Paul's plan to continue his mission work westward through Asia Minor; and in pursuit of this plan he traveled through Phrygia and Galatia, without, however, taking up any new work in these districts. There were circumstances making it plain to him that the beginning of such new work in these places would not now be in accordance with God's will. So he traveled also through Mysia without making any stop, and came down to the city of Troas. This was at that time a populous and important city. It was the usual harbor from which to set sail for European ports. Here was a meeting-place of Asiatics and Greeks, and the streets and the harbor were alive with busy traffic.

When the missionaries reached this wide-awake and beautifully situated city and saw its swarming life, it must have come home to Paul as the will of God that he was to go over to the Greeks and bring them the message of salvation. It is probable that he stopped for some time in Troas and preached the Gospel; for we read in Acts 20 that there was a Church in this city, no doubt founded by Paul at this time. And in Troas he found a new worker for the Kingdom; a man who became very useful to the apostles, and to whom the whole Christian Church owes a debt of gratitude—the physician Luke, the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles. From this time on he followed Paul, until this apostle died in a Roman prison. Luke has better than any other mirrored the religious view of his spiritual father. The

impression made on him as he listened to the apostle's version of the parables concerning the Lost sheep, the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and the Publican, etc., was never wiped out.

One night during his stay in Troas Paul had a vision, which opened up to his view a new field of labor. He saw a man over on the coast of Macedonia, who stretched out his hands to him and said: "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Paul did not doubt that this was a divine call; and he now understood why he had not been permitted to settle down to work in the district around Antioch. The Lord wanted him to go over to Europe. And Paul at once made himself ready and went on board one of the many ships leaving every day for Macedonia.

Thus the apostle and his companions Silas, Timothy and Luke, came over to the Greek peninsula. The Church of the Lord was now to be founded among highly cultured people, who for centuries had been leaders in the arts and sciences, and were the intellectual autocrats of the world. The tentmaker from Tarsus was now to answer the question on which the philosophers had pondered in vain, the great riddles of life and death. The four missionaries landed in Neapolis, where they stopped but one day, and then went on to Philippi, where Paul intended to begin his work. The Romans had made this a strongly fortified city, with a large garrison of imperial troops; and many Romans—former soldiers and others—had made their home in this place.

The number of Jews in Philippi was so small that they had no synagogue; so they were in the habit of coming together on the Sabbath at a secluded spot by the river, their usual bathing resort. On their first Sabbath here the apostles and his companions went out to this place. They found no large audience on this

occasion. Only a handful of women were there to offer prayer to the one true God. But the apostle did not regard it as beneath his dignity to preach to this little flock; and he soon found that he had an appreciative audience. The Gospel seemed especially to come home to the heart of a certain Greek woman, Lydia, a well-to-do seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira. She had ceased to worship the heathen idols and had joined the Jewish Church. Now the good news as related by Paul deeply impressed her; she became a convert and was baptized with all her household. In her joy over having received salvation through the Gospel, she invited Paul and his companions to make their home in her house during their stay in the city.

So they tarried for a time, and preached the Word in the city and its environs; and their work prospered greatly. Many were added to the Congregation, and everything seemed promising. Then suddenly the work was interrupted.

There was in the town a poor, demented girl, who brought her masters much gain by her gifts as a fortune-teller. Then one day when Paul and his companions were walking along the street this girl cried after them saying: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This was repeated several days, until Paul tired of it. In connection with such soothsayers there was much popular superstition; and Paul doubtless pitied the poor girl. So one day he turned toward her, and in the name of Jesus commanded the "spirit of divination" to come out of her. She was cured and became a handmaiden of the Lord.

When her masters saw that she could not be made to earn any more money for them by fortune-telling, they were furious; and so one day, as they saw Paul and Silas walking by, they fell upon these two men and

dragged them into the marketplace. This was an open square faced by handsome public buildings and grand temples. Here was the general resort of the people, and here sat the public magistrates. With noisy demonstrations Paul and Silas were brought before these magistrates, and were charged with making mischief and trying to introduce an unlawful religion. These were serious charges; there were severe penalties for such crimes. The accusers succeeded in inciting the mob to rise up against the two men and to scream and demand that they be punished.

The magistrates had no time to hear anything which the two Jews might want to say in their own defense, but ordered the servants of the court to make ready and flog them. Their clothes were torn off, and they were tied to the whipping-post, and scourged till the blood spurted from their backs. While the mob howled their approval the stripes were laid on till the two men were near death; then they were dragged to the prison, treated like the most dangerous criminals; and the jailor, who was held personally responsible for their not escaping, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Here they lay, then, almost dead, their backs smarting, and the blood dripping on to the floor, which was alive with vermin and other crawling things. But the courage of the two men did not fail them. Paul had experienced even worse things, and he put heart into Silas also. The apostle had found that the best cure for trouble was to sing praises to God; and so at the time of midnight the corridors of the prison were filled with glad song. Such had probably never before been heard in the prison of Philippi; it was more familiar with ribald jokes and curses. The strange sound fixed the attention of the other prisoners; and it must have strangely affected them; for songs of praise will touch even the

most callous; coming from the heart they reach the heart. Suddenly, as Paul and Silas were singing, the foundations of the prison were shaken by an earthquake, the walls were shattered, so that the bolts holding the prisoners' bands were loosened, and the prison doors opened. Furthermore, the strange thing happened that not one of the prisoners made any attempt to escape; for they understood that they were face to face with something supernatural.

The keeper of the prison awakened out of his sleep, and saw with terror that all doors stood open. He saw the prisoners walking about; and he did not doubt that many of them had escaped. So he drew his sword and would have killed himself; for he was responsible for the safe-keeping of his prisoners. But Paul, who saw his purpose, cried to him: "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here."

The jailor was entirely overwhelmed by this experience. He had, of course, heard about that demented girl, and what she had said; and now he understood that these men were in truth the servants of the most high God, and that they taught the way of salvation. Trembling with fear of God he fell down before Paul, who spoke kindly to him. "Sirs," said the jailor, "what must I do to be saved?" And they answered: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The other members of the family and the prison guards and servants were now present; and Paul stood among them with a body racked with pain, but with a glad heart, and told them of God's wonderful grace and mercy. And his hearers believed the message. The Lord had spoken to them through the earthquake; and now, in the small hours of the night, they received healing through the Gospel of life. The result was, that the keeper of the prison with his whole household were in this selfsame night through Baptism made members of the Church.

When they had heard the good tidings, and their souls had been filled with the good things of God's Kingdom, they remembered the wounded body and the empty bowels of Paul and his companion; and the keeper of the prison brought the two men into his house, and set meat before them, and "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

When it was day the magistrates sent men to the prison with orders to set the two prisoners at liberty. It seems to have dawned on the magistrates that they had been too hasty, and they thought this the easiest way out of the difficulty. They reckoned, however, without their host when they thought in this way to be rid of the two men. Paul told the messengers that he and his friend had been maltreated and thrown into prison against all law and justice, and refused to go quietly away and let the matter drop. Paul was a Roman citizen, and the magistrates had in their treatment of him violated the law; wherefore he demanded that the magistrates themselves come to the prison and offer suitable excuses and make reparation. When the magistrates heard this they feared and came at once; for they knew that Paul might make it very uncomfortable for them by making complaint to their superiors.

Thus Paul was able with unsullied honor to return to his Congregation, and the brethren received him with great joy.

The apostle did not think it necessary to stay here longer at this time. The work in the Church was being carried on in an orderly way. He cherished this Congregation above any of the others; none loved its apostle so well, and none gave him such unmixed pleasure. His letter, written to these Philippians ten or twelve years later, breathes the fond joy which filled his heart at the thought of them; and none other of the letters of Paul shows forth this tender side of his character so

beautifully as does this letter from the imprisoned apostle. "I thank my God," he writes, "upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." And he calls them "my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown"; and urges them to "stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Many times they also remembered their apostle and sent him gifts; and this was the only Congregation from which Paul would consent to receive any such help. Between him and his Philippians there always was the most cordial relations with hearty mutual regard.

The time was come when the apostle must leave these dear friends. He took Silas with him, letting Luke and Timothy remain behind for a time to give further help; while he and Silas went westward through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the Macedonian capital.—This great commercial and industrial city has most charming environs. Before it is the blue sea; and behind it rises the mighty, snow-capped Mount Olympus. Around the city were fertile fields and vineyards, fine villas and parks; and in the city were busy artisans and prosperous traders and rich bankers, and there was the hum of business in shop and street and trading booth. From the harbor was heard the singing of the sailors, and busy sailboats were bringing wares into the city or out to the ships. On the streets one might meet more or less respectable philosophers and fakirs and religious soldiers of fortune from the East and from Egypt; all of which gentry took things lazily and put on a wise air to delude people into the belief that they could search out all things in Heaven and earth. There were also in the city many Jews who by thrift had grown rich; and so they had here a large and imposing synagogue.

To this city came, then, Paul with Silas; and as he

had no friends here, and did not wish to be a burden on any one, he at once looked about him to find work, probably no difficult matter. But though he labored with his hands this was not his main business. He was there to preach the glad tidings of grace; and so it is not to be wondered at that he often found it hard to live, and that he was "in all things instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." During his first weeks in Thessalonica he was generally in need; and so the help sent him from time to time by his dear Church in Philippi must have been most welcome.

On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue and found there a large concourse of people; many Jews and not a few Greek proselytes, and even some members of the city's aristocracy, particularly certain rich Greek women. As a visiting rabbi he was asked to speak; and he began to explain the old prophecies concerning God's suffering Servant, and pointed out how all this had been fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that Jesus therefore was the promised Messiah. "This Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

This sermon by Paul made a deep impression on the hearers, and many became his adherents. Three successive Sabbath days Paul preached in the synagogue and won many converts; nor was he idle during the other days of the week. It looked quite promising. Some months later the apostle wrote to them: "Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God." He reminds them also how gentle he was among them, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children"; and how he comforted and admonished them "every one of you, as a father doth his children." So dili-



gently did he guard and nurture them. He loved them so well that for them he would willingly have given even his life.

In this way Paul labored for a month or so; then his work was again suddenly interrupted. As so often before, it was the Jews who were filled with hatred and took to persecuting him in every way possible. When the rulers of the synagogue saw that this stranger was robbing them of many of their adherents, they became bitterly envious. They felt that they would never fully recover from the blow given them through the preaching of Paul. But it was not an easy matter to harm him; for at this time there was a strong anti-Jewish feeling in these parts of the Roman Empire. Jews were regarded with suspicion, and several times there had been published imperial edicts against them. So it was necessary for them to be very careful as to what they did.

However, the spirit of hatred is inventive. There were in the city a number of "lewd fellows of the baser sort," who had nothing to do, and were ready for anything. The rulers of the synagogue persuaded this mob that Paul was a dangerous traitor seeking to stir up the people against the emperor, in order to proclaim one Jesus as their king. If the Jews could make Paul out to be a scheming political agitator it would then be easy for them to put him down. They were able to bring about a riot, and incited the wild mob to assault the house of Jason, with whom Paul had his home, with the purpose of dragging him out and bringing him to trial. But on reaching the house they found that Paul was not there. He must have been warned and have taken refuge in some other place. Not finding Paul, the mob took Jason and some others and carried them before the rulers of the city. But these seem to have known Jason and the others

as reputable citizens, and were not to be moved by the noisy mob. So the matter came to nothing; Jason and the others were set free.

Paul and the others Christians made no mistake as to what was doing; and they knew that the Jews would not rest content with this first attempt against them. So it seemed best to let the apostle go away until quiet and good order were restored. Naturally, it went against the grain with the apostle now to leave the new Congregation, which for some time would need his wise guidance; but there seemed no other way out of the difficulty.

Paul and Silas then went to the little city of Berea. From this place it was Paul's intention to go back to Thessalonica. Several times he was on the point of going; but Satan, the enemy of God's Kingdom, prevented it (1 Thess. 2:18). While in Berea, Paul labored as a missionary; and the Jews treated him much better here than in Thessalonica. Many Jews and Greeks, even some people of wealth and position, accepted the faith. But the distance between Berea and Thessalonica was not great; and the Jews in this city soon discovered where Paul had taken refuge. They followed him, and were able again to stir up the people against him; so that conditions in Berea also soon became intolerable.

In spite of it all, Paul had succeeded in founding three Churches in Macedonia; and of these there were born other Churches in the surrounding districts. Paul did not want to leave these young Congregations without leadership; so he left his three companions here to continue the work, and went alone to Athens.

He probably went to Athens by water; and thus he came to the great cultural center of the ancient world.

Greece is the Norway of southern Europe, with deep fjords, snow-capped mountains, rushing torrents, dark

forests, smiling valleys and the blue sea. Over it are the bright southern skies, and the country is not one of lowering darkness like the "land of eternal snow." Here in Greece dwelt the most wide-awake and talented of the ancient peoples; here was the home of the most profound thinkers and foremost artists; and all these flourished most luxuriantly in Athens. At the time of Paul, however, there was but little left of the former physical and intellectual strength of the Greeks. They were now an effeminate, idle and cowardly generation, who laid claim to admiration because their fathers had been great. Athens itself was now important only as an educational center, the city living off the many students and tourists. But it still was of imposing appearance, with many grand buildings bearing witness to its former greatness.

The apostle made use of his time in Athens to look about him (Acts 17:23); and the sight of all this luxury must have been confusing. The many grand temples must have especially impressed him; and there were numerous theaters, baths, statues and the like, everything being rich and in good taste. On every hand were fine works of art. The most beautiful place of all was the Acropolis, a hill which could be seen from all parts of the city. Through a fine peristyle one entered the open square of the Acropolis itself with many statues of gods hewn in marble, and among them the great statue, 50 feet high, of Pallas Athene, the patron goddess of the city. On the very top of the hill stood the most wonderful of the ancient temples, the famous Parthenon, with its 98 marble columns, and profusely ornamented with the greatest works of the world's greatest sculptors. The deepest impression was made on Paul by the many altars, and most particularly by the altar with the inscription: "To the unknown God." In all these things he saw

humanity's yearning toward God, whom the Greeks thought to find in the worship of the beautiful. But herein he saw also the proof that the Greeks in spite of all their wisdom lived in the "times of ignorance." For they themselves admitted that in the highest question of all, that concerning God, they were groping in the dark.

There was much also which must have stirred the ire of the apostle. He could see well enough that all this show of elegance covered much inner corruption. Heathenism was heathenism, no matter how beautifully clothed, and in the eyes of the Jew all images of idols were an abomination. And then, the frivolous and often licentious life of the Greeks filled him with disgust, and he despised the intellectual and spiritual child's play of the vain philosophers with all their pretended wisdom.

In Athens also were some Jews; and Paul, as a matter of course, visited their synagogue. He intended to wait there for Silas and Timothy, who were soon to join him. But they did not come as soon as expected; and of course Paul could not remain idle. So he went to the common meeting-place in the market. In the corridors on either side it was the habit of philosophers and rhetoricians to hold forth to their pupils, and to this place all people came to hear the news of the day. So here was a great chance to meet people and talk with them; and to this place the apostle found his way.

Something of a sensation was created by this Jewish rabbi who had the courage to address this learned concourse, and he became the center of a number of inquisitive persons. For the Athenians were fond of hearing and telling new things. The attention of certain teachers—Épicureans and Stoics—was attracted to Paul, and they tried to engage him in a debate; for

these old and experienced masters in the arts of sophistry imagined that it would be an easy matter to drive this Jew to the wall. Others assumed an air of superiority and said that they really could not trouble themselves about this babbler. Others, again, found the discussion quite interesting, especially when they understood it to be concerned with some new sort of religion. They no longer believed in the old gods; and though they cared but little for religion in general, it might be of some interest to hear news of what was doing along that line also.

So they asked Paul to go with them to the Areopagus and there give a lecture; and this the apostle was willing to do. From his high and open place there was a fine view over the city, the Acropolis and the harbor. Thus it was a grand panorama which the apostle had before him when he demanded silence and then made his famous speech, the gist of which is recorded in the 17th chapter of Acts. We see how the view before his eyes influenced his speech, until he worked his way around to that which to him was the essential thing: The many fine temples and altars scattered throughout the city showed that the Greeks wished to worship some divinity; but they also were an admission that the Greeks did not know the one true God. And it was this one and only true God whom Paul declared to them. Then he pointed out to them the want of good sense in their idolatrous worship; for God that made Heaven and earth surely can not dwell in a temple made with hands, no matter how beautiful it may be. Neither could the true God be like the gods of the heathen; for these thought that each people must have its own private gods. No, the true God has created all men equal, and appointed all things for them, to the end that they might seek Him; and He is equally near to us all, for in Him we live and move

and have our being. One of the Greek poets seemed to have felt this when he wrote the notable words: "For we are also His offspring." But if it be the living human beings who are God's offspring, created in his image, it must be meaningless to shape a statue of Him and imagine that this is His true image. Such devices are merely signs of man's foolishness and ignorance; which God in His patience has winked at, but now He commands all men to repent. For they must know that death does not end all; there will be a day of reckoning, when all shall be judged, the quick and the dead. And this judgment shall be executed by that Man, whom God sent to the world; who lived and died, but was raised again from death and the grave. Thus shall life gain the victory over death.

In substance, the above was Paul's sermon, but it was not well received. Some laughed, others mocked; and some seemed to be amused by this new idea of a resurrection from the dead, and they asked Paul to give them another speech on this subject.

It may have been this experience more than any other which caused the apostle to write: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."— Yet the stay of Paul in Athens bore some fruit. There was founded a small Congregation; and as one of its members there is made mention of a certain high judge named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris.

Before leaving Athens, Paul was visited by Timothy, who brought news from the Churches in Macedonia. But Paul thought it best to send Timothy back to Thessalonica, while he himself went alone to Corinth.

In all probability he went by water and found it a

delightful voyage. The bay which cuts into the east coast was studded with many beautiful islands fringed with fine forests; and many ships, large and small, were plying to and fro among the islands, either under sail or propelled by oars, the whole presenting a most pleasant scene. Coming from the east one would land at the port of Cencrea. From this place to Corinth was a walk of an hour and a half, and the scene was as lively as that on the water. The road fairly swarmed with people in vehicles or on foot, and great quantities of wares were on this road carried to and from the city. There were fine villas with well-kept gardens, and fruit-trees and vineyards covered the sunny slopes. By this road was the famous athletic field, where the young men of Greece held their contests and exhibited their feats of strength and skill; and to be victor in these contests was the greatest of honors. It is probable that the apostle during his long stay in Corinth saw some of these athletic meets; at any rate he uses in his letters many illustrations showing that he was familiar with these sports.

Corinth was built on a narrow neck of land; and it was only a matter of half an hour to go from the city down to the harbor at the nearest point on the deep arm of the sea reaching into the land from the west. This was the main highway of trade and travel from and to Italy and the western parts of the Roman Empire, for since the voyage along the south coast of Greece was very treacherous, nearly all traffic between the East and the West was carried on by way of Corinth. This made the city one of the leading industrial and trade centers in the Roman Empire. By reason of its situation the city also became an important political center. Thus Corinth was a world metropolis having, it is estimated, about 750,000 people; of whom, however, 500,000 were slaves.

The city had great wealth; and with this followed its usual companion, abject poverty and misery. The city was infamous throughout the world for its immorality. The life of Corinth was marked by all the licentiousness and unspeakable nastiness of rich and over-refined heathenism; even in the temple of Venus the most shameless orgies were indulged in under the mask of religious worship. Vice and lust ran rampant. This lowest depth of degradation is painted in darkest colors by Paul in the 1st chapter of his letter to the Romans. We see here the fruits of heathenism, despite all its arts and culture; these have no power to save a man from moral ruin. The apostle had, therefore, no admiration to waste on the puffed-up scholars and sages whom he met in Greece;—to him it was all foolishness.

The sight of life in Corinth must have been terribly depressing to one whose heart was filled with the love of Christ. But the apostle knew also that the Word of the cross was mighty to lift even the godless Corinth up out of the pit; and he saw that here if anywhere it was necessary to let the light shine through the darkness.

Paul determined to make a quite long stay in Corinth; so he at once looked about him for work, which he easily found. He was employed by a Jew named Aquila. This man was born in Pontus, but had become a resident of Rome; from which city he had been expelled, as Claudius, the emperor, after some riots had ordered all Jews to leave the city. Aquila then with his wife Priscilla removed to Corinth, where he worked at his trade as tentmaker. He and Paul soon became close friends. Aquila and Priscilla offered Paul a home with them; and the three of them contracted a most profitable friendship, which lasted through life.



On the Sabbath they went together to the synagogue; and there they found also a number of Greeks who in terror had shaken off their former licentious habits, and had joined the Jews, with their strict ideas of morality. As usual, Paul was invited to speak; and, of course, he was glad to do it. The first times he seems to have spoken of the prophetic promises and visions, without direct reference to Jesus as the One in whom the promises were fulfilled. He thus sought to prepare the ground. Some weeks later, when Silas and Timothy had come to him with cheering news from Macedonia, Paul began to testify that Jesus was the Messiah.

The usual results followed: Many became Paul's bitter enemies, and the Congregation of the synagogue was disrupted. He was not even allowed to finish his sermon; for the leaders drowned his voice with mocking and blasphemy.

Thus the apostle saw that the Jews were at all places the same; and he determined to break with the synagogue for all time. So according to the eastern custom he shook his raiment and said: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

But though the synagogue was closed to them the Christians found another place of meeting. The Jews saw with bitter resentment that a certain resident Roman named Justus, a former proselyte, whose home was close to the synagogue, opened his house to the Christians; and it exasperated them also to see that great numbers came to hear Paul in the house of Justus, while the Jewish synagogue was all but empty. Now, the two houses were so near each other that the Jews in the synagogue could hear the Christians singing their songs of praise and rejoicing over the glad tidings. At this even Crispus, the chief ruler of the

synagogue, turned his back on the Jews and joined the Christian Congregation.

The Church was all the time receiving new members through Baptism; among them even some high government officials, often whole families. But a majority of the converts were common, plain people, some of them slaves.

Paul understood well enough that the Jews were brooding on some evil purpose; but for the time being they dared not do anything to excite race hatred. They had not forgotten their recent expulsion from Rome. So Paul was able to work for a long time in peace.

At this time he sent his two letters to the Church in Thessalonica, the one following closely on the other. The reports brought from this place by Timothy were most encouraging; the Thessalonians held fast the Gospel and remained faithful to the apostle, and the spiritual gifts flourished among them. But of course there were many dangers, and the young Church needed admonition. The Jews tried in every way to undermine it. The Church was made up of new converts; and most of them had but recently left their heathenism with its many vices, and thus they were subject to many temptations. Only a few Jews had been won for the Gospel. Nor had these Christians as yet received the thorough instruction which they needed; and so many of them naturally became fanatics. Some of them expected the coming of the Lord, and would not work, and some were troubled in their minds because certain members of the Church had died; they had thought that all were to live till the Lord came again. Thus they needed guidance; and this Paul gave them in the two letters, which must to them have been a great blessing.

Paul worked in Corinth 18 months without inter-

ruption; but then he could see that there were dangerous and anxious times ahead of him. Thus he wrote to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:1-2): "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." The Lord remembered his servant and strengthened him by a vision at night, saying: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." This thought must have been a great comfort to the apostle: "The Lord is with me."

Then the storm broke. The Jews seized Paul and brought him before the deputy of Achaia, one Gallio, a brother of the famous philosopher Seneca. Gallio was a highly cultured and liberal man, and much esteemed in the province. When the Jews came to him and began to make complaint against Paul on the ground that he persuaded people to worship God contrary to the law, Gallio merely laughed at them. He cared nothing about the private quarrels of the fanatical Jews. So he dismissed the case at once, refusing to hear either the complaint or the defense. And when the Jews were somewhat slow in leaving the court, he ordered his people to drive the mob away. Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, had been the spokesman of the complainants. When he began to protest against such treatment, the servants of Gallio gave him a merciless flogging, to the great delight of the Greeks present, who were grateful to Gallio for giving them this free entertainment. Thus the apostle was set free, and the Jews did not dare molest him. So he was able to continue his work without interruption for another six months or more.

Paul had done a great work during these two years.

With his own hands he had earned his living, so he did not become a burden to anybody; and when the days proved too short for doing the work of both a missionary and a tentmaker, he worked at night also. But his great exploit here is that he founded and guided a Congregation under such crushing difficulties. It took much tact and patience and wisdom to weld together these many unlike elements: Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, rich and poor, men and women. And they lived under difficult conditions. All were new converts; and most of them had lived as pagans, and were thus in greater or lesser degree poisoned by the pagan vices. They had, also, many friends who still were pagans; and they could not avoid associating with these, and were thus led into many temptations and difficulties. So the apostle had a busy time, teaching them to believe in Christ and to lead a Christian life.

It would seem from 1 Cor. 16:2, and Acts 20:7, that Paul here in Corinth began to use Sunday as the day of public worship for the Christian Churches; and adopted a certain form of service that the Church worship might be conducted in good order.

After the lapse of about two years, then, Paul made ready to leave Corinth. There were other places, also, which needed the Gospel; and he had in mind especially the world capital, Rome. In those days terrible stories were told of the life led at the court of the emperor. The empress Messalina was so shamelessly profligate that it caused disgust even among the heathen. Emperor Claudius was a contemptible weakling ruled by the whims of the loose women with whom he surrounded himself. At last he was assassinated, and the unspeakable Nero came to the throne. The Christians foresaw troublous times; it seemed to them as if the end of time were near. It was therefore the more ne-

cessary to bring the Gospel at once to the peoples of the world.

But first Paul must make a visit to his old home. There was a district which had been neglected, namely, the west coast of Asia Minor; and he wanted to preach the Gospel here also, before he could think of going to Italy.

This time Paul had with him a pretty large company. Aquila and Priscilla went with him, as well as Silas and Timothy. A few weeks before Easter they went down to Cenchrea, from which place they were to sail. It was the finest season of the year, with everything clad in the gay colors of spring. A numerous company went with the apostle the short road down to the harbor, there to bid him farewell; and they were filled with sadness when they saw him depart.

Paul and his companions sailed, then, to Ephesus. He did not plan to begin any missionary work in the city at this time; he merely wanted to acquaint himself with the situation. He spent a Sabbath in the city, however, and used the opportunity to preach in the synagogue. His preaching was well received; and the people asked him to stay for a time with them. But this he could not do, as he wanted to celebrate Easter in Jerusalem. So he at once took ship again and went to Caesarea, and then on to Antioch, from which place he now had been absent four years. This was the end of his second great missionary expedition, embracing the time between the years 51 and 55.

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## VIII. Going Over the Top.

*"I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. . . . So that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Romans 15: 16-20).*

The apostle did not allow himself a long rest at home. He wished merely to see how things had developed during his absence. And when he saw that all was well he could stay no longer; for now the mission work was to begin in Ephesus and along the west coast of Asia Minor. Then from Ephesus it would be easier for him than from any other place to keep an eye on the new mission fields in Macedonia and Greece; for Ephesus was almost the exact center of his whole field of operations.

This time also he went by way of the Churches in Galatia and Phrygia, in order to confirm them in the truth. For he knew that the Judaists had begun again to bestir themselves; and there was no telling what they might take into their heads to do. Having visited these Churches, he went on and came to the west coast of Asia Minor.

In these districts were a number of Greeks who had been there for generations, and who in every line of endeavor were competitors of their former compatriots. The most important city on the coast was Ephesus, the capital of the province, and a mighty center of trade and industry. Life in this city was much like that in the other great marts of trade at that time. But

Ephesus was also a center of learning, and in this respect held the leading position in all Asia Minor. Science, art and practical business enterprise here went hand in hand.

To begin mission work in this city was a pretty bold undertaking. For Ephesus was also one of the centers of heathenism. Here flourished the worship of Diana, in a wonderful temple so vast and beautiful that it was famous throughout the world as one of the Seven great Wonders. The temple owned enormous wealth, as great numbers of people came to it from far and near; and the corrupt priests piled up money and encouraged people in the most abandoned indecency.

Together with this idolatry and profligacy flourished all manner of superstition: Sorcerers and soothsayers sold charms and amulets and lived on the fat of the land, while astrologists read fortunes in the stars.

The handicrafts also flourished, especially the art of the goldsmith. Miniature copies of the temple in gold and silver were sold in great numbers to the countless visitors who were in the city to see this temple.

Of course, there were all sorts of amusements. There were great theaters, with play-acting, dances, athletic contests, and fights between beasts and gladiators. Here oriental luxury, the pride of life, the lusts of the flesh, gluttony, art, science, trade and industry dwelt together and thrived; and people drank the cup of pleasure to the dregs.

It was a bold step which the apostle took when he began the fight against ungodliness in a place such as this, and many would have thought it absolutely hopeless. But he had faith in the Lord, and decided to take up the work right here, and was prepared to stay here longer than in any other place. And this was a direct declaration of war on heathenism. Ephesus was one of its strongholds which he was determined to capture.

Naturally, then, the heathen here became his most bitter enemies.

It seems to have been the autumn of the year 55 when Paul came back to Ephesus after visiting the inland districts of Asia Minor; and so it was something like half a year since he had stopped there a day or two on his way from Corinth to Antioch and Jerusalem. Aquila and Priscilla, who had remained in Ephesus, had not made the mission work their business. Still they had won an Alexandrian Jew named Apollos for the cause of Christ. He was an adherent of the disciples of John the Baptist, had in Alexandria received a thorough education, and was noted as a most eloquent orator. Apollos had come to Ephesus while Paul was in Palestine and Syria, and he had taught in the synagogue. All seemed to think well of the young orator; and Aquila became interested in him, and instructed him in the Gospel. The result was that Apollos became a Christian. When soon after he went to Corinth he had with him letters of recommendation, and was therefore well received by the Church in that city.

When Paul now came to Ephesus he, of course, made his home with Aquila and Priscilla, and began at once to preach in the synagogue. Nor was it long before his preaching bore fruit. The first converts were about a dozen of the former disciples of John. For three months Paul was allowed to preach in peace; then the cordial relation with the Jews was broken off. Here also the unbelieving Jews were angered because so many people came to hear Paul; and they began secretly to speak ill of his teaching. Thereupon Paul with his disciples left the synagogue; and the new Christian Congregation hired a large school-room in the house of one Tyranus. There Paul preached for more than two years.

His preaching created a great sensation, so that more



and more people came to hear him. Many even of those who were strangers in the city visited the school-room in order to hear the apostle, and through them his fame spread over all the western part of Asia Minor.

The movement all the time gained headway, and a number of Congregations were founded in the surrounding districts. Paul needed several new assistants. We know that Timothy was with him, and likewise Erastus of Corinth, and Gaius and Aristarchus of Macedonia, and no doubt others also. And with these he took counsel in matters of special importance. -

Truly these were great results of the work of one man. His activity had embraced all the country from Antioch in Syria westward through Asia Minor, and through Macedonia and Greece; and Churches had grown up everywhere in his footsteps. The Word of God prospered mightily, spring had come to these arid regions, and now the vineyard of the Lord was seen in bloom on every hand. High honors had been won by the great Captain of the Christian Church, who waged war against heathendom, and victories were reported from all battle-fronts.

Paul also performed a number of miracles, and these, of course, added to his fame. Prone to superstition as these people were, they tried to possess themselves of some article belonging to the apostle, thinking by them to cure disease; and sorcerers, who saw what Paul could do, tried to steal the secret from him. Especially was this true of seven vagabond Jewish exorcists, all sons of the high priest Sceva. They had noticed that when Paul performed a miracle he always mentioned the name Jesus. They assumed therefore that this name had some secret power, and they took to using it; but their attempt to drive out evil spirits by this name brought only punishment and shame on them.

The conduct of Paul caused people to discard their old faith in sorcery. They now saw that it was a swindle; and they lost faith in the sorcerers and their charms and formulas. Books dealing with these curious superstitions were one day publicly burned; "and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

So mightily grew the Word of God, and the future seemed full of promise. But then came trouble, and it went from bad to worse.

The Judaists in Jerusalem saw with envy and anger how the Gentiles in great numbers joined the Pauline Churches. The Jews now were but a little handful compared with the Gentile Christians, and had no sort of authority over these. Paul had usurped all power; the thing must be stopped.

Of course the Judaists could not hope to do anything in Ephesus, where Paul himself was present. They knew from old experience that they would fail. So they looked for another place in which to work mischief, and they found it among the volatile and easily moved Galatians.

Among them they began, then, a persistent attempt to undermine Paul and his work, and to draw the people away from him. They cared nothing about the resolutions adopted by the conference at Jerusalem, to the effect that Paul was to have a free hand in his mission field, and that his people were not to be compelled to observe the precepts of the Jewish Law. For these resolutions had tied the hands of the Judaists; and they knew very well that the victory of Paul's Gospel would mean the utter ruin of the hopes and plans of the Judaists.

They began, then, their work of mischief, and put on an air of authority in order to impress the credulous Galatians. They told them that the promises had been

made to Abraham and his children; and if the Galatians wanted to share the blessings they must become Jews by adoption through the rite of Circumcision, and keep the ordinances which God had given to Israel; for there could be only one way of salvation.—But in order to win the Galatians the Jews must undermine the authority of Paul, and they tried every means to that end. They made diligent use of every sort of falsehood and vituperation. And these were good weapons, unfortunately. The Galatians began to doubt their own Christianity; and the Judaists had already persuaded them to observe the Jewish rules concerning sacred seasons and the like.

How long the Judaists carried on this work among the Galatian Churches before Paul heard of it, we do not know. When he did hear of it he was filled with pain and grief; and it was in hopes of stopping this dangerous movement that he wrote his strong letter to the Galatians; a letter which gives us a wonderfully vivid picture of Paul's own inner life and of his preaching.

First he assures his beloved Churches that the charges made by the Judaists against his personal character were false; he was as truly as any of the others an apostle of the Lord. Then he shows them the deep difference between his teaching and that of the Judaists; and he refutes their doctrines in detail by the words of Scripture. His thoughts follow the straight course, and he sets forth in a way not to be misunderstood the great fundamental truths; so that the readers must see that there is only one Gospel, namely, the one which they had heard from Paul. And in every line of his letter we see that the motive power behind it is his fervent love of the Savior, together with warm charity for the erring brethren. It is this which makes the letters of Paul so fascinating. We feel the beat of his great

heart in every sentence; and we understand the strong purpose in all his work to draw as many as possible to the Savior, in whom he has his being; and the power of his words over the minds of men.

It was not only among the Galatians that the enemy made mischief; they were looking for other places in which to do the same thing. Corinth especially seemed a promising place to them. There the Congregation was in many ways working under great difficulties, and it would not take much to cause the building to topple over.

Just before Paul came to Ephesus the youthful and enthusiastic Apollos had gone to Corinth, and the Corinthian Christians asked him to preach to them. It was soon noticed that he did not follow Paul's method of preaching. His doctrine did not conflict with the Gospel according to Paul; but the young Alexandrian knew how to present the Gospel in a form more acceptable to the cultured Greeks. They understood the arts of oratory too well to take kindly to Paul's blunt and direct manner of preaching the plain truth. Apollos seems to have had all that cunning of speech for which Alexandria was famous, and to have given his preaching a certain philosophical color. Probably he presented the Gospel as a divine wisdom, which was a mystery not to be understood by any but the initiated; and thus he, unintentionally no doubt, promoted an unhealthy spirit of arrogance. He in no way intended to injure Paul's work, or to draw the hearts away from him; and there never was any quarrel between Apollos and Paul. But this did not prevent many from becoming partisans of Apollos, holding him to be better worth hearing; while others found that the preaching of Paul was better after all.

Here was a chance for the Judaists to fish in troubled waters, and they did not long neglect it. In Corinth

they did not begin with the demand that the Gentile Christians should be circumcised. Such a demand would have done them no good. The circumstances rather invited an attack on the character of the apostle, and they circulated all sorts of bad rumors about him. If they could destroy the confidence in Paul, the rest of their work would be easy. To ingratiate themselves with the people they pretended to be adherents of the apostle Peter. Him they lifted to the skies, while they slandered Paul. Thus there came to be a Peter-party; making three parties, that of Paul, that of Apollos and that of Peter.

To these seems to have been added a fourth party calling itself that of Christ. They would have neither Paul nor Apollos nor Peter as their leader; for these were but men. No, they wanted no leader but Christ. This was a party of people who prided themselves on being more pious and spiritual than the other Christians.

As yet the Church had not been disrupted, but such contentions must in the end lead to a division. Such personal man-worship is fraught with many dangers to the Congregation.

But this was not all. Unfortunately it was brought out that the Congregation was deeply infected with moral corruption. The Greeks were a frivolous people, prone especially to sexual delinquency. Here was the sad spectacle a Christian Church some of whose members fell a prey to the lusts of the flesh. One member was even guilty of the crime of incest. At the love-feasts of the Congregation it had happened that people were drunk; and even the diverse spiritual gifts had caused unseemly wrangling.

Thus the Church at Corinth was in a sorry plight. These sad reports were brought to the apostle by those of the household of Chloe, who came from Corinth to Ephesus. Paul received also a letter from the Church

at Corinth concerning certain practical matters, as to which there was a difference of opinion: Should a Christian marry? Should a Christian who was married to an unbeliever seek a divorce? Had Christians the right to eat meat which had been offered to the idols? How were the diverse spiritual gifts to be regarded? And other such questions. And, besides, they thought that Paul had been unduly severe in a letter to them (1 Cor. 5:9). They submitted that if they must obey his demands they must break with the whole world.

Much wisdom and the love of Christ were needed to restore peace and discipline to this sadly disorganized Church. To Paul it was the more difficult, since so many had tried to undermine his authority. Besides, where party spirit runs high all are usually disposed to think themselves wiser than the others.

These were sad reports received by the apostle; and it was to set these misguided people right that he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians.

After a stay of nearly two and a half years in Ephesus Paul felt that it was time to leave. He wished to visit Rome; but before going he wanted to collect some money in his Churches for the benefit of the poor in Jerusalem. Besides, he also wished to visit Macedonia and Greece, and especially Corinth, to see how his people were getting on.

To prepare for the "drive" for money he sent on before him his treasurer Erastus, and Timothy; he himself intending soon to follow them. But just before he was to say farewell to his dear Congregation in Ephesus there was made a wholly unexpected attack on him, which came near costing him his life.

All who in one way or another lived off the worship of Diana in Ephesus had noticed with anger how faith in this goddess was gradually dying out, and many of them found it hard to live. This was true not only

of the sorcerers and similar confidence men, but also of many artisans. Especially did the goldsmiths suffer loss, as the demand for their miniatures of the temple decreased; and it was Paul's fault, of course. So there was much bitterness toward him among these people, and the goldsmith Demetrius made himself the leader of the malcontents. One day he called a mass-meeting and delivered a cunning speech. He reminded the goldsmiths that they might soon close their shops, if Paul had his way; and what was still worse, that people were losing their reverence for the goddess; and were she dethroned it would mean the speedy ruin of the city. Thus cunningly was this Demetrius able to appeal to the self-interest of his hearers, and he excited the fanaticism of the mob; and when he closed his speech they howled: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The uproar grew worse and worse, and at last the howling mob started for the theater. On the way they fell in with Paul's co-workers Gaius and Aristarchus and took these men with them. Paul must have heard the uproar and learned that his two friends were in the hands of the mob.—Paul was never a timid man, and so now he wanted to go out and talk to the people. He was not afraid to risk his life. Some Christians begged him not to put himself in the power of the fickle populace, but he would not listen to them. However, when the city officials, who were friendly to the apostle, begged him to keep away from the theater, he consented. For he then knew that everything possible would be done to save his two friends from mob violence.

The great theater, with room for 50,000 persons, was at once packed by a noisy mob, acting like Bedlam let loose; and many of them did not know what it was all about. They kept up the din for fully two hours.

The officials let them howl; knowing that when they

tired of this they would have cooled off so that one might speak to them. So, when the noise ceased the town clerk took the floor, and commanded silence, and made a very adroit speech: It was, he said, well known to all men that Ephesus was guardian of the great goddess Diana and of the image which fell down from Jupiter; therefore there was no occasion for this uproar. Besides, the two men were peaceable citizens and entirely harmless. If Demetrius, then, had any just quarrel with any, he could make formal complaint and have the case tried according to law. They must bear in mind also that rioting was a very dangerous matter; if this affair came to the ears of the governor the city might be held responsible, and made to pay dearly for the amusement.—This speech cooled the ardor of the noisy rioters; they were ashamed and beat a hasty retreat.

The apostle and his companions were thus saved by the wise intervention of the authorities. Shortly after these events the apostle took leave of the Congregation in Ephesus. What route he followed is somewhat uncertain. But it seems not improbable that he first made a flying trip to Corinth to study conditions at that place. What he saw would seem to indicate that his admonitions had done but little good. So with a heavy heart he left them again, and crossed over to Asia Minor, and visited some of the Churches there, and stopped for a time in Troas. From this place he sent a letter to the Church in Corinth "out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (2 Cor. 2:4). He admonished and begged them to return to the right paths, in order that the Church might not be laid waste.

The apostle waited anxiously for the return of Titus with news from Corinth; but as Titus seemed to be slow



in coming, Paul went on to Macedonia, where he visited his beloved Congregation in Philippi and also those in Thessalonica and Berea.

While staying in Macedonia he at last received the anxiously expected report from Corinth. Timothy, who had been all this time in Corinth, presented himself before the apostle; and with him Titus, who had but recently gone to Corinth, possibly with the above-mentioned letter. The reports which these men brought cheered the apostle. Conditions in the Church were much improved; and this caused the apostle to write the letter known to us as Second Corinthians, and tell them that now it would be a pleasure to him to visit them again. Still, everything was not as it should be; there was yet a faction, supported by the Judaists, who were traducing Paul in the most shameless way (2 Cor. 10: 7-13; 11: 5, 13-14). He wanted to stop the mouths of these slanderers, and thus regain his authority and good name in the Congregation. Besides, he wanted to encourage the Corinthians to begin again the collection of money for the poor in Jerusalem—a work which, owing to the confusion in the Church, had been neglected.

It is probable that from Macedonia the apostle went to Illyria and there did some mission work (Romans 15: 19), and then returned to Macedonia; after which he went to Corinth, which city he now visited for the third time. This time he made his home with Gaius and made a stay of three months (Romans 16: 23). This visit in Corinth greatly comforted the apostle. The clouds had rolled by, and there was now peace in the Church. The offenses against decency had been done away with, and there were no warring factions. None rejoiced over this more than did the apostle; and no doubt he more than once thanked the Lord for the happy outcome of the matter.

In the soul of Paul there now ruled a quiet joy and peace. The Lord had done great things through him; the Gospel had now been preached from Syria to the Adriatic; and there were numerous Congregations, in which the Word was preached and the Sacraments administered to the assembled Christians. There had been stormy times, and for a long time it had looked dark in Galatia and Corinth; but now this was a thing of the past; the attacks of the Judaists had been repelled.

It was during these days of peace and joy that the apostle wrote his wonderful letter to the Romans. The sun was sinking; but before going down it poured its warm rays over the fearless soldier of Christ, and breathed into his heart the peace and gladness which are a foretaste of the joys of Heaven. He understood, however, that this could not last long. Dark clouds began to appear in the east. He did not know exactly what they might portend, but they looked threatening.—Still it was his hope and prayer that he might live to see Rome and Spain (Romans 15:19). It is concerning this that he wishes in advance to inform the Church in the capital of the mighty Empire.

How the Church at Rome came to be founded we do not know; but it seems to have been done by persons coming from Congregations organized by Paul.

There are in the letter but few allusions to conditions in Rome; for this Epistle is in its grand universality lifted high above the plane of mere history. It gives a sublime summary of the Gospel, and shows the apostle's deep understanding of God's wonderful providence; and how the Gospel is a power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, to the Jew first, and to the Gentile. All are equally great sinners before God, and are therefore in equal need of God's mercy. And God has had mercy upon all; "therefore 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." In the faith in Christ all men have righteousness and peace, the source of a holy life and of victory over all enemies.

After three months in Corinth the stay came to an end. The moneys collected for the poor in Jerusalem Paul wanted to bring them in person before going on to Rome. The parting from the friends in Corinth was a sad one, especially for Paul; for he knew that there were great troubles ahead of him. The hatred of the Judaists had not become less bitter by their being put out of the Churches. Now they were seeking Paul's life. He knew but too well the enmity of the Jews in Palestine, and that he was never safe from assassination. The anxieties of the apostle are vividly pictured in these words to the Christians in Rome: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints" (Romans 15:30-31).

In order to escape his Jewish enemies Paul changed his route and went by way of Macedonia. He spent Easter in his beloved Philippi, and then took ship over to Troas in Asia Minor. There were many who this time went with him over to Asia. On Sunday the Congregation at Philippi assembled for church services, including holy Communion, and the meeting lasted till late into the night.

The following day the apostle went over land to Assus, from which port his companions, who had gone on ahead, had engaged passage by ship. They sailed along the coast of Asia Minor and came to Miletus. He had summoned the elders from Ephesus to meet him there, as he did not have the time to visit their city.

On the shore near Miletus Paul met with the brethren of these parts to bid them the last farewell. It was as beautiful and touching a scene as can well be imagined. The apostle preached, and reminded his hearers of how he had, in humility and through many troubles, served the Lord; and now he was on his way to Jerusalem, being confident that this was God's will. He knows that it will be a hard journey. "Bonds and afflictions abide. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." Then he begged them to care for the flock which the Lord had committed to their care, and to guard against errors of doctrine, and not to forget their apostle and his admonitions. "And now I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

When he had said this he kneeled down and prayed with them all. But they all wept bitterly, and embraced Paul and kissed him; sorrowing most of all because he said that they should no more see his face. It was an impressive leave-taking.

Paul and his companions went on board, and the friends on shore watched the ship till it was beyond their view. The voyagers sailed along the shore to Coos, Rhodes and Patara; and there took another ship for Tyre, where it was to unload its cargo.

In Tyre they were obliged to stop a whole week; and it was a great comfort to the apostle that here, also, there was a Christian Congregation, which gave him a cordial reception. The brethren here strongly advised him not to go to Jerusalem. They were near enough to be well acquainted with the sentiment in this city. But Paul would not yield. So the whole Congregation, men, women and children, went with him out of the

city, "and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed. And when we had taken leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again" (Acts 21).

At Ptolemais, also, where the ship touched, they found a Christian Church; and then they came to Caesarea, the end of the voyage. We do not know whether or not the centurion Cornelius was still living. But it is on record that Paul lodged with the evangelist Philip, who had been one of the seven elders of the Church in Jerusalem. In the persecutions following the martyrdom of Stephen, this Philip had fled to Caesarea, where he settled as a missionary in the town and surrounding districts. Now the persecutor and the persecuted were become friends.

While the apostle had his home with Philip they were visited by an old acquaintance, the prophet Agabus from Jerusalem. He was in terror when he heard that Paul was on his way to Jerusalem; for Agabus had but now come from this city and knew exactly how matters stood. When Paul still was determined to go there, Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet to illustrate his meaning, and said: "Thus saith the Holy Ghost: So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." All who heard these words of Agabus were much afraid, and begged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. But he answered: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The prospect of torture and death did not frighten him. He knew that one might die cheerfully; but to go against the will of his Lord—that was something which he could not do. And if the Lord now wanted him to go to Jerusalem his life was in God's hand. The warm love of his friends made a deep impression on him;

while their grief and anxiety pained him more than did the thought of a violent death at the hand of an enemy. Not many could have resisted the entreaties of the friends. "But when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying: The will of the Lord be done."

So there was nothing to be done; so after some days the apostle and his traveling companions set out on their journey to the holy city of the Jews. Some of the friends from Caesarea went with them to secure them a lodging in the home of an acquaintance, an old Christian named Mnason of Cyprus.

At the time of Pentecost, in the year 59, the apostle came, then, to Jerusalem, thus ending what is usually counted as his third missionary expedition.

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## IX. In Prison.

*"If I have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me to them. I appeal unto Caesar" (Acts 25: 11).*

These were troublous times in Judaea, and particularly in Jerusalem. People were walking as on a volcano. A spirit of unrest was smoldering in the heart of the masses, and might at any moment break out in the devouring flames of revolution. The country was a Roman province, and was heavily oppressed; and the Roman officials, particularly the governors, harassed the people in every possible way. The ruler of the province at this time was Felix, a former slave, who had been able to climb the political ladder, a cruel and grasping man, who would stop at nothing to gain his ends. He had, as one of the Roman historians puts it, the power of a king and the soul of a slave.

The relation between the oppressed Jews and their masters had been far from friendly; but, of course, the situation grew worse under this man Felix. There had been a number of revolutionary factions, and to them was now added a new faction called the Sicarians. The name is derived from the word *sica*, which means a small dagger. These people were the Jewish anarchists, whose plan of campaign was to get rid of their opponents by the simple expedient of murdering them. They were a secret society, and the members carried the dagger under their clothes. They were guilty of many dastardly murders, and had generally managed to escape punishment. Sometimes they went about from place to place in bands, plundering, burning and killing. People could never feel that their lives were safe.

On top of all this misery came a number of quarrels between the high priests and the lesser clergy, and sometimes even these led to deeds of violence.

Religious fanaticism, internal dissensions, a lawless revolutionary spirit, and hatred of everything that was not Jewish—this was the Jerusalem to which Paul now came.

The reception accorded him was not marked by the good-will which he had a right to expect; coming as he did with a large sum of money for the poor, sent as a free gift from the members of his Gentile-Christian Churches. Some few there were who received him cordially; but he was soon to learn that the sentiment was unfriendly among the Jewish Christians as well as among those outside of the Congregation.

There were few who grasped the importance of the great work of his life; they did not understand his kingly idea: One holy, general, Christian Church. Neither did they understand, narrow and bigoted as they were, his persistent efforts to unite Jew and Gentile, and to maintain friendly relations between the Con-

gregation in Jerusalem and his missionary Churches, his nobility of character and his big heart. Besides, here was a good field for the Judaists; and they diligently cultivated it, in the Congregation and among the outsiders. They distorted what he said about the Jews and the Law, and they embellished his preaching with Judaistic comments; and thus the very success of his work had strengthened the opposition to him. A meeting was arranged, of course, at which Paul was to speak; and he related many instances to show how the work of God had prospered among the Gentiles. But his words fell flat; a majority of his hearers remained cold and held aloof from him. Some few there were who listened with interest to his reports, but the uncomfortable feeling remained nevertheless.

Naturally, under such circumstances there are certain spineless people who lean to both sides and want to cover up the trouble. These now came forward with a plan which they thought would smooth the rough places. They turned to Paul and said: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe: and they are zealous of the Law; and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it, therefore?—Then they explained to him how that great numbers would come together when it became generally known that he was in Jerusalem, and how difficult it would be for him to stand against them. So, as a way out of the difficulty, they had a proposition to make: There were four Christian men who had taken a vow to become Nazarenes. They were poor; and it was regarded as a good deed if some wealthy persons took it upon themselves to defray the expense of keeping such a vow. Now it was suggested that Paul might do this, and stay with



the four men for a week in the temple as a penitent, and thus show that he also obeyed the Jewish precepts and the Law. In other words, Paul was asked, for the sake of peace and out of consideration for the "zealous" ones, to place his neck under the yoke of the Law. These were trying times for the apostle. His soul was in torture; and there was no Peter present to save the situation. Now, what was Paul to do? Was he to rise against these people in defense of Christian liberty, and thus challenge the storm to begin? Or would it be better to yield and be a Jew among the Jews, in order, if possible, to win some of them? Could he with a good conscience do this? These questions caused him a hard fight with himself; and the upshot was, that for the sake of peace he decided to yield. But the storm was not to be thus turned aside.

The seven days of cleansing prescribed by the Law were almost ended, when the storm broke. A number of Jews were come from Asia Minor to Jerusalem as pilgrims to celebrate the feast of Pentecost; and they knew the apostle, and hated him most cordially; for none other had inflicted such wounds on them as he. Out in the provinces they could not attack him, but here they might do it with better hope of success. One day they saw the apostle in the company of an Ephesian Christian named Trophimus. And then they began to cry out that Paul, the seducer of the people, was guilty of sacrilege, as he had entered the temple, taking with him one of his heathen friends. This the mob understood to mean that Paul had taken the Greek into the holy place of the Jews—a crime punishable by death. The Jews went wild with fury. Their shouts filled all the place about the temple, where great numbers of people were assembled; and spread over the city, so that others came running from every direction to learn what was doing. When they were told that the sanctity of

the temple had been violated, all were mad with fanaticism:—this man must be put to death.

There was no difficulty in finding the apostle, who was undergoing the ceremony of purification in the temple. With shrieks and much noise he was dragged out of the temple; and now the Jews could give free reign to their hatred. In the temple itself they could not well kill him, for then they would have befouled the sanctuary with his blood.—When the furious mob had dragged him out into the open the gates of the temple were shut.

The mob had begun to beat him to death, when there were heard shouts and the loud blare of the war trumpet. The mob desisted for a moment; and then they saw a body of Roman soldiers, who came marching under arms to the scene of the rioting, and demanded to know what the trouble was. The Jews knew that even less than this might by the Romans be regarded as a revolt against lawful authority, and in those days there was no long distance to the gallows or the cross.

So the Jews drew back, and the life of the apostle had this time been saved by the Roman troops. In explanation of how the Romans came so promptly to the rescue, it may be mentioned that at the northwest corner of the temple, on a hill commanding the whole place, was the strong fortress Antonia. Here there was at all times a garrison of soldiers; and this was strengthened at the festal seasons, which brought such large numbers of Jews to Jerusalem. The guards who patrolled the walls kept a sharp eye on the doings around the temple, and some soldiers were always held in readiness to sally forth at once at the least sign of trouble.

When the soldiers reached Paul he was placed under arrest; and the captain ordered him put in chains, and asked the people who this man was, and what he had

done. But some cried one thing, some another; and the captain could make nothing of it.

The captain thought to himself that he had made an important capture; for he guessed that his prisoner was a certain Egyptian revolutionary leader, who had led 4,000 men out into the desert and had then disappeared. So the captain was greatly astonished when Paul spoke to him in the Greek tongue. Now he learnt that Paul was a Jew from Tarsus, and that he wished to speak to the people in his own defense.

The captain barely managed to bring the prisoner unscathed up to the castle; for the multitude pressed in on the soldiers, and shouted: Away with him; and they seemed determined to put him out of the way for good and all. The soldiers had to lift him up on their shoulders and carry him. At the stone stairs up to the castle the people were stopped, and the captain let Paul speak to them. While the soldiers held the people back, Paul took his stand on the stairs, and beckoned with his hand. This unexpected appearance of the sorely wounded man, who stepped forward to address them, cowed the vulgar mob. They held their peace, and he began to speak to them in the Hebrew language. He told them of his life from his childhood; of the time when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel; of his zeal for Judaism and his persecution of the Christians; and then how the Lord had stopped him on the way to Damascus; and how he had become a Christian, and in the temple itself had been called of the Lord to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Thus far they heard him without interruption; but when he said this about the Gentiles, the multitude again began shouting that he should be put to death. And then, according to the Jewish custom, when touched by great sorrow, they tore off their clothes and sprinkled themselves with dust.

The chief captain did not rightly know just what to do, but thought to learn more of the matter by causing Paul to be scourged. So he commanded one of his underlings to tie Paul to the whipping post and flog him. However, when they came to the whipping post before the castle, and were about to apply the torture, Paul called to the centurion standing by and asked him: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" This declaration by Paul of his Roman citizenship gave the centurion something like an electric shock. He at once reported to his superior officer, asking if they should scourge the prisoner though knowing him to be a Roman citizen. The chief captain was equally surprised, and asked Paul how he could be a Roman; this being a dignity which the captain himself had bought for a large sum of money. "But I," said Paul, "was born to it."

The captain then thought best to shift his course; and as he understood that the whole turmoil hinged on some religious question, he called together the sanhedrin, which had jurisdiction in all matters of religion.

The apostle was taken the short distance from the castle to the court-room. Now he stood in the place where the Savior Himself had stood before His accusers, and where later had stood Peter and John, Stephen and other champions of the faith. He probably knew also some members of the council, since the time when they had given him letters of authority to persecute the Christians. Now these same men were to be his judges; and he knew how bitterly they hated him. Had he not been under the protection of the Roman authorities, his life would not have been worth an hour's purchase. But he knew also that, in spite of his rights as a Roman, the sanhedrin had sufficient authority, so that they might have him thrown into prison; and if

he were in their power they would make short shift of him. This he must guard against.

Even now Paul knew no fear, and he boldly said to his judges: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

At this point his speech was cut short, as the high priest Ananias, whom Paul did not know, commanded one of the servants to smite him on the mouth. Then Paul lost his temper and hotly declared: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for thou sittest to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law." One of the men standing by called the attention of Paul to the impropriety of answering the high priest in that way; and Paul admitted his fault, explaining that he had not known the high priest; else he would not have used such unseemly words, for it is written: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

This little episode shows us how wide the difference is, after all, between the divine Master and his foremost servant. In this same place the Lord Himself had been smitten on the mouth, but He uttered no word of resentment or anger.

It was clear that the apostle could expect no fair treatment from these people, and to defend himself would be a mere waste of words. Under the circumstances it was fortunate that he knew some of the judges, and understood how easy it was to set them by the ears. So he cunningly intimated that he was being persecuted for his doctrine, in that he in common with the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. With this statement he had fired the mine. There at once ensued fierce wrangling between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, so that the council was broken up in disorder.

The Roman captain was astonished at this comedy;

and when the turmoil became too great he let his men take a hand in the matter, in order to protect the prisoner and take him back to the castle.

Paul was heavy of heart, as on the night following he tossed on his couch, unable to sleep. But the Lord remembered his faithful servant and revealed Himself to him, and strengthened him. The sorely tried man saw his Savior, who said to him: "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." These were truly words of cheer: His one greatest ambition, to testify in Rome of his Lord and Master, was after all to be realized.

Next day the members of the council were in no good humor. The pernicious Paul had been in their power; and they allowed themselves to be tricked into letting him escape. It certainly was exasperating. Nor were they the only ones to be angry. Some other Jewish fanatics, who had heard of the disastrous outcome of the trial before the sanhedrin, had formed a conspiracy, and had taken a solemn oath not to taste food or drink before they had put the apostle out of the way. There were about fifty of these conspirators, and they cunningly counseled the sanhedrin to demand a further investigation of the charges against Paul on the following day; and when Paul then was on his way between the castle and the place of trial the conspirators would see to it that he was put to death.

However, in spite of every effort to preserve their secret, news of the conspiracy leaked out; and among those who heard of it was a son of Paul's sister. He then at once went up to the castle and warned the apostle of the new danger threatening him. The apostle called one of the centurions and asked him to take the young man before the chief captain, for whom he had an important piece of news. The young man was

brought before the commandant, and told him what was in the wind; and the commandant did not doubt the truth of the story. He sent the young man away with a warning to say nothing of the matter, nor of his having been at the castle.

This chief captain was a wise and prudent man; and he knew the Jews. So he would not risk keeping the prisoner in the castle, but decided to send him away that same evening. He called the centurions and gave them orders to hold four companies of 100 men each in readiness for marching, together with 70 horsemen and a beast for the prisoner to ride, and to take Paul to Caesarea, to the governor Felix; and he gave them a letter to the governor with a full account of the charges against the prisoner.

So with an escort worthy of a king Paul left Jerusalem, which city he was never to see again. None who saw the pageant knew what it meant; and even if they had met one of the robber bands the guard of soldiers was strong enough to protect the prisoner. In the forenoon of the second day the party reached Antipatris; from which place the main body of soldiers returned to Jerusalem, while the horsemen went on with Paul to Caesarea and delivered him to the governor Felix. Thus were fulfilled the words of Agabus, saying that Paul was to be bound in Jerusalem and given into the hands of the Gentiles.

It was barely two weeks since the apostle, disregarding all warnings, went from this place to the holy city of the Jews; and now he was brought back as a Roman political prisoner, to be kept in Herod's palace, or the praetorium. And he surely did not then dream that he was to remain there for two long years.

When the sanhedrin, on the morning after Paul's being taken away, sent to the castle asking that he be again brought to trial, they learnt that their hated

adversary had escaped them. They were disappointed and angry, but were not disposed to give up the fight. They determined to send a delegation to the governor in Caesarea and try to secure possession of the prisoner. The foremost men of the council, headed by the high priest, were members of this delegation; and they took with them a Roman lawyer named Tertullus, who was to present their case and see to it that the legal formalities were observed.

A few days after the imprisonment of Paul in Caesarea this delegation put in their appearance. They had made all possible haste, as they were afraid that Felix might set Paul at liberty.—So the governor sat as a trial judge, and let the prisoner and his accusers appear before him, that he might hear both sides. The lawyer of the plaintiffs was allowed to open the case. He began by trying to win the favor of Felix by means of flattery, and then he took up the charges against Paul. The apostle was described as a pestilent fellow and a mover of insurrections, and as a ringleader of the Nazarene sect; and besides, he had profaned the temple. For these reasons the sanhedrin had laid hold on him, the matter being one in which they had jurisdiction; and the case would have followed the regular course, had not the chief captain of the castle, by force and without authority, meddled with the matter and put himself in possession of the prisoner. Now they wanted Felix to examine into the matter; and they did not doubt that he would declare them to be in the right.—Thus argued Tertullus; and the high priest and the others corroborated his statements in every particular.

When they had finished, the governor called on Paul to defend himself. The apostle spoke calmly and to the point. He began with the statement that Felix, having had much experience as a judge among the Jews, would find it easy to follow the case, and to understand



how utterly without foundation the charges were. It was but twelve days since he, Paul, went from Caesarea up to Jerusalem to worship; and he had made no speech of any kind in the synagogue or any other place in the city. Nor had he in any way incited any man to revolt against the government; and his accusers had offered no evidence whatever in support of that charge. It was true that he belonged to the Nazarene sect; but as a Nazarene he was not an infidel. On the contrary, he believed all that was written in the Law and the Prophets; and he also believed in the resurrection of the dead. "Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men always."

The charge that he had incited insurrection was plainly preposterous; for it was several years since he had visited Jerusalem, and he had now gone to that city as the bearer of a large sum of money for distribution among the poor. He had been there but a few days, and had spent the greater part of this time in the temple, engaged in the Levitical rites of purification. And while he was thus following the noiseless tenor of his way some Jews from Asia Minor had seen him and started a riot. These were the people who should have been here to make charges against him, but they kept out of the way. Now, the men who were present as his accusers knew that he had been before the sanhedrin; and they should have given an account of the proceedings before that court, if any guilt had been proven against him. For his own part he knew of nothing, unless it be the declaration which he had made: "Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question before you this day."

Felix understood the situation very well; and to rid himself of the Jews he declared the trial continued until the chief captain could come from Jerusalem with a more detailed report. He ordered, therefore, the cen-

turion to keep Paul in charge, but to allow him all possible liberty and to let his friends visit him and show him every attention.

Now, of course, it was the duty of Felix either to set Paul free, or to find him guilty; in which latter case Paul could at a Roman citizen appeal to the emperor. But Felix did neither. He held off, hoping that Paul or his friends might offer him a substantial bribe; for to Felix money was everything.

Some days after the Jews had gone home without having accomplished their purpose, Paul was again summoned before Felix. The governor had told his wife Drusilla, to whom he was not, however, lawfully married, about the new prisoner, and she was curious to see him. She may have heard of him before. Paul knew the history and character of these people, and was thus able to touch the tender spot. He had no desire to flatter them, but wished to speak to their conscience; so he reasoned of righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come. And that his words went home is evident from that which Felix said: "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me."

Later on Paul was several times summoned to appear before Felix, who gave him to understand that some money would procure him the liberty which he so much desired. But the apostle would listen to no such proposition; and so Felix determined at least to win the favor of the Jews by keeping Paul as a prisoner.

In this way several months went by, with nothing to indicate that the case against Paul would ever be disposed of; and in the meantime he was kept in enforced idleness, while his whole soul cried out for a chance to work. But he was compelled to practise patience. Naturally, it must have been a great comfort to him that his friends and companions were permitted to visit him

without hindrance; and there is no doubt that the apostle at this time also was sending messengers and keeping in touch with his Congregations.

While Paul was thus kept inside of the prison walls there were stirring times in Judaea. The feeling of bitterness against the misrule of Felix and against Roman tyranny grew all the time stronger, and often went beyond control. In Jerusalem sheer anarchy prevailed at times, and there had been pitched battles between the Roman soldiers and the Jewish rioters on the streets of Jerusalem. Even in Caesarea the apostle could from the windows of his prison hear the tumult on the streets. To revenge himself Felix caused the homes of many rich Jews to be robbed; thus securing some more of that gold which he loved so well.

But in this way Felix brought about his own downfall. For these rich Jews had influential connections at the imperial court; and the result was that Felix was ousted from the governorship, and ordered to Rome, and called strictly to account; and Porcius Festus, a good and upright man, was appointed his successor. This was in the year 60.

Shortly after taking over his new office, Festus went up to Jerusalem; and the Jewish sanhedrin thought that this would be an opportune time for again securing possession of the apostle. They would demand of the new governor that he send Paul to Jerusalem, that he might be brought to trial before them; and then they hoped that a new attack on him would prove more successful than the first effort, which had been such an ignoble failure. However, Festus seems to have seen through their plans; and he told them that if they had any charges to make against Paul they must come to Caesarea.

This they did; and the apostle was again put on trial, but this time before a judge of a different character.

The Jews reiterated their former charges, but without any sort of proof; and the apostle pointed out how utterly unfounded all the three counts of the complaint were. He had done no wrong against the Jewish law, nor against the temple, nor against the emperor.

For political reasons Festus would like to please the delegation from the sanhedrin; but he was considerate enough to ask the prisoner if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before the Jewish council. But Paul knew the Jews and their council too well for this; and when he understood that he might be delivered up by Festus to the sanhedrin, which had jurisdiction in religious matters, he made the declaration which put an end to any further proceedings against him in Palestine, in that he said: "I am standing before Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."

Thus all the efforts of the Jews came at once to naught; for it was the privilege of a Roman citizen, no matter where he might be, to demand a trial before the emperor. This, however, required the presence of the prisoner in Rome.

Before being taken to Rome the apostle had a new opportunity to testify in his own behalf. King Agrippa and his wife Bernice, who was also his sister, came to Caesarea on a friendly visit to Festus. These royal personages were treated with every possible consideration by the governor; for he knew that the king of the little country to the east of the Jordan was a special favorite of the emperor Nero.

Festus mentioned his notable prisoner, and king

Agrippa wished to see him. "Tomorrow thou shalt hear him," said the polite Festus.

So Festus arranged for a specially imposing trial to be held on the following day. To make it the more splendid in honor of his royal guests he ordered the highest military and civil dignitaries to be present, and the whole affair was made as impressive as possible. When everything was in readiness the king and queen appeared in their robes of state and with a numerous and splendid following of courtiers. The prisoner was brought before them in chains; and when he saw himself surrounded by all this pageantry, he no doubt remembered what the Lord had said to Ananias: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." For now he stood before the throne of a king.

When all was ready, Festus opened the proceedings with a speech addressed to the king; the speech of a practised courtier: The prisoner before them was a man whose life the Jews demanded. For his own part Festus had found no fault in the man. But since the prisoner had appealed to Caesar, he must be sent to Rome, and there must be sent with him a report from Festus. However, he found it difficult to write such a report, since he was not familiar with the Jewish faith; and now that King Agrippa had honored them with his presence, Festus would respectfully ask the king to conduct the examination, and then it would be an easy matter to make out the report to the emperor.

The king turned to the apostle and said: "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself."

Paul then boldly stretched forth his manacled hand and began to speak. He addressed the king, saying that he was glad to defend himself before a man who was able to understand him, and he begged the king to hear him patiently. Then he outlined his life from his

youth, and explained how he had been trained in the principles of the Pharisees, and held their views. He told how he had persecuted the Christians, and how he had been converted; and also how he had been called of the Lord to go out with the Good News that the hope of Israel was fulfilled in Christ, who suffered and died, and rose again.—As he proceeded with his speech the apostle became more warm. Festus, the proud Roman, could not understand that there was any good reason for such enthusiasm, and he interrupted Paul: “Thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad.” But Paul replied: “I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness.” And he turned from the Roman to the Jew Agrippa, and asked him to say that he also believed the promises of the Jewish prophets. But Agrippa made the diplomatic reply: “With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian”; to which Paul made the fine rejoinder: “I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.”

The king stood up to indicate that the examination was at an end; and the apostle was taken back to his prison. In the discussion which followed all declared the apostle innocent; and Agrippa gave as his opinion that the prisoner should have been set free had he not appealed his case to the emperor.

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## X. The Martyr.

*"I have fought the good fight . . . and the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly Kingdom; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (2 Tim. 4:7, 18).

The apostle had appealed to Caesar and must therefore be sent to Rome. It was now near the setting in of winter; but as a number of prisoners were still to be sent to Rome, it was decided to send Paul also. He had all the time been treated with every courtesy by the Roman officials; and thus they now also gave him permission to take Luke and Aristarchus with him, in order that these men might serve and comfort him. The centurion to whom the prisoners were given in charge knew, of course, from the report sent by him, that Paul had been found not guilty and was not in any sense a criminal. Therefore the centurion treated Paul with kindness and allowed him all the liberty which the circumstances would permit.

It was in the autumn of the year 61 that Paul with the other prisoners went on board a little vessel in the coastwise trade. They had not sailed far before they discovered that this was an unfortunate season for a voyage. The weather was contrary; and they were compelled to beat against the wind, and they made but little headway. At last, however, they succeeded in reaching the port of Myra in Lycia, on the south coast of Asia Minor. Here they were transferred to another ship, as the little coast trader could not put out to sea in these dangerous waters so late in the season. The centurion was so fortunate as to find here a large freighter carrying corn from Egypt to Italy. These freighters were of good size and sturdy build, and well able to weather a storm.

The voyage was then continued. Had the wind been favorable the voyage might have been made in a week; but luck was against them. So the master of the ship determined to set his course out into the open sea south of the island of Crete, where there would be some protection against the storms from the northwest. But the wind remained contrary, and progress was very slow, and the voyage became all the time more dangerous; the time of the winter hurricanes was at hand. When the ship reached a place called Fair Havens, Paul urged the men in command to put up there for the winter; for he knew how dangerous these waters were at this season of the year. He had three times been shipwrecked off the coasts of Asia Minor and Greece; and on one occasion he had drifted about on a piece of wreckage for a whole day before being picked up. So he knew something of suffering at sea. But none would now listen to his wise counsel. Fair Havens was not a safe place in which to winter; it was too exposed. They wanted if possible to reach Phoenix, a haven of Crete, where they could hope to winter more safely.

To begin with, all went well. There was a fair wind, but it soon veered from the south to the northwest and became a hurricane, and the ship was tossed about like a mere plaything of the waves. The sailors tried to hold it up against the wind, but it refused to obey the rudder. They were compelled to let it drift, and the storm carried them close up under the little island Clauda. They had a lifeboat in tow; and here they managed with incredible labor to lift it on board and save it from being smashed. The storm raged with unabated fury, and the ship, with its large cargo, labored heavily; and the seams began to open, so that the sailors were afraid that it would spring a leak and go to the bottom. To strengthen the ship they took what cordage they had and passed a strong rope under



the keel and around the hull as tightly as they could, and made it fast. But the storm increased; and soon it was impossible to carry any sail, and the ship drifted helpless before the tempest. The next day also the storm raged as before, and it was necessary to lighten the ship by throwing the cargo overboard. And the third day being equally tempestuous, they cast overboard all the tackling not absolutely necessary. The storm raged day after day, and everybody gave up hope. There were on board 276 persons; of whom the most part were prisoners, and these, not being sailors, suffered terribly. All were too sick to eat; and at last even the sailors lost hope.

Then one night Paul had a vision. The angel of God appeared to him and said: "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Paul did not doubt that this was a message from God, and in the morning he tried to put new courage into his fellow voyagers. And they now believed him, having experienced that on the former occasion he had spoken the truth.

The storm had lasted thirteen days, and on the fourteenth night they were still drifting helpless before it on the waters of the Adriatic. Then at midnight the sailors thought that they must be near land. So they cast the lead and found twenty fathoms of water; and a little later they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. They knew then that they were drifting fast toward some shore; and to be thrown against the rocks this dark night would be certain death. So they let fall the four anchors, hoping to hold the ship till morning. In the early dawn the crew lowered the lifeboat, thinking to save themselves. They thought it absolutely impossible in this stormy sea to save the prisoners. Paul saw what they were about to do; and he

told the centurion that they would surely die if they took to the boat. They no longer doubted the apostle; and one of the soldiers cut the rope, and the boat drifted away.

In the morning Paul called together all the people on board and told them that their sufferings would soon be over. The storm having lasted for full two weeks, all were in a bad way from illness, and want of sleep, and fear of death; but now they must eat, that they might have strength for the work before them; for all lives were to be saved. To give them courage Paul took a piece of bread, thanked God, and began to eat it in the sight of all. Then the others also took heart and strengthened themselves with food.

It was now broad daylight; and they saw land near by, but did not know where they were. They had before them a bay which looked fairly promising; and they decided that it would be a good place for beaching the ship. That it might be lifted as high as possible up on the beach they lightened it by throwing out what remained of the cargo and the provisions. They took up the anchors and hoisted the mainsail, and made through the breakers for the shore; and before long the ship was run aground. The prow rested on a sandbank, while the stern was out on the water; and soon the ship parted in the middle. All the men were on the forepart; and the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners as the surest way of preventing their escape. But the centurion, who wished to save the life of Paul, forbade this, and ordered all that could swim to jump first into the sea and get to land. The others saved themselves on pieces of wreckage, and not a life was lost.

It was then learnt that they were stranded on the island of Melita, or Malta. The islanders came in great numbers to the scene of the wreck; and though they were barbarians they showed the strangers every

kindness, and kindled a fire and made them as comfortable as their exhausted condition and the rain and cold would allow. Here the shipwrecked voyagers remained for three months, from November of the year 61 till the following February; and the apostle, of course, employed his time in preaching the Gospel. He also performed some miracles, which created a great sensation and caused the natives to regard him as a messenger from God.

Of course, as soon as the weather allowed, the prisoners must be rounded up again and taken to Rome. They took passage in an Alexandrian ship called the "Castor and Pollux," which had wintered in Malta; and after a few days of good sailing they were landed at Puteoli in Italy.

So now the apostle was in the country which he had so long wished to be able to visit. He was not a free man, however, but a prisoner of the Roman government. In Puteoli there was already a Christian Church; and the brethren were made happy by learning that Paul was among them. The centurion gave the apostle leave to go wherever he liked; and Paul therefore lodged with members of the Congregation, and remained a week to strengthen their faith and gladden their hearts. In Puteoli he received his first impression of the mighty city of Rome. For Puteoli, washed by the fresh waters of the beautiful bay of Naples, was the favorite summer resort of Rome's fashionable world, the Newport of Rome, as it were. Here the Roman leaders of fashion displayed all the luxury which fabulous wealth can buy, and vied with one another in lavish entertainments. On the shore were many beautiful villas, occupied during the summer by the emperor and the Roman aristocracy. In the harbor were many ships, from all parts of the Mediterranean, and even from distant Brittany; and here the great Roman fleet

of warships lay at anchor. It is the most charming place in Italy; and even today it is admired and celebrated in song by the poets of all lands. Who has not heard of the beauty of Capri and Naples?

After a week in Puteoli, Paul and his companions took leave of the brethren; for he with the other prisoners must be taken to Rome. They followed the famous Appian Way northward. When they were but two days' journey from Rome, and stopped over night in a certain notorious inn called Appii Forum, Paul was given a happy surprise. The Congregation in Rome had heard that he was on the way, and several of the brethren came this far to meet him. And the next evening others came and met him at a place called The Three Taverns; and of course it was a happy meeting for both him and them. Thus the prisoner entered the Eternal City with a large retinue; a conqueror in chains, followed by a number of lowly people who were without honor among their fellows. But the future was theirs, and the victory; for they had the faith which could vanquish all things, even mighty, proud and godless Rome.

Never before had Paul seen anything like the extravagant luxury of Rome. Here he was at the very center of the ancient world. To this place led all the threads holding together the vast empire, which seemed to exist only to support this proud city on the Seven Hills. Streams of gold flowed into the city from every side; and this wealth was again dissipated in a perfect carnival of reckless extravagance, the like of which the world has not seen. Eating and drinking and amusements were in Rome the real business of life; and in these things no other place on earth had so much to offer. Foremost among all these votaries of pleasure was the unspeakable ruffian, the emperor Nero. None could vie with him in vanity, luxury, foul indecency,

and cruelty, though the others followed as closely at his heels as they could. Faith in the old gods was a thing of the past. To be sure, there were many temples and statues; but they were only relics of a faith which had been. It had been replaced by sorcery, astrology and the like; and there were certain secret societies in which some of the gods of the East were worshiped. The old, strict Roman ideas of morality had long been relegated to the rear. A man of moral life was an object of curiosity and suspicion; that is to say, if he were important enough to be noticed at all. And every house was familiar with the poisoned cup and the dagger of the assassin.

At the prefecture in Rome the centurion delivered his prisoners to the captain of the guard, a good and honest man named Burrus. When this man had read the report and heard the centurion's account, he gave Paul permission to go where he liked, only he must have one of the soldiers with him. The Christian brethren then provided a decent lodging for the apostle in a house near by.

Rome had a greater number of Jews than any other place in the Empire outside of Palestine. It is said that there were at this time no less than 50,000 Jews in the city. Some years before this they had been expelled by the emperor Claudius, but had now been allowed to come back. But they were hated and despised by all men. Their penuriousness, their filthy habits, and their jealous adherence to everything Jewish had made them objects of disgust to all. So they were not permitted to live in any place they might select, but were kept segregated in their own quarter of the city.

Paul was always zealous first of all for the salvation of his own unhappy people. After three days in Rome he summoned to him some of the most influential Jews, and explained to them how it happened that he was a

prisoner; and he told them that he wished to speak to the Jews about the Hope of Israel. They consented to hear him, and fixed a day on which the Jews were to come together in his house.

On the day appointed many came, and the apostle explained to them the Law and the prophets. He spoke from morning till night, and made a deep impression on many. But still more of them were offended, and turned from him; so that the apostle here also experienced the truth of the words of Isaiah the prophet. And he took leave of the Jews with these same words: "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

And so there was an end of this brief friendship.

As already mentioned, the Christians in Rome had a Congregation of their own several years before Paul visited them. He was in Corinth when he wrote his Epistle to them. The little minority of Jewish Christians rather resented the break between Paul and the Jews, and treated him with some coolness; but he was kindly disposed toward them and did not turn them away. For at any rate, they preached the Gospel of Christ. But it seems that certain Judaists, also, had found their way to Rome; and at the thought of them the apostle grows bitter and says, as in the letter to the Philipians: "Beware of dogs, and of evil workers. For some preach Christ even of envy and strife, not sincerely; supposing to add affliction to my bonds."

But he had the more joy in the Gentile Christians,

who did everything possible to serve the imprisoned apostle of the Lord. They knew that he was suffering this indignity for Christ's sake. — In the meantime Aquila and Priscilla also had come to Rome from Ephesus; and it must have been a joyful event, when they and the apostle now met again and talked about their experiences in Ephesus and in Corinth, where this worthy man and his good wife had been won for the Gospel by the preaching of the apostle.

In the camp of the Pretorian guard, also, the apostle became a familiar figure. The soldier constantly guarding him was shifted, of course, from day to day; so he came to know many of these so-called Pretorian guards. When the apostle and these men were walking together, or resting, during these many weeks and months, the apostle talked to them of the one thing needful; and they came to know him and love him, and many of them became Christians. Even servants and slaves from the imperial palace visited him and received instruction. In this way the Congregation rapidly grew in numbers. Everywhere in the city people began to feel that a new religion was gaining foothold, and that it was able to accomplish what no other religion could. The people who came under its influence seemed to be transformed. They ceased to lie and swear and steal and follow the lusts of the flesh, and became charitable and truthful, clean and honest.

The apostle was, of course, badly handicapped by being a prisoner. How much more could he not have done, had he been allowed the full liberty which was his by right! No doubt he had many a dark hour. While he was thus waiting to have his case finally disposed of, there happened something which made his heart swell with joy. The beloved brethren of his Church in Philippi had heard that the apostle was in Rome, and that he had suffered much since last they

saw him; so now they wanted to give him a joyful surprise. They therefore collected some money, and sent one of the members of the Church, a certain Epaphroditus, to Rome with this money, and asked him to remain for a time with the apostle and comfort him, and to bring him a greeting from all the brethren in Philippi. We can understand how happy Paul must have been when Epaphroditus came and surprised him with this present and this message.—How long Epaphroditus remained in Rome does not appear from the record. But when he had been there for a time he was taken very sick and was near death. As he began to regain strength he, naturally, wished to go to his home; to which Paul, of course, assented. Paul then gave him a letter to the Congregation in Philippi, and it is one of the most beautiful and tender letters ever written. The apostle opens his whole rich and warm heart to his beloved brethren, his “joy and crown,” as he calls them. He tells them his troubles and hopes, and at the same time he gives them wise counsel. In spite of his many afflictions he is happy; for he sees how the Gospel is winning victory after victory. His heart rejoices when he thinks of his Lord and Savior, who so deeply humbled Himself, and was so highly exalted; and full of joy he looks forward to the glorious time when every knee shall be bowed, those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is the Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore he, the apostle, has all that he needs in life and death. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” He does not deny that he desires to die and be with Christ; for this were far better, he says. But since it is needful for the others, he is willing to live.—The apostle had learnt to say with devout humility: Thy will be done.

For two long years Paul was a prisoner. And he



had other troubles. Dark clouds appeared in the east, and the storm broke, and threatened utterly to destroy the Churches in Asia Minor. The Lord did not let his faithful servant live to see this calamity. But before Paul went to his tomb he did see the first signs of the coming storm; and it could not escape his keen intellect that his Churches would soon be face to face with a great danger. This new and most serious danger which the Church has met was what is known as *Gnosticism*.

The first and second centuries of our Christian era were the golden age of religious syncretism, something like our own times. People had discarded their faith in the old gods, and were trying to get at the truth through a philosophical treatment of the several religious forms. Many efforts had been made along that line. In Alexandria there was a school trying to work out some sort of mixture of the Jewish faith and the Greek philosophy. Asia Minor was a good field for this kind of endeavor. Here were many different races, each with its own system of religion; and there had been many keen minds engaged in all sorts of philosophical cults. Then came the Christian religion as preached by Paul, sweeping everything before it. Thousands became converts to Christianity. The preaching of Paul appealed especially to the Gentiles; for he told them of a God who loved all, and who had salvation for all without distinction of persons. Judaism had made spasmodic attempts to force this new religion into the Jewish forms. The Judaists had made their bitter assaults on the Pauline Churches; but in the Gentile-Christian Congregations these assaults had been repulsed for good and all by Paul's powerful preaching. It was not easy for the Judaists to gain any foothold in Congregations founded by Paul; the Greeks could hardly be persuaded to become Jews through circumcision and the pledge to observe the precepts of the

Jewish Law. The one great danger which threatened the very existence of the Christian Church, was the attempt to form a mixture of Christian faith and Greek philosophy. Judaism would have choked the Christian Church by forcing it into narrow Jewish forms; Gnosticism would have thinned it out by mixing it with vague speculations. Either would have destroyed it.

This last-named cult, which toward the end of Paul's life began to lift its head, assumed many different characters. In Ephesus and the other places in the western part of Asia Minor it pretended to be an effort toward a more practical form of religion, while in Colossae and other parts of the interior it was more of a philosophic theory. The Greeks were in general prone to cultivate hazy speculations, and so there was great danger that they might underestimate and weaken the highest and best in the new Christian faith; and that they might confuse it with their former religious thoughts and forms, and allow their imaginations to run riot, thus building up some wonderful theories of life, and giving a free rein to their lusts.

While Paul was in prison he heard of the trouble brewing in his eastern Churches, and decided to send them a warning. It was as yet a somewhat vague danger, but must be promptly met. The apostle therefore sent out a circular letter, which he addressed to the Church in Ephesus, and also a letter to the Colossians.

In Ephesus and environs the people seem to have found it easy to believe anything which came to them clothed with an air of secrecy. Heathen occultism flourished among them; and all sorts of mysteries which were mere nonsense, but had put on some kind of philosophic garb, were regarded as wonderful wisdom, and as showing deep thought. And this wisdom was the more attractive, because its votaries strongly emphasized the freedom of the spirit as against the flesh.

Their souls dwelt high in the ethereal realms; and so the flesh was of no importance, and might be left to do as it liked.

As against this sham wisdom, which as yet was in its tender infancy, the apostle points out that he also knew of a secret wisdom, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. And God had now through him revealed this wisdom to the Ephesians, that they might understand this divine mystery, which is Christ. And the apostle had taught them the wisdom of God, His eternal plan of salvation, fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord. To know this wisdom, and to be initiated into this mystery, is life's greatest happiness; and to this they were chosen of God, who had given them His Word of truth and His Spirit, that the eyes of their understanding might be opened, "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." They must look on life by the light of these Christian truths. And they must lead it in accord with God's Word, which will enable them to live a holy life, and confirm them in the truth; that they may attain the stature of men, and no more be children to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness.—Thus the apostle admonished his Congregations and urged them to lead a healthy Christian life.

At about the same time with the letter to the Ephesians the apostle sent his letter to the Colossians. Epaphras had come from Colossae and reported on conditions at that place. Gnosticism had there taken a somewhat different shape. The Phrygians were prone to become enthusiasts. Here the philosophers drew a sharp distinction between spirit and matter; and the one great thing was to bring oneself into relation with the higher powers, with the god who was lifted

high above all material things. In order to rise to this height they presented a theory which they had borrowed from the Christian doctrine about Christ and the angels; and they gave this a sort of philosophical color by an admixture of Platonic idealism. Christ was the chief of angels; and all the angels held an intermediary position between God and man. The important thing, then, was in some way to lay hold on the sex beings. But as matter was in some sort a hindrance, and the spirit was chained to the body, this was to be despised and even subjected to torture (Col. 2:18,23). They had been able to give these doctrines an attractive appearance; so that many people were seduced, and did not understand how dangerous these doctrines were (Col.2:4). And many credulous Christians regarded the cruelty which these people practised against their own bodies, as evidence of great piety.

Paul points out, also in the letter to the Colossians, the hollowness of this pretended mystery of Gnosticism, and this super-spirituality; and shows the Colossians how necessary it is that they be filled with a knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding; for only thus can they walk worthily and be pleasing to God. He also describes to them how highly Christ is exalted over all things else, and how He has reconciled all things with God by the blood of the cross. The riches of the glory of this mystery, which is "Christ in you, the Hope of glory," this it is which Paul has preached, and this they must hold fast always; then they will be strong to resist every temptation.

With these two letters, to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, there was sent another brief letter, the Epistle of Paul to Philemon. This letter was occasioned by the circumstance that a slave named Onesimus had run away from his master, Philemon, one of the Colossian Christians. The slave had been guilty of some in-

discretion; he dreaded punishment, and had therefore run away, and made his way to Rome. There he had fallen in with Paul and had been converted, and he became very dear to the apostle. Now Tychicus was to go to Colossae; and Paul thought it best that Onesimus go with him. So he gave Onesimus a letter to his master, asking this man to receive his slave with kindness. This remarkable little letter, which has excited the deep admiration even of infidels, shows us the apostle's character from a new angle. He, who fought so valiantly against heresy and all manner of wickedness, was at the same time possessed of the finest tact, and even showed a delicate sense of humor (Verses 18 and 19). It is a most kind heart which speaks through this letter to Philemon.

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We have now followed the great Apostle of the Gentiles from the days of his youth to the time when he was a prisoner in Rome, and was waiting to have a final decision in the case against him. We have reached the beginning of the year 64. Here ends the story as told in the Acts; and all that we know of Paul's later history is what we may piece together from stray allusions in the letters to Timothy and Titus. Now, here in these letters are certain difficulties, to clear away which, in detail, is not within the scope of our purpose.

One of these letters, which, in common with most other commentators, we regard as having been written after the burning of Rome, we are able to outline briefly the last years of the apostle's life. In the spring of the year 64 he was at last brought to trial; and owing to the favorable report which he had brought with him, and to the good character given him by the Roman prefect of police, he was ordered discharged.—He was now getting on in years—he must have been in the sixties. His health had never been robust, and he

had suffered much hardship; so he well knew that now his day was drawing to a close. However, he had not as yet visited Spain—which had been one of his ambitions. And he much desired to visit once more some of his Congregations, before the Lord should call him to his long rest. We learn that he did visit Crete, where he left Titus behind (Titus 1:5), and also the Church in Philippi (1 Tim. 1:3) and those in Greece (2 Tim. 4:20), and remained through the winter at Nicopolis in Epirus. From this place he wrote his first letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus. Paul had sent Timothy to the assistance of the Ephesians in their difficulties; and now he wrote to him to encourage and advise him in the fight against the Gnostics. These pseudo-philosophers—literally, the name Gnostic means one who knows—pretended by a mixture of Greek idealism and Eastern mysticism to answer the questions: Whence is evil, and why? Whence is man, and how?—To Titus the apostle wrote in order to give him practical counsel with respect to the tour of inspection which Titus was making through the Congregations for the purpose of establishing good order. When spring came Paul again started out on his travels. He visited Troas and Ephesus, which places he had not expected to see again; and from there he went to Miletus, where his companion Trophimus was taken sick and left behind; and then Paul came to Corinth. From this city he took ship to Spain; from which country he returned to Rome, probably in the year 66.

During the absence of the apostle the Church in Rome had seen much trouble. Shortly after his discharge from prison the city had a disastrous fire. This was on July 19, 64. The fire started in some hovels near the Circus, and a strong wind caused it to spread rapidly, until many blocks of buildings were enveloped in fierce flames.

The people were stricken with wild fear. They fled in all directions. The fire raged fiercely on every hand; and people claimed to have seen persons throwing fire-brands into the houses, and many of these persons were known as belonging to the household brigade of the emperor Nero. The fire lasted several days, and consumed the cottages of the poor, the palaces of the rich, temples and public buildings. Property of enormous value and many priceless works of art were destroyed. Not till the seventh day was the fire under control, and then hardly a fourth of the great city remained intact. The rest was smoking ruins, from which fires still flared up fiercely from time to time. Many hundred thousand people were homeless.

The governor hastily erected a large number of great barracks; but these could not shelter all the homeless people. Popular feeling was extremely bitter. All knew that the fire had been purposely started and fed; and the people were beside themselves with anger when it was reported that the emperor himself had stood on the tower of Maecenas, in his garb of a dramatic actor and with his zither in his hand, enjoying the grand and terrible spectacle, meanwhile declaiming the poem on the burning of Troy. People knew that Nero did not regard Rome as being beautiful enough; and that he wanted the old city swept away, in order that a new and more splendid capital, such as he had it in mind, might be built on the ruins.

The suspicions of the people came to his ears; and this unspeakable monster, who, like a contemptible coward, was always trembling for his own life, conceived a most abominable means of averting suspicion from himself and turning the public fury in a new direction. It was announced as most probable that the Christians had started the fire; and then the crazed populace turned on the innocent Christian Congregation, and its members

were murdered by the score. Many suffered martyrdom after the most horrible torture; for Nero revelled in seeing their sufferings and death. Many were crucified in Nero's gardens; others were sewn into the skins of beasts and torn in pieces by bloodhounds. Still others were covered with warm pitch, bound to stakes on either side of the driveways in the emperor's parks; and when night fell they were set on fire; and the emperor drove his golden chariot and feasted on the sight of these living torches that writhed with pain till death mercifully made an end of their unendurable agony.

A cry of fear and horror went up from the whole Christian Church; for the news of Nero's awful crime spread rapidly over the whole Empire. The Christians found themselves suddenly placed in the spotlight; and they had a premonition as to what awaited them. What had been done in Rome might be repeated anywhere. But the Christians also saw with joy the steadfastness of the martyrs. The Pauline Church had received its baptism of blood.

We do not know where the apostle was when he received the news. But we can imagine what he must have felt when he heard about the persecutions. No doubt he wished that he might have died in the place of the brethren; that the hatred of the heathen might have vented itself on him.

When the apostle, after two years, returned to Rome, he found great changes. A large number of splendid new buildings had been built, or were being built, and everywhere was feverish activity. Of the Congregation he found but a small remnant. But among those who had been spared was his beloved physician Luke; possibly, also, the apostle Peter.

Paul felt that the end of life could not now be far away. The hatred against the Christians was still burning fitfully, and from time to time one or the other of



those who confessed Christ paid the penalty with his life. At this time Paul wrote his last letter, 2 Timothy. He felt the nearness of death, and wished that his beloved son might have been with him in his last hour. Since this could not be, he wished to send Timothy some last words of cheer. Through the whole letter runs an under-current of gentle melancholy. "That which we here read," says Calvin, "of the Kingdom of Christ, the hope of eternal life, the Christian fight, the loyal confession of the faith, the wise and sure Christian doctrine; is not written with ink, but with the apostle's blood."—"Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God. Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Endure thou hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

Soon after this it came about as Paul expected. One day a troop of Roman soldiers took him out on the road to Ostia. His last hour was come. Being a Roman citizen, he could not be crucified, but must be put to death by the sword. Here his head was severed from his body. This probably was in the year 67.

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Such was the life and such the death of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Now the Christians in Rome could see that he had meant what he said when he wrote to them (Romans 8: 35-39): "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or fire, or sword? As it is written: 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul had risked his life in the war, and had met a soldier's death. His strenuous career had been one of strife and stress, but also of many victories. The light of the Gospel had been lit from the far East to the farthest West. Many Churches had been founded, and multitudes of Christian believers assembled for worship; and their courage in times of persecution showed that they stood firm on the rock of truth. Thus Paul's great plan had been gloriously fulfilled, and this was the joy and pride of his life. But he was not alive to see the fulfillment of his other cherished dream: *one* united Christian Church, embracing all who held the common faith.

The Jews had difficulty in following the apostle of Christian liberty; so many looked upon his work with suspicion, while others openly opposed him.

We have followed this mighty struggle in the earliest Christian Church, and have seen how the Judaists were tireless in their efforts to choke the growth of that which the great Apostle of the Gentiles had planted. We have found them at their work of destruction in Antioch and Jerusalem, among the Churches of Galatia, in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome—that is, over Paul's whole mission field. Think of his position: He traveled from one country to another, from city to city, full of zeal for his great work, overcoming all obstacles, disregarding every danger (see 2 Cor. 11:23 and following verses), with these enemies all the time at his heels; it is easy enough to understand his harsh judgment of them.

The situation in Jerusalem during these fights of Paul against Judaism is not quite clear. But it seems fair to assume that there were in the Mother Church two factions, one supporting the Judaists against Paul, and the other embracing the remaining apostles and their closest adherents. That these took no part in the work of the Judaists is evidenced by the fact that Paul always speaks of them in terms of the highest esteem. Had they in any manner supported the Judaists, Paul would not have spared them. For he was afraid of no man, as we see by the way in which he called Peter to account at Antioch. On the other hand, Paul never mentions having received any pronounced assistance from the other apostles. Probably they respected the agreement reached by the conference of apostles at Jerusalem; they did not interfere with Paul's missionary work, but limited their own efforts to work among the Jews. The leading spirit among these Jewish Christians was James, the Lord's brother. As Jews by birth, educated in the Jewish traditions, they no doubt held it their duty to follow closely the precepts of the Law. They kept themselves to the temple, observed their festal seasons, and the like; and felt themselves under obligation to do this until the Lord should absolve them from this duty. But they did not regard these observances as something by which they merited the grace of God; as clearly appears from what they said at the Jerusalem conference. At the same time they did not feel that they had the right to accept for themselves the greater liberty of the Gentile Christians; and therefore they took offense when Peter at Antioch yielded to Paul in some of these matters.

Thus the Christians were still divided into two factions; and this division must have been particularly trying to Paul. A united Church had all the time been his ideal. None other had so strongly emphasized the

thought that all barriers should be broken down, and all Christians be united into one body. But the Judaistic interpretation of the Law stood in the way; as also the misunderstandings and prejudices harbored by even the best among the Jews. We see here, as in so many other things, how difficult it is to break loose from old customs and opinions, which are bred in the bone; and that even if they to one looking on from a distance seem to be of no account, or rest on misconception and on wrong premises. Paul fought and labored, and tried by his visits to Jerusalem to unite the two factions; but he did not succeed. At least he did not live to see fruit of his labor along these lines.

The historical developments made the Jewish Christians to see more and more clearly the deep distinction between Judaism and Christianity. The Jews were but awaiting the opportune moment to crush the hated Christians. Scarcely a year after the taking of Paul as a prisoner to Rome, circumstances shaped themselves in such a way that the Jews were able to make open war on the Christian Church in Jerusalem; and the leader of this Church, James, fell a victim of their hatred. There was, however, soon put a stop to any further persecution; and the Jews were for the time being compelled to desist.

But the condition of the Church in Jerusalem became all the time more intolerable. Among the masses there was a deep-rooted hatred of the Roman tyranny. The fair-minded Porcius Festus was succeeded as governor by the corrupt Albinus (62-64), with whom justice was for sale, with no regard for law or honesty. For money he would shut his eyes to any sort of crime; and even much worse than Albinus was his successor Gessius Florus (64-66). His misrule knew no bounds. He plundered the cities and other communities; and brigands needed but to divide the booty with him in order to

be entirely safe.—But the Jewish cup of misery was at last full, and then a wild insurrection broke loose; and this brought about the ruin of the people and country.

While these desperate conditions obtained among the Jews, there was a strong growth of national consciousness. The Jewish aspirations and the expectation of a Messiah laid hold on the masses; and these were stirred to their depths with fanaticism. It will be readily understood that much of this fanaticism must be vented against the Christians; for the Christian's hope and faith in Jesus as the Messiah was the worst enemy of the political zealots. And though these were kept from making open war on the Christians, they had every opportunity to show their hatred and contempt in their daily dealings with them; so that the sober and peaceable Christians at last were no longer able to live in Jerusalem. They left the city and went to Pella before the revolution had fully broken out.—Thus the last bond which tied them to Judaism was loosened; and when Jerusalem and the temple were merely a pile of ruins, and the Jewish people were driven out of their own country, the old time had passed away. The barrier between the Jews and the other peoples were now torn down; and the Mother Church in Jerusalem could, of course, no longer hold a leading position among the Christian Churches.

Circumstances thus forced the Jewish Christians to change their old views. They found themselves hated and persecuted by their own compatriots, and so they came to know their true friends; and the former zeal for the Law and for nationalism in contra-distinction to Christian liberty as practiced in the Pauline Churches, was done away with. Now history itself showed that the time was gone by when religion was a national-theocratic affair connected with the temple and the observance of the Law; and that hence Paul was in the

right, and that they must now save their faith as a thing apart from these complications.

Paul did not live to see the union consummated between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians. It is possible, however, that he heard of conditions in Palestine just before the beginning of the revolution; and that he had a glimpse of the dawn which had been the goal of his stormy life.

As the leader of the great war on heathenism and Judaism, Paul was of the right timber. The Lord of the Church finds the right man and places him at his appointed post. Paul was richly endowed by nature; he had a splendid intellectual equipment. And the education which he had received in his youth stood him in good stead. Through many years he dragged with him a body racked with painful disease. He earnestly prayed God to deliver him from this suffering; but he came to learn that it was a cross which God had laid upon him to keep him humble, in order that he might the better understand the power of God, and see that God's grace is all-sufficient. He had a lively and at the same time deep temperament; and when he had a work to do, which to him seemed worth while, he threw his whole soul into it. He had dedicated his life to the service of God, and he performed the service with all his might. The same energy which he had displayed before his conversion in the persecution of the Christian faith, he afterward turned against everything that would corrupt his Congregations. His education as a rabbi was of great value to him in his fight with Jews and Judaism. He knew their way of thinking and their arguments; and he knew the art of turning their own weapons against them. The letter to the Galatians is especially rich in examples of his skill; his words are sledge-hammer blows, all his talents are employed to the full, and his learning and profound thought appear

in every line of the letter. He is planted firmly on the rock of truth; for he has received his Gospel not from any man, but direct from God. And he is not ashamed of this Gospel; for it is the wisdom of God, no matter how much it may offend, nor how men may laugh at it.

The burden of such a life of stress as Paul's it would not be possible to bear without a firm faith in God. Only through such faith may one receive the iron strength which can not be crushed by any suffering, nor turned aside by any obstacle. But faith in God means the surrender of all that is our own. So when we review the army of the Lord, who is stronger than Paul, and who more humble? He, who fashions the strong words of faith, has this wonderful and deep feeling of his own unworthiness and weakness. None other is so little in himself as this mightiest soldier of Christendom; in himself he is the least of all, the greatest of sinners; all that he has is undeserved mercy. But the grace of God is sufficient; "when I am weak, then I am strong." And none other has so well described the riches of the free grace of God. It sets his soul on fire with a fervent love, such as no man may feel who does not realize his own sinfulness and God's infinite mercy. But this apostle, whose will is so unyielding, can for that very reason be a Jew to the Jews, and a Greek to the Greeks. The only feeling which is allowed to rule him is love. None other has been so well able as he to admonish the erring brethren, and excuse them, and guide them, and discipline them with all charity. Never has any other drawn so good a picture of a soldier of the cross. He knew what it meant: "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for

me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

This is a hymn of victory in the midst of death. Through the centuries these brave words have given courage to hosts of soldiers in the army of the Lord.

The labors of Paul had brought out, or rather, clarified, a new religious and ethical theory of life; a system which can unite all mankind, and which embraces all in the love founded in Christian faith and hope. This new principle was stronger than anything else in the world; and thus it must be victorious. The Jewish view of life, with its narrow idea of forcibly molding all in the same form; and the philosophy of the Stoics, which in its self-sufficiency and heartlessness coldly turned its back on the joy and the grief of others;—these could not bring comfort to suffering humanity. Something else was wanted, and only Christianity had the needed strength. The Christian faith makes man independent of the things of this world; the Christian has everything in God, with whom he is united; he is a child of God, and therefore heir to the glory of God. The Spirit, who works through the Word in his heart, is the pledge of this. Then what matters it if the Christian in this world must suffer affliction and be reviled? See the wonderful picture drawn in the 8th chapter of Romans.

This faith in God and love of Him does not make a man callous to his surroundings. On the contrary, there is no stronger bond than Christian love, which goes out to all men; its highest wish is to win as many as possible for Christ. This is illustrated by the whole life of Paul. The love of Christ is the only and perfect rule. And they who are actuated by this love need no dead letter to threaten them; for they willingly do the holy will of God. The child spirit is the spirit of obedience to the commands of the father.



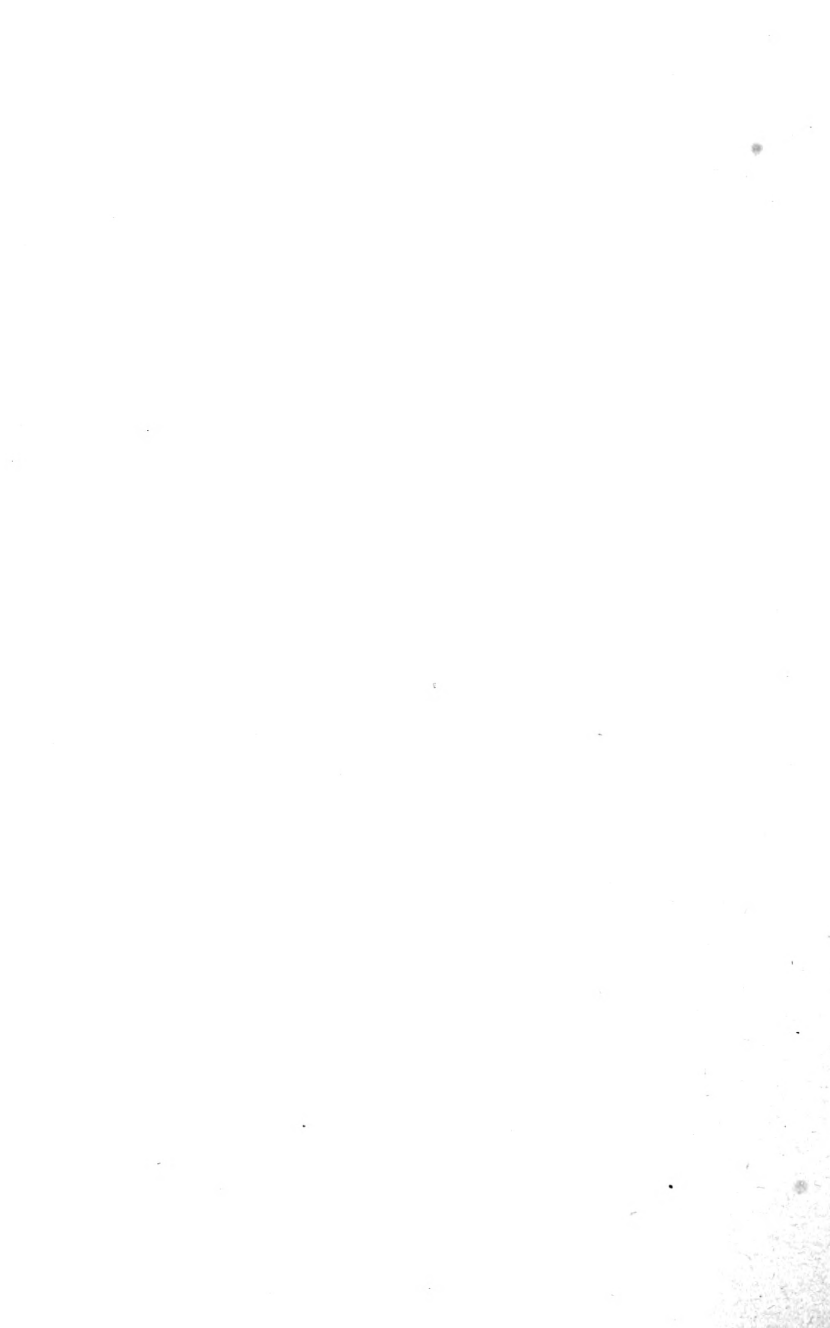
The passion and death of Christ is for all men; none is to be shut out. God is not the God of the Jews only, nor did Christ die for the Jews only; His atonement is for all. God is the Father of all; He looks upon all with the same love, and wants to be "all in all." And in Christ is the bond which unites all: Jew and Greek, slaves and freemen, men and women.

The apostle Paul looms up high among the host of God's witnesses. Better than any of his contemporaries he understood the real essence and spirit of Jesus. So he became the leader who was to guide the Church out of the formalism of the Old Covenant, and teach it to live in the spirit of the New Covenant; and who was to show that the Christian religion is the religion of all humanity. In the message sent out by him to the old world, which was tired unto death, was the power to give new life and strength; a living fountain out of which all ages and generations to the end of time might draw comfort and courage. In the Christian Church he helped to organize an institution which is to stand when thrones totter, and when all other institutions have grown gray with eld, and have fallen into decay.

Therefore all humanity and all ages owe a debt of gratitude to Paul. His name shall never be forgotten; his voice resounds through the centuries, teaching the children of men to grasp the ineffable grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When Paul lifts his eyes to God he says: "Justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Abba, Father."

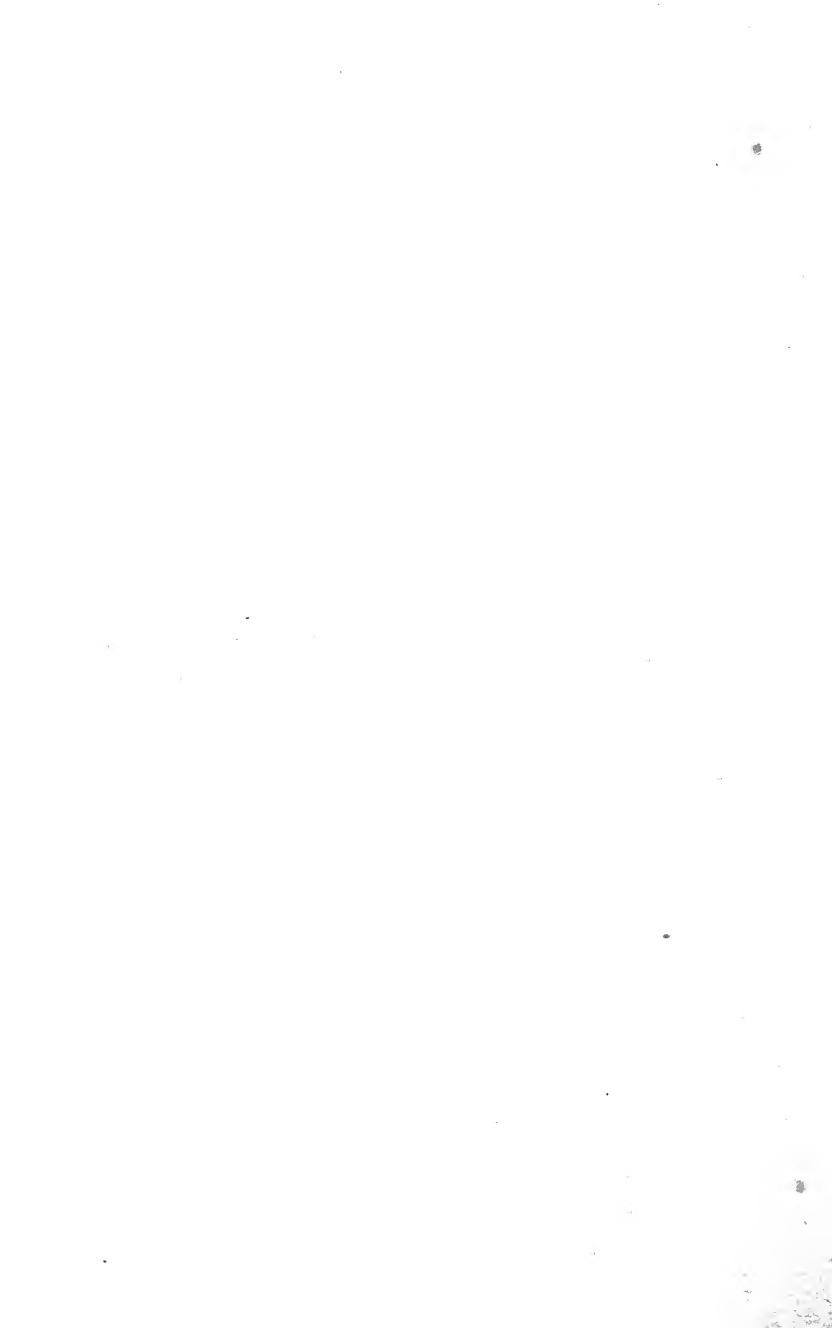
And when he looks out over the great, swarming world of human beings, he cries to them: "Greatest of all is love."



II

PAUL'S LETTERS

A Testimony Concerning the Manner in which  
the Gospel was Preached in the earliest  
Gentile-Christian Churches



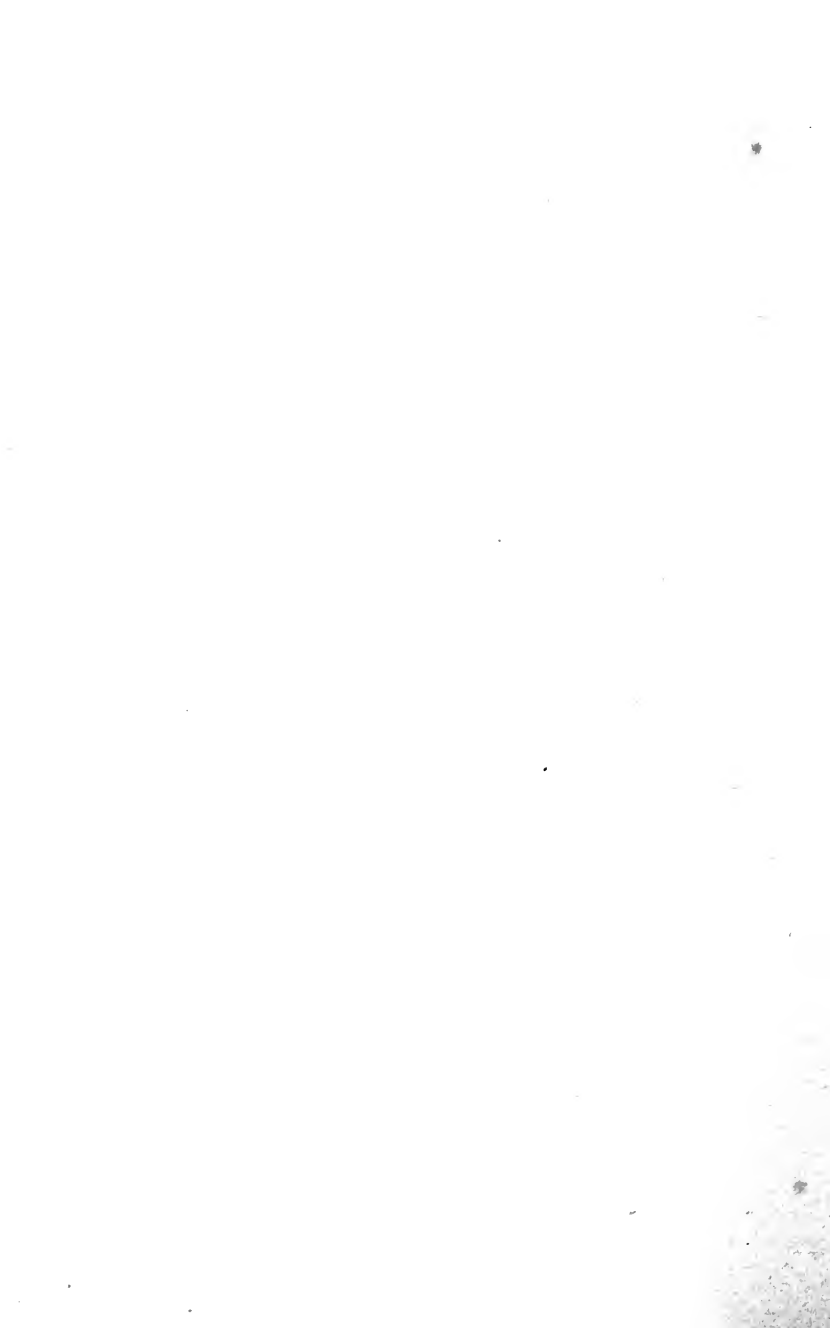
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## The Letter to the Church in Rome.

The name ROME includes everything which had a place in the ancient world. The city was the center of the vast Roman world empire, which stretched from the Atlantic in the west to India in the east, and from the North Sea to the Sahara Desert in the south. The population of the empire was about 100 millions. From the palace of the emperor his commands went out to the most distant points of the empire. He ruled with an iron rod over these millions, the many conquered and enslaved nations. And woe to the vanquished if they did not remain loyal.

The city itself was filled with all the proud splendor which untold wealth together with love of luxury and show can produce. It is difficult for us even to imagine the insane extravagance of splendor which was peculiar to imperial Rome.

Rome was built on seven hills; and on all sides were parks and elegant villas. In the city were innumerable marble palaces, triumphal arches, statues, fountains, works of art of all kinds, amusement resorts, and the like.

In the center of the city was the famous Forum, where all public business was transacted. On the one side was the emperor's palace, and on the other side stood the world-famed temple of Jupiter, the god worshiped throughout the empire as the father of the gods. The place was also flanked by a number of other temples and splendid buildings; so that it was, in all probability, the most resplendently beautiful spot on earth. This

was the terminus of the "Avenue of Triumph," on which marched the victorious Roman armies when they came home from the wars, bringing with them vast treasure and great numbers of slaves.

The population of the city, counting only such as were Roman citizens, was about 800,000. Counting slaves and strangers, the number of persons in the city would probably reach 2 millions.

The Romans were extremely fond of amusements. The four largest theaters had a total seating capacity of 60,000. In the great Colosseum no less than 50,000 persons could at one time see the bloody dramas there enacted. Here the captives of war fought with one another, or with wild beasts, for the amusement of the populace. The chariot races in the immense Circus Maximus might have as many as 155,000 spectators. And there were numerous lesser amusement resorts scattered over the city.

Rome was doubtless the most immoral city in the world. Every possible form of vice flourished. The rich rejoiced in every imaginable refinement of sensuality, and the poor wallowed in the mire.

Here one might see heathenism in its most enticing form, and its most revolting rottenness. On this city the eyes of all the world were focussed.

#### *The Christian Church in Rome.*

There is uncertainty as to how this Church came to be founded. But this much is certain, that it was not, as the Roman Catholic Church claims, founded by the apostle Peter. Nor is there any better foundation for the claim that Peter was for 25 years the bishop of Rome. Peter remained all his life an apostle, and was never the bishop of a Church. It may be, however, that like the apostle Paul he died the death of a martyr in Rome. It is said that his body is buried in the Church



called after him, "San Pietro in Vaticano," while the grave of Paul is supposed to be in the Church "San Paoli fuori le mura."

It is estimated that at the time here dealt with there were in Rome about 50,000 Jews, and they had a synagogue.—All roads led to Rome, and the news of the great empire did not take long to reach the city. Thus the Jews in Rome must very soon have heard of Jesus and the new religious movement in Palestine. In Acts 2:10 we see that there were Romans present in Jerusalem at the time of the first Pentecost. And it is possible that one or more of them were among the converts.

The persecutions which the Jews began in Jerusalem drove many out of the city, and the easiest place for them to reach was Rome. Strangers were all the time coming to Rome, and among them many Jews. Thus the fame of Jesus came to the capital. First to the synagogue; for here was the meeting-place of all the Jews and proselytes. And when some men began talking to these Jews about Christ there was trouble in the camp. The heathen historian Suetonius says that the emperor Claudius "drove the Jews out of Rome, because they all the time were in a state of revolt, incited thereto by one Chrestos." This took place while Paul was in Macedonia on his second missionary journey.

It is probable that events shaped themselves in Rome in about the same manner as that with which we are familiar from the history of Paul's work in other places. The Gospel was first preached to the Jews; and when they rejected it and refused to have anything further to do with the Christians, these found it necessary to organize a Church of their own.

At any rate there was in Rome such a Congregation of Jewish and Gentile converts. The Gentiles were in the majority; and many of them had been converted by the work of Paul. Many men and women from dif-

ferent Pauline Churches had either taken up their homes in Rome, or visited the city, before Paul's arrival. This is indicated by the names of those to whom, at the close of his letter, he sends special greetings. These people had placed the stamp of Paul on the Church in Rome. Among them were Aquila and Priscilla. They had come from Rome to Corinth, where they were converted through Paul; and then they returned to Rome (Romans 16:3). Epænetus had come to Rome from Ephesus (16:5). Here we find also Simon of Cyrene—the man who had carried the cross of Christ—and his wife and their son Rufus. Paul had become acquainted with them in Jerusalem. There were also many others.

That a majority of the Church members were Gentiles appears from several statements in the letter (1:5; 15:16; 11:13, 17–22). But it is just as certain that there were a number of Jewish converts. This plainly appears in Chap. 2, where in the 17th verse Paul addresses them in particular: "Thou art called a Jew." The same thing is presupposed in Chap. 3; otherwise the question in verse 29 would be meaningless. See also 7:1–6; and the whole argument in Chapters 9–11 must have the Jews in mind.

The preaching in the Church was according to the Pauline Gospel. Thus we see that he praises the Congregation (1:8; 15:14) and approves of their form of doctrine (6:17). There is nothing in the letter to suggest that the Judaists had accomplished anything in this Church. The Gentiles would seem to have been so strong in numbers that the Jewish Christians rather felt themselves pushed into the background. For Paul finds it necessary to remind the Romans that the Jews after all had certain advantages, even if they as a people had rejected the grace of God in Christ. But at the same time he impresses with great force on all that no man is justified before God through the Law, but only

through faith, which accepts the salvation in Christ. Before God there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.

*Why and When Did Paul Write This Letter?*

Paul had for a long time hoped to be able to visit Rome (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:13; 15:23). But his work as a missionary in Asia Minor and Greece had kept him too busy. Now this work was, in a way, finished. The Churches in Asia were clustered about Ephesus, and those in Macedonia and Greece about Corinth, as their administrative centers. So it seemed to Paul that he might bring his work in the eastern part of the empire to a close. The West was calling him; he was at one of the turning points in his career. And the natural headquarters of his work after this must be the magnificent capital of the empire (Romans 15:19, 23, 28).

He wished, before coming in person, to establish some sort of relations with the Church in Rome. Though he had never been there, this Church was no stranger to him. And he understood very well that the Church in Rome was destined to hold a commanding position in all Christendom. Rome was the center of the world. Therefore it was especially important to formulate the Christian doctrine in plain words and present it to this Church, and maintain peace and unity among the faithful in Rome.

Still, Paul could not go to them at once; he was collecting money for the poor in Jerusalem among the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia, and he himself wanted to carry this money to Jerusalem. While engaged in this labor of love he spent much time in Corinth; and here he, in the year 59, wrote his Epistle to the Romans. (See I, page 116.) The letter was probably sent by the hand of the deaconess Phebe from

the port of Cenchrea, near Corinth (16:1), as she was to go to Rome, and could take the letter with her. Paul at the same time bespoke for her the good-will of the Christians in Rome.

#### THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

Introduction and greeting. 1:1-17.

I. *The righteous by faith shall live.* 1:18-8:39.

1. All men, both Jews and Gentiles, are under the wrath of God. 1:18-3:20.

a. The Gentiles are under the wrath of God. 1:18-32.

b. Over the Jews also rests the wrath of God. 2:1-3:8.

c. All are, therefore, sinners. 3:9-20.

2. God has in Christ brought about the righteousness which lost man so sorely needs. 3:21-31.

3. The proof of this doctrine of Paul's concerning righteousness. 4-5.

a. Proof from the history of Abraham. 4.

b. Proof furnished by Christian experience. 5:1-11.

c. Proof from a comparison, or contrast, between Adam and Christ. 5:12-21.

4. The new life. 6-8.

a. Believers are by the grace in Christ made free from the power of sin. 6:1-7:6.

b. As long as man is under the power of the Law he also is under the power of sin. 7:7-25.

c. The new life in Christ is a life in the spirit of Christ. 8.

II. *For the Jews first, and then for the Greeks.* 9-11

1. The Jews have misunderstood God's promises. 9:1-29.

2. The condemnation of the Jews is their own fault. 9:30-10:20.

3. God's plans for this stubborn people. 11.

III. *The new life in its relations to the affairs of our daily life.* 12:1-15:13.

Closing remarks. 15:14-16:27.

## INTRODUCTION AND GREETING (1:1-17).

*Paul Is the Messenger of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.*

1:1-17. It was the usual custom in those times to begin a letter by mentioning who the writer was, and to whom it was to be sent; and then followed greetings. As Paul was personally unacquainted with most of the members of the Church in Rome, the introduction to this letter is somewhat more extended than is generally the case.

The apostle begins by explaining by what right he sends this letter. The Lord Jesus has made him His messenger to bring to the Gentile world the glad news that God had now sent the salvation promised through the prophets and revealed in the Sacred Writings of Israel. God has given this salvation to the world through His Son, who after His human nature is a scion of the royal house of David. In the spirit of holiness Jesus fulfilled His mission as the Savior; and God placed His stamp of approval on Him and His work by raising Him from the dead and making Him the Lord of the Church. Paul is the servant of this Savior, and brings the news of Him to the Gentiles. Therefore he comes with this Gospel to the Congregation in Rome. For they, also, are God's dear children, called of God to belong to the communion of the saints. So the apostle greets them with the wish that they may have grace and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle has in these few words found a terse expression for his view of his apostolic calling, and for the Gospel which he preaches. God has appointed Christianity to be the world religion. The Gospel is for all men. Salvation is by grace.—These are the great ideas which he wishes to present to the Church.

*How He Longed to Bring the Gospel to Rome.*

1:8-17. Paul had all the time longed to visit Rome; always there had been something to prevent it. Now, however, he hopes soon to come; for he is a debtor to all men, and the purpose of his life is to pay this debt by preaching the Gospel. This he wants to do in Rome also. He is not ashamed to preach the *Gospel* in any place; for the Gospel alone *is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe*; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek. None is excluded, and none has any advantage; Jew and Gentile here stand on the same footing. All need this message of salvation; for in it God has revealed the *righteousness* which saves us; that we may stand, and not fall, when we come to judgment. This righteousness, which no man can bring about, God has Himself brought to light, and gives it as a free gift to all who in childlike confidence receive the joyful tidings ("of faith"); and by this same gift men are kept in the faith ("to faith"). Salvation can be had only through faith. He who believes the Word of salvation, and holds it fast, he is thereby in the right relation to God, and has life in Jesus Christ; as it is written:

I. THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

Here the apostle has reached the leading thought of the letter, the greatest of all questions, the deepest thing in all religion: How may we reach the point where we have God with us, and not against us? Israel sought to answer this by arranging their life and worship to conform with the precepts of the Law; and the Gentiles, by sacrifices, learned speculations, and the like. But none found the answer; for they went about it in the wrong way. Therefore all were without this righteousness. The answer can come from God only; and it is this which the apostle brings.

He shows first: *How the whole human family, Jews and Gentiles, are under the wrath of God. All are sinners (1: 18—3: 20).*

And then: *That God in Christ has provided the righteousness which lost humanity so sorely needs. (1: 21—31).*

1. THE WHOLE HUMAN FAMILY, JEWS AND GENTILES, ARE UNDER THE WRATH OF GOD (1: 18—3: 20).

a. THE GENTILES ARE UNDER THE WRATH OF GOD (1: 18—32).

The misery into which the Gentile world is sunk is the punishment of God's wrath upon them, for that they by their wickedness and unrighteousness prevent the truth from gaining power over their mind. They could have *knowledge* of God; for God has with all necessary clearness revealed Himself in His creation. The created world speaks, in a way not to be misunderstood, of God's eternal power and divine glory. But men have shut their eyes to it; they neither honored nor thanked Him. Therefore the hand of God has been heavy upon them. In spite of the wisdom of which they boasted, they have been struck blind, and they have given themselves up to a foolish worship of idols.

This spiritual poverty has *moral* degeneracy as its companion; idolatry and immorality go hand in hand. This is the universal rule. God has in His anger suffered them to sink down into all sorts of vices, even the most disgusting and unnatural. And the result has been unspeakable misery. Though they understand how wrong and ruinous such conduct is, they not only practise it themselves, but they even find delight in seeing others also wallow in the mire.

b. OVER THE JEW ALSO RESTS THE WRATH OF GOD  
(2:1-3:8).

The first thing of which the Jews boasted as proof that they were in favor with God, was the circumstance that *they had the Law* (2:1-16).

*The Jews and the Law.*

If the Gentile is without excuse before God for having refused to see the light which God gave him in external nature, this is in a still higher degree true of the *Jew*. Both are found equally guilty, and both are without excuse.

The Jew was not slow to pass judgment on the Gentiles for their corrupt life. He knew the difference between right and wrong; for he had from his youth been instructed in the Law of God. But he did not consider that in judging the Gentiles he judged himself; for he himself did just those things for which he condemned the Gentiles. But we know that *God's judgment* on men is based on what *they do*, and *not* on what they *know*. So the Jew must not count on God's great goodness and patience; if these do not accomplish that which God intends, namely, a change of heart. Failing in this, the punishment is as sure and severe on Jew as on Gentile. For God is not a respecter of persons.

On the great day of judgment God shall not divide mankind into Jews and Gentiles, but into two classes: those who are obedient to the will of God, and those who are disobedient. The former He rewards; and the others He punishes, without distinction of Jew and Gentile. For He is a righteous Judge.

God, then, is *no respecter of persons*; He judges all by the same rule. If the Jews violate the Law it will profit them nothing that they hear it read on the Sabbath. Nor will the heathen escape punishment merely



because they do not have the written Law. For it is often seen that, hearing the voice of conscience, they obey some of the Commandments, though having no knowledge of the Law. Thus they show that there is something in them which tells them what is right, and what is wrong, and which condemns their acts, or approves of them. Even if they hide this now it will come to light on the last great day, when God appoints Jesus to judge the world.

*The Jewish Name Indicated That They Were God's Chosen People.*

2:17-24. In the *next place*, the Jews prided themselves on *their name*. They were God's Chosen People and had been given a peculiar position above the other peoples. This was their strength and pride. The Roman was proud of his power, the Greek of his wisdom, and the Jew of his name. The Jews took pride in their God; He was *their own God*, and they were *His people*. They alone knew the Law; they looked down on the Gentiles as being people who walked in darkness, with no understanding of God and His will; and they regarded themselves as appointed of God to be teachers of the Gentiles.

But the name in which they trust, and of which they boast, would not help them; for their life and their doctrine were too wide apart. They were severe in condemning the Gentiles for the two great sins: the love of money and the lusts of the flesh. But they themselves were guilty of both—in a somewhat more refined form. They looked with disgust on idolatry; but they did not hesitate to make money on it by fraud. Instead of living like God's own people, they lived in a way to cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles.

*The Jew and Circumcision.*

Still another thing of which the Jews boasted, and in which they put their trust, was their *circumcision*. This marked them as *children of Abraham*, and was to save them from the judgment. But circumcision would not in the judgment be any protection for violators of the Law. When Gentiles, who have not the Law, still do the Law's commands, they stand as living witnesses against the Jewish violators of the Law. So God's judgment will not be a question of whether or not they are circumcised. It is not circumcision in the flesh which makes one a member of God's people, but the spiritual *circumcision of the heart* by the Spirit of God. The slave of the letter of the Law may be admired by men, but he does not win the favor of God.

This declaration of Paul that their Law, their election and their circumcision did not benefit them; that God loved Gentile as well as Jew,—made the Jews furious and aroused their bitter enmity toward the apostle. Their ideas of the Law and election and circumcision were bred in the bone; so that the Jew found it very difficult to give them up, even when he had become a Christian. Paul continually rubbed up against these contradictions. Here he fought the great fight of his life. Therefore he again and again returns to this subject.

*Has the Jew, then, no advantage? (3:1-8).*

*The Advantage of the Jew.*

3:1-4. Since their ownership of the Law, their election as a Chosen People, and their circumcision do not profit the Jews, do they, then, have no advantage over the Gentiles? This was, no doubt, a common perversion of Paul's words. But what he has said is, that these things do *not* have *the effect* with which the Jew

credits them; that is, the power *to save him in the judgment*. There is but one thing which can do this, and that is that he keep the Law. In the sight of God the Jew who violates the Law is no better than the Gentile transgressor. The Jews have no right to expect more lenient treatment than the others in the judgment. But Paul does not by this mean to say that the Jew has no advantage of any kind whatever. In Chap. 9-11 he takes up this matter and deals with it at some length. *The great advantage of Israel* is, according to Paul, the peculiar position which God has given them before all other peoples in the history of His Kingdom of grace. Salvation comes from the Jews.

In this place the apostle mentions only the one great advantage: God has *committed His Word to the Jews*; to them and none others. They despised the Word; but *their unbelief* does not make the *faith of God* without effect. God abides by that which He has said, even if every man be a liar; and some time all shall be forced to admit that the righteousness of God reigns supreme.

#### *An Objection and Its Answer.*

3:5-8. When Paul's opponents attacked him they put a wrong construction on his stand in this matter. They charged that his doctrine contradicted itself, and that it led to results which were against morality. They said: If my sin makes the righteousness of God to shine the brighter, and if my faithlessness makes His truth appear the more glorious, it is meaningless to teach that God will condemn these sins of mine. It would not be right of Him to punish them that glorify Him; they rather deserve a reward.

As against this argument Paul lays down the proposition that when God condemns sin, He does not ask whether or not it in some way redounds to His greater glory. This question as to how God may turn even

men's sins to some good, is a matter apart. God condemns all sin as such, and all who violate His Law deserve punishment. This must be God's verdict as the Judge of the world. Though He may turn the evil into good, this does not in any manner make us the less guilty. However, the whole chain of reasoning is a malicious perversion of what the apostle has said. He has never meant to argue that we should do evil in order that good may come of it. Such a statement is shocking blasphemy; and they who make it can not escape God's righteous wrath and punishment.

c. THEREFORE: ALL ARE SINNERS, AND DESERVING OF PUNISHMENT (3:9-20).

After these incidental remarks in verses 5-8 the apostle returns to the main argument; showing that, so far from its being true that the Jews has any advantage, Jew and Gentile are alike in being sinners before God. None has the righteousness needed in order to stand before God in the judgment. And if the Jews will not accept the word of the apostle they must still accept that which God Himself says to them in the holy Scriptures. The apostle then quotes a number of passages from the Old Testament which declare with all possible clearness that the Law *condemns all men without exception as sinners. Thus all the world is guilty* before God. And the Law, in which the Jews put their trust, has for its very purpose to *stop their mouth*, and show them that they are no better than others, but like them deserve punishment. For none can obtain righteousness by keeping the Commandments; on the contrary, by trying it they learn that they are sinners. *This is one purpose of the Law.*

2. GOD HAS IN CHRIST BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE  
 RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH LOST MAN SO  
 SORELY NEEDS (3: 21-31).

*God's Plan to Make Man Righteous.*

The picture of mankind which the apostle here paints is a dark one. No matter which way he turns, he can find no righteousness that can stand before God; but *only sin and guilt*. There seems to be no hope; Gentile and Jew alike are in a bad way.

But then the new light from Heaven, shining through the Gospel, is all the more bright: *God's plan of righteousness* for guilty humanity; but not through their own hopeless efforts to obtain it by obeying the Law. No, God has Himself brought it about, as foretold by the Law itself and the Prophets; and He gives it as a *free gift to all who believe in Christ*. All may have this righteousness. All being sinners, there is but one way for all to obtain righteousness—the way of faith. Having nothing, they must receive all as a gift. In no other way can we become righteous before God. But He could not have given us this grace, had not Jesus Christ borne the punishment of our sins. So, when God deals out the gift of righteousness, He does not consider what we are, or what we have done; but *He looks to Jesus Christ, and to what He has done*. Therefore we do not stand in the sight of God as *guilty*, but as *guiltless* creatures; and therefore God does not demand anything of us in order that He may declare us righteous.

When Jesus willingly gave His life, and with His own blood redeemed fallen humanity, God presented Him before the eyes of all the world as One who gave all that to which the great Day of Atonement had pointed. On that day the high priest went every year into the holy place and sprinkled the blood of the sacri-

fice on the mercy-seat as atonement for sin. But this foreshadowed the atonement through Jesus. Him God set forth as a mercy-seat, through His blood, for all who, in faith, accept His atoning sacrifice. In this way God wanted to show that He is a just God whose judgments are true and righteous altogether. In His great forbearance He had tolerated the sins of man from the fall to the time of Christ. But this forbearance might easily lead people astray in regard to the justice of God. For sin had not been adequately punished, nor had it been properly atoned for. But now that Jesus has by His blood paid the penalty of sin for all the world, there is made full atonement for all guilt. Thus God may as a just God grant righteousness as a free gift of His grace to all who believe in Jesus.

This being so, we have absolutely nothing of which to boast. It would have been otherwise had we been able to earn our own righteousness by obedience to the Law; but now we must *accept it* as a free gift *through faith*.

Had salvation been of the Law it would have been limited to Israel. For the Law had been given to them; and the Gentiles must, in order to be saved, have been adopted into the Jewish people. However, there being but one God, He must be the God of *all men*, and not of the Jews alone; and help them in their sore need by means of a way which all may go: the way of faith.

But does not this mean that the Law is made void, or is suspended? This was one of the complaints made by the Jews against the preaching of Paul. Here he merely repudiates the charge. Instead of making the Law void, he has, on the contrary, given it the place which God wants it to have. Later on he goes into the matter more in detail.

Thus we have in these pregnant verses a summary of the Pauline Gospel: One God and one atonement;

one Savior and one way of salvation for all men, who were equally lost. The salvation in Christ is for all. None receives it as having deserved it by his own works; but because God in His infinite love has had mercy on all men, and offers them righteousness as a free gift of His grace to be received through faith. This is the leading thought in the Gospel of Paul; and this is the true Christianity.

### 3. THE PROOF OF THIS DOCTRINE OF PAUL'S CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS (4-5)

These great thoughts, which God had appointed Paul to preach, meant nothing less than the tearing down of the whole religious structure of the Jews. Therefore the Jews hated the new preaching, and the preacher. It came to be a war to the death.

But it was more than this. The new preaching meant that the Old Covenant was of the past, and that now it was to be replaced by a New Covenant.

Was Paul's preaching true, then, according to the Scriptures? Was it or was it not supported by the Word of God in the Old Testament? If Paul had the Old Testament against him, his preaching could not be true. Here the apostle had an enormous task. We have seen him, in these first chapters, read the Bible to Jews and Christians, and point out what it says concerning all men. Now he proceeds: 'Take your Bible and read it;—God's plan of salvation has always been exactly the one which I have now preached. The history of Abraham must be especially competent proof; for it was as the children of Abraham that the Jews found themselves having a sure salvation. What does, then, the history of Abraham teach in this matter?—Paul finds another proof in the Christians' own experience: and then he pieces together the history of Adam and that of Christ, and shows how closely they fit each other.

## a. PROOF FROM THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM (4:1-25).

*Abraham Was Not Justified by Works.*

4:1-8. Let us begin with our father Abraham, says the apostle, and see how it came about, that he was justified before God. The Jews went wide of the mark when they imagined that Abraham found favor with God because of his good works. For Scripture says distinctly that Abraham *believed* God, and *this* was counted to him for *righteousness* (Gen. 15:6). The way of salvation preached by Paul applied to Abraham also.—But he who has *works* of which to make boast has the right to demand a reward, and then grace is out of the question. But when one has no works to boast of, but turns to God in *faith*, as did Abraham, then his faith is counted to him for righteousness. The idea that one is justified by reason of his good works is the exact opposite of the truth; for it is to the ungodly, who has no works of which to boast, that God can grant righteousness, because this man in faith puts all his trust in God.

This is the testimony of David also, the great Jewish ideal, the man after God's own heart: The glory of justification consists in this, that God forgives us our transgressions.

*Circumcision Does Not Avail.*

4:9-12. Good works, then, had nothing to do with the justification of Abraham. But how was it with his *circumcision*? Here was the next objection with which the enemies of the apostle met him: Without circumcision faith could be of no benefit; for to become a child of God one must be circumcised and thus become one of God's people, a son of Abraham according to the flesh.

Again Paul points to the history of Abraham; faith



was counted to him for righteousness, long before he was circumcised (read Gen. 15 and 17). It is not necessary to be circumcised in order to be declared righteous of God. Thus God has made Abraham the *father of all the faithful*, whether they be circumcised or not.

*The Law, the Promise, Faith, Righteousness.*

4: 13-25. Nor are God's promises dependent on the Law. This, also, is shown by the history of Abraham; for he received the promise because he was justified through faith. No other solution was possible. Had the promises been conditioned on the keeping of the Commandments, none could have made them his own; for the Law calls down the wrath of God on all who violate it; as all men do. Faith would then be useless, and the promise of no account. But if the promise is not conditioned by any law, there would be no violation which could take away the promise; one can not violate a law which does not exist. But that the *promise* might be absolutely sure, God *made it of faith*; for then He could give it to man as a free gift of grace. Then the Gentiles, also, could be made partakers of the promise; and *Abraham* would be the *father of all the faithful*, whether Jew or Gentile. Thereby is fulfilled the word of Scripture; "I have made thee a father of many nations." That the faithful are the true children of Abraham appears in this also, that *their faith is of the same nature as his*. Abraham believed in God as the God who quickens the dead. And in faith he trusted the power and truth of God, even when the fulfilment of the promise seemed humanly impossible. He "against hope believed in hope"; and he did not let unbelief seduce him to doubt God's promises. So his faith was strengthened; and God regarded him as being a righteous man.

Now, that which holds true of Abraham holds true

of us also, if we have the same faith. Then God counts us as righteous. We believe, as did Abraham, in God, who quickens the dead. God raised our Lord Jesus from the dead; who died to atone for our sins, and was raised again, in order that we through faith in Him might stand justified before the judgment seat, and that God might see us in the same light in which he saw Abraham.

b. PROOF FURNISHED BY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE (5: 1-11).

*Our Gracious Communion with God.*

From the time of our being justified by faith we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thereby we have access to that *gracious communion* with God in which we now live. And this grace and peace wherein we daily stand fills us with joy, and we count ourselves happy in the sure *hope* of glory. This hope supports us in all the trials of life; for we feel our hearts filled with the love of God through the Holy Spirit, given us to be our help. God has showered upon us the greatest love which it is possible to imagine. At the appointed time Christ died for us, who were not righteous men—for a good friend one might give his life—but we were sinners, ungodly. But if our Lord Jesus could by His death reconcile us to God, while we were sinners, how much more must He now, that He lives at the right hand of the Father, have power to give eternal life and salvation to us, who are reconciled to God. Therefore we boast, not of our deeds, but of our God, who of His mercy through the atonement of Christ gives us eternal salvation.

Thus Christian experience, also, shows us the truth of Paul's Gospel preaching: that we are justified by faith.

c. PROOF FROM A COMPARISON, OR CONTRAST, BETWEEN  
ADAM AND CHRIST (5:12-21).

*Sin and Death.*

5:12-17. We are justified by faith, because Jesus has with His blood atoned for our sins. But this Covenant of grace in Jesus corresponds precisely to the fall in Adam.

Through the guilt of *one* man, Adam, sin entered the world; and with it came the *punishment*, namely *death*, into the world. From that time these two, sin and death, are inseparable companions. *All men* sin; therefore all must die. By the fall of Adam all came under the power of sin, and thus also under its punishment.

With this connection between sin and death the Law has nothing to do; for sin came into the world long before the Law was given to Moses. That which makes sin sinful is not, then, that it violates a commandment of the Law; and punishment was not a punishment for the violation of a law not yet given. One is not punished for violating a law which does not exist.

But death is from the beginning the appointed punishment for sin, and such it has remained. Since the fall of Adam sin has come like a deadly infection and poisoned the whole human family. Thus all the children of Adam must die, even though they did not sin in exactly the same manner; such far-reaching results did the sin of Adam have. But the first Adam is a prototype of the second Adam, who was to come and be the founder of a new generation of men.

*Life and Righteousness.*

As the fall of Adam brought so much misery upon all men, so the act of grace and love which God performed by the one man Jesus Christ must be even more

far-reaching in its results. The sin of Adam having brought upon us the judgment of condemnation, the gift of grace must bring the opposite, that is, a verdict of acquittal. Thus if *death reigned over the generation of Adam* because of the sin of the ancestor, the grace and righteousness in Christ must even more shed their rich abundance over *the generation of Christ*, giving them *life* and *power* over all things. With Christ the history of mankind is turned into a new channel; there is born a new generation of men, the generation of believers.

#### SUMMARY.

5:18-21. In these verses the apostle sums up the deep thoughts just presented. As the guilty act of *one* man caused God to pronounce the judgment of condemnation on all men, so the righteous act of *one* man has caused God to pronounce the life-giving verdict of righteousness over all men. And in like manner as the many came to stand as sinners condemned to death by the disobedience of *one*, so shall also the many be counted as righteous by the obedience of *one*.

In other words: The merciful grace of God embraces all who are touched by the ravages of sin; Christ builds up again all that which Adam destroyed. In other passages the apostle explains how the individual sinner is to become a partaker of this grace. Here his purpose is to point out and emphasize that the way of salvation is open to all sinners.

With this matter the *Law* has nothing to do; the Law can not save. Far be it from that. Much more it came, siding with sin, in order that its many precepts might show us the terrible power of sin. But where sin abounded, grace did even more abound. God has so directed things, that where sin uses its power to bring death to the sinner, there the grace of God proves itself as having still greater power; for it is able to bring us

that righteousness which gives eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here ends this strong section of the letter to the Romans. The apostle has in a unique religious-historical review shown us the struggle between grace and salvation on the one hand and sin and death on the other. He has pointed out how God has guided events to bring about victory for the forces of life and salvation. The last verse is a song of triumph to the praise of God's love and the riches of his grace. The power of sin is great; but *the power of grace is immeasurably greater.*

#### 4. THE NEW LIFE (6-8).

The apostle has pictured to his readers the lost condition of all men, the Gentiles without the Law, and the Jews with their Law and Circumcision. All must be lost, for none can save himself. But now God has revealed his righteousness, which He gives to all who accept it in faith. In the last two chapters which we have considered the apostle shows that only such a way of salvation is in accord with the Word of God and his dealings with the individual and with humanity; and he defines the mutual relation of God and the believer. In the following chapters he shows the effect of this justification on our inner life and our conversation.

#### a. BELIEVERS ARE BY THE GRACE IN CHRIST MADE FREE FROM THE POWER OF SIN (6:1-7:6).

##### *Christians Are Through Baptism Dead Unto Sin.*

6:1-14. As we have seen, the enemies of the apostle claimed that his teaching encouraged people to lead an immoral life. Here we again collide with this idea. The apostle asks if it is right to construe his teaching concerning the free grace of God as meaning that we

should sin the more in order to give God the better opportunity to show His mercy. And the answer of the apostle is short and clear and sharp: "God forbid." We Christians are *dead* unto sin, and so it is not possible that we can *live* therein. In Baptism we were most intimately united with Jesus, our Savior. But to have part in Jesus means first of all to have part in His death and burial. When Jesus died we died; and when He was buried we were buried. With the death and burial of Jesus His earthly relations with sin were closed; and thereby our life in sin is closed also. We are dead and buried with Jesus. But when we are united with our Savior in Baptism we must have part also in His resurrection. When God raised Him from the dead Christ entered on an entirely new life. When our Savior arose from the dead we arose with Him; and when He received the new life we received it also. Into this union with Jesus we have come through Baptism. We are dead from sin through the union with Jesus, and thereby we also have received a new life with Him. When He suffered Himself to be nailed to the cross we also were crucified. Our "old man"—that is, the natural man, with his life, natural leanings and purpose—was then crucified, that we may no more live the old life in bondage to sin. None is a bondman after his death. If we are dead with Christ, God has declared us free from bondage under sin; and we shall live with Him the life which He lives, the life eternal; for He dies no more. Christ has put sin and death behind Him in order to take eternal life as His own. Now He lives unto God. Our baptismal union with Christ therefore means that we in Him are dead unto sin and live unto God. For this reason Christians must guard against following the lusts of the flesh, and coming again under the bondage of sin. They are translated from death to life, and thus they must fight for God with the weapon

of righteousness, and remember that the power of sin is broken. For they are no longer bound fast to sin by the bonds of the Law (see 5:20); but of God's grace they are free men through their union with Christ, the dead and risen Savior.—The life of the Christian is a life in holiness.

*Christian Liberty Must Not Be Abused.*

6:15–23. The apostle repeats the question which he asked in verse 1, and again answers emphatically no; and then he proceeds to explain more fully what is meant by his doctrine concerning sin and grace. It is the nature of man to serve something or somebody. Either he serves sin, and the end is death; or he follows the will of God in order to obtain righteousness.

Thank God, the Christians have made the right choice. Having been made free from the power of sin, they cheerfully become the servants of righteousness, even as Paul had presented the matter to them. But this doctrine of Christian liberty must not be misunderstood or abused,—a thing which is very easily done. They can not serve *both* sin *and* righteousness, but must serve *either* one *or* the other. Once they were the servants of uncleanness, and so their life itself was unclean. Now that they have become Christians, they must obey the will of God, and their life must be a life in holiness. When they were in the bondage of sin they were free from righteousness. But the fruit of such a life was something of which to be ashamed; for the end of it was death. But now that they are free from sin, and have become servants of God, the fruit is one of which they need not be ashamed, namely sanctification; and the end is eternal life.

In the war waged by sin the soldier receives *death* as his wages. But the free gift which God gives His servants is *Jesus Christ*, and in Him *eternal life*.

*By Death the Christian Is Discharged from His Duty  
Under the Law.*

7: 1-6. The apostle now turns to the Jewish converts. He wants especially them fully to understand his Gospel. Naturally, they found it difficult to grasp his statement concerning freedom from the Law, and to take the full step from life under the Law over into the estate of Christian liberty. The matter seemed doubtful to them; and the apostle must explain it again and again in order to give them the full assurance of faith. This question of Law and liberty is one which every man, passing over from death to life, must settle in his own experience: From sin through Law and death, to Christ with life and liberty.

We all understand that no law can be of force beyond the time of one's death. By death every duty under the law is ended, as under the law concerning marriage. While the husband lives the wife is bound to him by the law; but when he dies she is free, and may, without being faithless, contract a new marriage.

So it is with the Christians. When Christ died we died also. Then we were discharged from the Law; and we can in honor give ourselves wholly to Christ, and in communion with our risen Savior bring forth fruit unto God. This we did not do while we were in bondage under the Law. Then we were the slaves of sin also; for the two go hand in hand (see 6: 14 and 5: 20). The Law aroused the sinful passions in our members, and death harvested the fruit. But now that we are Christians, we are dead unto the Law, and thus free of it. We have, then, nothing more to do with the bondage of Judaism under the letter of the Law. There is now a new force controlling our lives—the Holy Spirit of God.



b. AS LONG AS MAN IS UNDER THE POWER OF THE LAW, HE ALSO IS UNDER THE POWER OF SIN (7:7-25).

*The Law Does Not Make Free; It Enslaves.*

7:1-13. This statement by the apostle concerning the close relation between the Law and sin was one at which the Jews were deeply offended. To them it seemed as if Paul taught that the Law was sin, or that it was at fault. This objection, also, he must meet; and he repudiates their conclusion as not warranted by the premises. The fault is not in the Law. Out of his own experiences he outlines the Law and its purpose:

I had never known the power of evil except through the Law. If the Law had not said: "Thou shalt not covet," I would never have known how strong this lust may be. Thus sin, through the Commandment, came to excite in me the desire to do evil. The lust of sin caused me to do that which the Law forbids. On the other hand, in those things of which the Law makes no mention the lust of sin is dead; it has nothing to do with them.

As a child I, also, lived without being conscious of the Law. But as I grew older and was instructed in the Law, I found that sin lived in me. Then the happy days of childhood were past. I died; and the Commandment, which promised me life, if I kept it (see Lev. 18:5), proved to be an instrument of death. Sin took occasion by the Law to lead me wrong, representing the unlawful as something to be desired, and that which brings ruin as something profitable. In that way sin, through the Commandment, gave me into the power of death, and killed me.

So the fault is not in the Law; it has done me no evil. It could not; for it is God who has given it; and therefore the *Law* and all its Commandments are *holy, righteous* and *good*. That which has brought death to

me is *sin*, not the Law. God gave me the Commandments, in order that my eyes might be opened, that I might see how terrible a danger sin is; it puts me to death. The Commandment was to show me the innermost nature of sin. It is death, said the Law, whenever the lust of sin seduced me into violating the Commandments.

*The War in the Christian Between the "Flesh" and the "Mind."*

7:14-25. I and all other Christians have in the school of life learnt to understand that it is God's Spirit who speaks to me through the Law; and for my good. The reason for the pain which I experience is not in the Law, but in myself. I am *flesh*; and in this my corrupt, sinful, weak human nature I am wholly in the power of sin; I am the slave of sin. Such is now my experience. I wish to do one thing, but I do something widely different. Thus I bear witness with the Law that it is good. This being so, it is not, strictly speaking, "I myself" who does evil, but it is the sin which dwells in me. That is the cause of my weakness, and makes use of it.

This, then, is my sad experience: In me, that is *in my flesh, dwells no good thing*. My "self" is corrupt to the bone. I have the will to do good, but it is powerless. Evil, sin, which dwells in me, has control.

Thus I see that there is in me a *double nature*. *One impulse is to delight in the Law of God*, and to do that which is good; but with this there is *another, overpowering impulse, which wars against the first*, and irresistibly masters me. The first is of my "mind": the other rules my conduct. I am dragged on like a chained prisoner of war. As long as I am in this body of death I can not escape this awful war. Who shall deliver me from this miserable existence?

God be praised. While I have reason to complain and to long for deliverance, feeling, as I do in this life, the mighty power of sin in my corrupt nature; I also have abundant reason to thank God, that my "mind," set free through our Lord Jesus Christ, is become God's obedient servant.

The apostle has now shown us how helpless man is when left to his own devices. Neither the Law nor man's own strength can help him. Man is the certain prey of death.—Then comes the joyous contrast: There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. On the one side the despairing cry: Wretched man that I am; left to myself; standing on the verge of the pit, looking into the terrible jaws of death, which would swallow me. On the other side: A happy life, an open Heaven. God be praised through Jesus Christ our Lord.

c. THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST. IS A LIFE IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST (8:1-30).

*God Does That Which the Law Could Not Do.*

8:1-11. No condemnation awaits those who through faith and Baptism are united with Christ Jesus; while the Law condemns all who are outside of this communion with Christ. In this communion with Christ I have the liberty which He has bought me; deliverance from the power of sin and death. An entirely new life lies before me. Now I am led onward by the Spirit of eternal life, who has quickened me, and has the determining influence over my life. *For that which the Law could not do, God has done.* The Law could command, but the "flesh" made it powerless. *Law could not conquer over sin.* But God did it in an entirely different way. *He sent His Son* to our earth, and gave Him a body; such as our bodies, in which sin exercises

its power. It was to atone for sin that God did this; and that He might pronounce judgment on sin in the flesh. In the flesh of Christ God executed the judgment of death on sin, dethroned sin as the ruling force in human nature, and stripped it of its power. And now that could come about which had been impossible: The demands of God's Law could be fulfilled in us. For through our coming into communion with Christ, the Spirit of God is become the living force in our life. This was God's purpose. So there is among men a great difference in their whole scheme of life. They who do not belong to Christ desire to follow the lusts of the flesh. But sin reigns in the flesh, and it wants to do only that which is contrary to the will and Law of God. It is not in this nature to do otherwise. But God can not have pleasure in him who lives in this wise, and the end of it is death. They, on the other hand, who allow themselves to be led by the Spirit of God have their joy in that which is of the Spirit: life in God, and peace with God. Christians do not live according to the desires of the flesh; they live in the Spirit of God, who dwells in them, and directs their life; and only these belong to Christ. To be sure, the body of the Christian is mortal, for sin still dwells in it; but the new spiritual man can not die, as through righteousness he is the owner of life. Even the body can not remain dead always. For if the Spirit of God, who raised Christ from the dead, dwells in us, our bodies, also, must arise from the grave, that the whole man with body and soul may live in everlasting bliss with God.

*The Bondman and the Child.*

8: 12-17. We have, then, no obligations toward the flesh; for to follow its desires is death. But if by the Spirit of God we put to death the life in sin, we have life eternal. *God's children shall live.* Now, the *proof*

that we are the children of God is this, that in our life we are led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit which God gave us is *not* the *spirit of bondage*, which would make us to continue in fear of death and the judgment. But we received the *spirit of adoption as children*, so that we may confidently and gladly trust our all in the hands of our heavenly Father. This spirit of adoption is not an empty dream, but something real, resting on the testimony of the Spirit of God in our heart. But if children, then we are *heirs* of God. We shall divide the inheritance with Christ, our Brother. Even if we here must suffer for a time, glory awaits us. As the lot of Christ is, so shall ours be.

*Creation Is Waiting for the Liberty of God's Children.*

8:18-27. It may be a heavy road we have to travel here below; but this suffering is as nothing compared with the resplendent glory awaiting us. To reach this is the *longing* and yearning of *all creation*. Now it groans in pain under the yoke of corruption, which God laid upon it for the sake of man's sin. But at the same time it is hoping for the liberty which God's children are to receive on the day of glory. Then shall creation also be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

*God's Children Are Waiting.*

A still deeper groan is ascending to God; the *groan* rising from the hearts of *His children*. God has given us His Spirit as the first installment of our inheritance. We are waiting, therefore, for the remainder of the heritage, including the redemption of our body. We own all now in *hope*. The greatest and best part of our inheritance is not yet ours. This, then, we await with patience.

*The Spirit of God Is Waiting.*

The *Spirit also is waiting* for this consummation, and teaches us to pray as God wants us to pray. Often we can not put our longing into words; but that is of no importance. For the omniscient God knows the meaning of the unuttered longing which the Spirit has put into our heart. The Spirit makes intercession for God's children before the throne of grace. God has so ordered it.

*God's Eternal Foreordination.*

8:28-30. *The surest proof, however, that we are to reach the heavenly glory is this, that God has so decided in his eternal decree.* That which sustains the Christian in his times of trouble is his assurance that our salvation rests secure in the decree of God. If God has begun the good work He will know how to finish it. God will find a way of carrying out His plan of salvation. God has so ordered it that all things, even afflictions, must serve to further the salvation of them that love God. These are they whom God in His eternal decree decided to call as His children. He foreknew them all, each individual among them. And concerning them He has ordained that they are to be conformed in glory to the image of His Son. That which Jesus received, His brethren also shall receive. God so wills it.

And that which God has decreed He also performed; for there is no wavering in Him. Whom he foreknew and forordained, He also called. And whom He called, and who in faith obeyed the call, them He justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

This is God's great plan of salvation, which is from everlasting; and it is as sure as though it were already consummated.

8:31-39. *Conclusion. Nothing—no accusation, and no judgment of condemnation—can be laid to the charge*

*of God's elect; and no power in the world can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.*

What result have we now attained? asks the apostle in conclusion. As we have heard, many charges had been made against his teaching. His opponents contended that it led to sin, and that it was condemned by the Law. But the contention is not true. Paul's exposition of his doctrine has led to this result: *God is for us.* Who can then be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of one whom God defends?

That God is for us is shown most clearly in this, that in the greatness of His love He sacrificed His own Son to save us; and it must then be sure that He will freely give us all things else necessary to our salvation.

And when God's elect are pronounced righteous by Him, none other can lay anything to their charge. There can be no condemnation for us, since Christ died for us; yea, rather was raised from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of God, and is our Advocate with the Father. There is, then, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

How glorious is the Christian estate! *Nothing can separate us from the love of God and of Christ.* Paul here makes mention of all the suffering and adversity which may be our lot, and especially of injustice done us by others. Often it seems as though God had forgotten us. But, says the apostle, in all this we are more than conquerors. Nothing could separate us from the love of Christ. We remain victors through Him who loved us. So he closes with the triumphant declaration: Nothing, nothing whatever, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

These words, with which this section of the letter is brought to a close, have been called "Paul's 'Song of Songs'." It is one of the most wonderful passages in Holy Writ, a true fount of salvation. Here is put into

words an assurance of salvation which is not of earth or of time. It is a song of triumph over sin and death; all things must yield to the spirit of life in Christ. With this the apostle has crowned his argument for the truth of his Gospel. In the face of this God-given assurance, all the objections raised by the Jews and all the doubts harbored by the Jewish converts must fall to the ground. It is the sun of God's righteousness whose rays dispel all the dark clouds, and fill the Christian heart with the joy of Heaven.

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## II. FOR THE JEWS FIRST, AND THEN FOR THE GREEKS (9-11).

The apostle has now set forth the plan of salvation in all its perfected glory and unerring certainty. This Gospel raised many doubts among the Jewish Christians, and the Jews made war on it with all their might.

Besides, the Jews were offended by the success of Paul's missionary work; and many of the Jewish Christians also looked upon this work with serious shakings of the head. For it developed that the Gentiles were coming to be much more numerous than the Jewish converts in the Christian Churches. Was this right? This state of affairs might lead to the result that the Gentile Christians would look down on the Jews as a wicked and inferior people. The apostle now takes this up, and sets forth the truth of the matter.

### 1. THE JEWS HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD GOD'S PROMISES (9:1-29).

#### *Paul Has Great Sorrow for His People.*

9:1-5. The apostle has sorrow and bitter pain in thinking of his own people. God had showered His



favours upon them with incredible lavishness, and had now at last let His own Son, who is true God with the Father, be born as one of the Jewish people. In spite of all this the Jews have not been saved, but have hardened their hearts against the grace of the Gospel.

*The Jews Thought That as Descendants of Abraham They Were the Rightful Owners of the Promises of God.*

9:6-13. The Jews did not understand the Word of God; and thus they did not now see that the promises were fulfilled. They had invented their own special theories and doctrinal system; and so the Word of God had to be forced to agree with their ideas. The one thing certain to them was that Israel was God's chosen people; and it was to this people that God had given all His promises. The descendants of Abraham were of this people, they and none others. This was what they found in Scripture. But now Paul takes up this Sacred Book, and proves that they have completely misunderstood God's Word. It is not the descent from Abraham which makes one a true Israelite and heir to the promises of God. This was made plain even when God gave to Abraham the promise concerning Isaac. For Abraham had then many sons; and had God counted their descent from Abraham after the flesh as the one important thing, these sons ought first to have been counted his heirs; nevertheless Isaac was the "child of the promise," and was to be the father of Israel. Descent from Abraham does not, then, of itself necessarily mean ownership of the promises. Worldly goods descend by inheritance from father to son; but the promises of God are a different matter. These are property of quite another kind.

The same rule held good in the next generation. The promise did not descend to the firstborn after the flesh.

—Neither birth nor works can determine the plan of God. This He showed most clearly by the decree that Jacob, the younger son, was to take over the right of the firstborn, and thus inherit the promise, while the elder brother was to be the servant of the younger. The reason given is this, that God loved Jacob, but hated Esau. Thus God had made clear that He will be bound by nothing of earth, but will be free to adopt as His children any whom He in His wisdom and love may elect.

*God's Foreordination Can Never Be Unjust.*

9: 14–16. But, one may ask, is not this an injustice on the part of God? Paul repudiates any such suggestion. Injustice—on the part of God! *God's foreordination can never be unjust or unrighteous.* Such a thing is unthinkable. God is not a fickle tyrant. Our election is in the hands of Him who is compassionate and gracious, long-suffering and rich in mercy. Had God decided that they only who are descendants of Abraham after the flesh, were to inherit the promise, this would have been unjust to the others. And if God had limited His mercy to certain individuals of especially strong and enterprising character, this would have been unjust to the many who are not so well equipped, and who could not have made the race. No, if God is to be just toward all, His merciful love must not depend on anything of this earth, but solely on His own will and power to save.

*God Is Just, Even When He Hardens Whom He Will.*

9: 17–18. We reach the same result if we look at the matter from the opposite direction. As God has mercy on whom He will, so *He also hardens whom He will. In both cases He acts with righteousness.* This

appears in the history of Pharaoh. God raised him up in order to show in him the power of God; that all men might see that even earth's mightiest king is powerless to prevent God from carrying out His plan of salvation. Thus God has mercy upon whom He will, and hardens whom He will. The very fact that God's will is supreme, is the surest guaranty against all manner of injustice and of acting without purpose; for there is no such thing as unrighteousness of any sort in God (9: 14). A man's fate can be in no better hands than in the hands of God.

*God's Decree of Election Is in the Service of His Saving Love.*

9: 19-29. Against that which Paul here says might be raised the objection, that *man's responsibility* then ceases; for none can withstand the will of God. To this the apostle answers that it is not seemly for any man thus to reply against God. For as against God, man is merely like clay in the hands of the potter. The potter has a right over the clay to make it into any kind of a vessel. Thus God has the same right and power, if He wishes to use them. God has, however, not chosen to crush those who have aroused His anger, and were fit for nothing but to be cast out from His face; but He has endured them with much long-suffering. And this He did, in order that He might make known to those whom He has fitted for the glory, how infinitely great that glory is which He has prepared for them on whom He has had mercy. *And in choosing us to be such vessels of mercy* God has not taken into account whether we were *Jews* or *Gentiles*. This is just and merciful, and none has any right to complain. Thus God has kept His promise through the prophet Hosea, to make the heathen His chosen people, His beloved children. God has also foretold through the prophet

Isaiah that only a small remnant of Israel shall be saved. Had not God in His mercy preserved this remnant of the faithful among the Israelites, all Israel would have suffered the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.

## 2. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE JEWS IS THEIR OWN FAULT (9:30—10:20).

*The Salvation of the Gentiles Is No Violation of the Rights of the Jews.*

9:30—33. When the Christian Churches mostly consist of Gentile converts, and have but few Jews, this state of affairs is in full accord with that which God had foretold. Israel had been warned many times; therefore no injustice has been done them. It is their own fault that not all of them have become partakers of the promise. It is this which the apostle now wishes to make clear.

When the Gentiles, who did nothing whatever to attain to righteousness before God, still did reach it, while the Jews fell short in spite of all their efforts; this is to be explained by the circumstance that the Gentiles were willing to attain righteousness in the only way possible, that is, by receiving it in faith as a gift of God. The Israelites, on the other hand, wanted to earn their own righteousness by keeping the Commandments. Thus they collided with the Stone of Stumbling, Christ; whom God had given to the Jews, that they might be saved by Him. But they rejected Him; and it was with them even as it is written: They did not believe in Him, and their unbelief caused their downfall.

*The Jews Wish to Bring About Their Own Righteousness.*

10:1—4. It is the apostle's great sorrow in life that such is to be the fate of his own people; and he all the

time prays for their salvation. He sees that they strive continually to become righteous before God. They can not understand, and *will not follow that way of righteousness which God has pointed out to them. Nor do they understand the Law*; for its true purpose is to drive men to Christ, in order that through faith in Him they may receive righteousness as a free gift.

*The Righteousness by Way of the Law, and the Righteousness Which Is of Faith.*

10: 4-13. Between the *way of the Law* and the *way of faith* in the attainment of righteousness there is a very wide difference. The Law says: Do these things, and you shall live. But the righteousness of faith does not demand of us the impossible. It points to Christ, who came down to us from Heaven, and is risen from the dead; and it says, that if in your heart you believe on Jesus, and confess Him with your mouth, you are righteous and shall be saved. This salvation is offered to all, Jew and Greek; for Jesus is the Lord and Savior of all. His love is great enough to save all who cry to Him in their trouble, as the prophet Joel has said.

*Israel Has Heard the Word of Faith, But Has Rejected It.*

10: 14-21. *To believe on Jesus, then, and to call upon His name, is the way in which to become righteous before God.* But had the Jews been given the opportunity to hear of Jesus, that they might come to Him? They most certainly had;—and with the outcome which Isaiah had prophesied. God has sent His messengers with the Good News to every part of the world where Jews are to be found. They can not make the excuse that they have not heard the Glad Tidings. But, unfortunately, they have made true another statement by

the same prophet: They closed their heart to the message. Thus they did not come to believe in Christ.

The Jews had been informed, also, that God would turn to the Gentiles with His Gospel of salvation, in order, if possible, to stir the Jews to take serious thought of the matter. But nothing came of it; Israel is a people that will not obey. This and nothing else is the reason for Israel's condemnation. But the Gentiles accepted the salvation which God revealed to them.—Thus are the Words of the prophets fulfilled. "Read the Holy Scriptures," says the apostle to the people of his own race, "and you will see that the ways of the Lord are justice and mercy."

### 3. GOD'S PLANS FOR THIS STUBBORN PEOPLE (11: 1-36).

#### *God Has Not Cast Off Israel.*

11: 1-10. We have seen how Israel has behaved toward God; and one might have expected that God would in revenge have cast off his people. But Paul declares that God has not done this. "Of this I am," says he, "a living witness." God foreknew the people, and yet he chose it to be his own people. This he did not do in order to cast it off. But it is now as in the days of Elijah. Then everything seemed so dark that even the Lord's prophet was near despair. Yet even so *God had preserved a remnant*, which had remained loyal to him. But God had not chosen even these for their good works; but because He had mercy on them.

The others God has hardened, so that they neither see nor hear. Israel is now what it was of old. This has been the plaint of the men of God from Moses to Isaiah.

*The Problem Solved.*

11:11-23. Are we to understand, then, that God has done this in order that they might fall? Of course not. But God *let them fall on account of their own stubborn behavior*; and in His wisdom and goodness God so ordered it that their fall *must further His plan of salvation*. God now will try a new way of winning them. He therefore turned with his offer of salvation to the Gentiles, hoping thereby to induce Israel again to seek earnestly the favor of God. But if the *fall of Israel* brought the riches of God's grace to the Gentiles, how much more glorious must not the results be when *Israel* as a people is *saved*! "This," says the apostle, "is the great purpose always before me. God has made me His witness among the Gentiles; and it is the greatest happiness of my life to do this work. But the salvation of my own people is never out of my thoughts. For if the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews has caused the Gentile world to have a part in the glorious gift of the atonement, then will its acceptance by the Jews be followed by the life eternal. For after the conversion of Israel shall come the end of the world, and thereafter everlasting life."

[Some understand this rather vague expression, "life from the dead," to mean a great awakening in the Church when Israel is saved.]

God can not have cast Israel off for good and all. For if Abraham, the first fruit and root of the people, was holy, his people also must be holy. That is, not every individual Israelite. We have seen that most of them have rejected the Gospel; and so God has cut them off as dead branches on the tree of Israel. They were of the seed of Abraham, but were not connected with him in the bond of faith, and thus did not in truth belong to the people of God. In their place God has chosen people of Gentile birth and made them members

of the true Israel. Thus the history of Israel is the preface, as it were, to the history of Christ's Church among the Gentiles. This we Gentile Christians must not forget. Israel is the root, and the Gentiles are the branches; and the branches do not nourish the root, but are nourished by the root. The Gentiles must not boast that God has cast off the Jews in order to put the Gentiles in the vacant place. The reason for the rejection of the Jews was their unbelief. God will regard Gentiles as His people, as long as they remain in the faith; and with fear realize that God treats all alike, both when He has mercy on man and when He casts him off.

*The Great Purpose of God in All That He Does Is the Salvation of All.*

11:25-36. If God could graft the Gentiles into His Israel, He surely can do it with the Jews also, when they turn to Him. God has shaped the course of history, and revealed His plan to His apostle; else neither Paul nor any other man could have known anything of these things. A "hardening in part has befallen Israel"; and it will continue until God shall have led the great army of saved Gentiles into His Church. Then salvation shall come also to Israel as a people; as it is written, that "when Christ, the Deliverer, comes, He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and forgiveness of sins shall be the foundation of His New Covenant with the Jewish people."

By reason of their rejection of the Gospel the Jews are, to be sure, the objects of God's anger, while salvation is given to the Gentiles. But as His Chosen People God loves the Jews for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for He never repents of His goodness.

The Gentiles were in time past disobedient to God, yet they have obtained mercy. Now the Jews are disobedient; and God has given them over to such dis-



obedience, in order that He might thereby draw them to Himself, and again cover them with mercy.

Thus God deals in the same way with all; and *His great purpose is salvation for both Jew and Gentile*. Both are deep in the mire of sin; and God has shaped history in such a way that He has gathered all together into the great mass of sinners, in order that He might show to all the same great mercy.

Unsearchable as are God's judgments, and His ways past tracing out, it will appear at last that here is a dept of riches both of wisdom and mercy, far beyond our power to understand. For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things; He is the beginning and the end of it all. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen.

The apostle has now unfolded to us this wonderful picture of God's eternal plan of salvation, and has shown us how God has directed human history. Back of this history of the peoples stands the living God, who holds all the threads in His hands. His ways are past finding out, but His aim is the salvation of mankind.

It is *God's providence in the history of the peoples* which the apostle here sets forth; not the manner in which God leads the individual upward to life and salvation. He does not say that Israel is to have a position of vantage in the Church of the New Covenant; nor that the Jews are to receive something withheld from the Gentiles. In the New Covenant there is but one Israel, the true, believing, spiritual children of Abraham. But God, who forgets none of His creatures, will not forget the Jewish people. He is the God of all; and He will do everything possible, that the Jews also may be saved. And it shall come to pass. Before the end of the world there will be a great revival among the Jews.

### III. THE NEW LIFE IN ITS RELATION TO THE AFFAIRS OF OUR DAILY LIFE (12: 1-15: 13).

Paul has now laid before the Romans the Gospel which God had given him to preach. In the last part of the letter he points out how Christians must show their faith by their attitude in the different affairs of life. The power of God, which is in the free Gospel, must develop into a life in holiness. Paul puts all this into the form of an admonition.

#### *The Life of the Christians in the Church.*

12: 1-8. The mercy which God has shown to the Christians is to be the new and motive power in them, causing their whole life to be devoted to the service of God. In their relations with their Christian brethren they are to be sober, and in their Church work they are to be faithful.

#### *Admonition to Brotherly Love and a Forgiving Spirit.*

12: 9-21. Brotherly love is to be without hypocrisy; all their inner life full of the glow imparted by the Spirit of God. In prosperity and adversity alike, strong, helpful and hospitable, magnanimous toward enemies, and always sympathetic toward friends. None shall set himself up above others; and as far as possible, Christians shall keep peace with all men. God will care for His own. They shall overcome that which is evil by doing that which is good.

#### *Obedience to the Government.*

13: 1-7. The temporal powers are ordained of God to administer justice on earth. The Christian shall therefore honor them as God's servants, and do his duty as a citizen of the State; not because of the fear

of punishment, but out of respect for the government and its high calling.

*Love Is the Fulfilment of the Law.*

13:8—14. Christians must not in any way molest others, or work them any injury. They are to have self-respect, and keep themselves free of heathenish immorality. They are the children of light, and have put on the Lord Christ. He shall soon come again. It is important, therefore, to be always on guard.

*The Habit of Judging Others in the Church.*

14:1—15:13. It is not the business of one Christian to judge the other. It is the province of the master to judge the servant; hence it is not ours to judge the servant of another, of Christ. Let each be allowed to arrange his own life as his own conscience dictates; and then Christ shall at last pronounce the final judgment. Especially are they who have more advanced ideas to be charitable and considerate in dealing with such as have their doubts and scruples about the right to do certain things. Let all remember that the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. Therefore none shall bring strife into the Church because of such things as these, but rather bear the infirmities of the weak. In this matter, also, Christians shall try to follow in the footsteps of their Master. He became the servant of all; of the Jews first, and then by God's grace of the Gentiles also. Therefore God's name is praised among all, both Jews and Gentiles. Thus are fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. None, then, shall exalt himself above the other.

This part of the letter closes with the wish that God may fill the Christians in Rome with all joy and peace.

## CLOSING REMARKS (15:14—16:27).

The main part of the letter is finished. There follow some closing remarks of a more personal nature, together with a final greeting.

15:14—21. The apostle makes a forceful statement of his reasons for writing this letter. Then he tells (15:22—33) that it is his purpose to visit Rome on his way to Spain; but first he must carry the money which he has collected to Jerusalem. He begs (16:1—2) the Church in Rome to receive with all kindness sister Phebe, who brings them the letter and who is from Cenchrea, the port of Corinth. Then he sends special greetings to a number of persons (16:3—16). Last of all (16:17—27) he issues a warning against all things contrary to the true doctrine; and he prays that God may strengthen and guide the Roman Christians in all things.

## The Two Letters to the Church at Corinth.

These letters cast a flood of light on conditions in the earliest Christian Churches, as do no other writings of those times. The German scholar, Prof. Dr. Weiszaecker, says: "These two letters are in an eminent degree historical. They describe a series of conditions and facts in such a way as to be a good substitute for the usual historical documents. In many respects these letters are the only, and in others the best source of knowledge which we have. Even if we had nothing more than these letters, they would be sufficient to show us the oldest form taken by the Christian religion in Greek-Roman soil." And the French scholar, Prof. Godet, says: "These two letters have a special interest to the Church. They unfold to us, as do no other letters, the inner life of a large Congregation in those earliest times. They let us see the magnitude of the war waged by the apostle of the Gentiles; and they give us a deep insight into his character, his emotional nature, and his whole personality."

The letter to the Romans shows us the apostle in his fight against Jewish ideas and traditions, which threatened to destroy the Gospel and the Church; while the letters to the Corinthians show him in his fight against heathen ideas and traditions, which threatened the Gospel and the Church from the opposite direction.

Concerning the city of Corinth and its Congregation. read Part I of this volume, pages 97-102, 110-112.

## First Epistle to the Corinthians.

This letter begins, as is usual, with greetings and an introduction (1:1-9), and ends with some personal closing remarks and a farewell greeting (chap. 16). The main body of the letter deals with the many difficulties of the Congregation, torn as it was by disputes concerning Christian duty and Christian liberty; and answers the many questions put to him; trying in general to bring order out of the chaotic conditions in this Church.

### THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

Salutation. 1:1-9.

1. Against sectarianism. 1:10-4:21.
  2. Against immorality and dissensions in the Church. 5-6.
  3. Concerning marriage. 7.
  4. Of Christian liberty and its limitations. 8:1-11:1.
  5. Answers to a number of questions in regard to conditions in the Congregation, and in regard to the public Church service. 11:2-31.
  6. Of God's Spirit, and of spiritual gifts. 12-14.
  7. The resurrection of the dead. 15.
- Conclusion and greeting. 16.

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### INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION.

1:1-9. The letter begins with a *greeting* to the brethren; and the apostle expresses his joy in the knowledge that the truths of the Christian religion had gained a foothold among them, and that the spiritual gifts had

been poured out abundantly upon them. He prays God that their lives may always be marked by true holiness.

Thus the introduction is characteristic, in that it gives the Congregation an inkling of those things which are weighing on the mind of the writer.

#### 1. AGAINST SECTARIANISM (1: 10-4: 21).

##### *Away with Party Divisions.*

1: 10-16. The apostle denounces the party feeling, which always brings strife and divisions, and which threatens to disrupt the Congregation; and he urges them to be quit of this unseemly contention, and to be of one mind. They are not to worship men; and they must not use his name, or that of any other leader, as a party slogan. None of these names can save them. Paul has not been crucified for them, nor have any been baptized into his name. Christians are to belong to Christ, and to none other. Therefore Paul is glad that he has baptized only two persons in Corinth; so that people can not boast of being better than others because of having been baptized by Paul himself.

##### *The Wisdom of the World, and the Foolishness of God.*

1: 17-31. "Christ has not sent me to baptize," says the apostle, "but to preach the good news of salvation." And this is what the apostle does; and he never asks what and how the people would like to have him preach. He knows that the Jews want proofs which they can see and handle; and that the Greeks have a weakness for philosophical essays set forth in polished language. But he does not resort to such means; for thereby the wisdom and power of God in the Gospel are weakened; the hearers are interested in the style of the discourse, and forget the matter itself. For the Word of the

cross is widely different from the wisdom of this world. This wisdom can not rise to such heights. Therefore the Word of the cross seems foolishness to the great mass of the "wise" in this world. But they who in simplicity of heart believe this Word, and are saved by it, experience that it is the power of God. Through the preaching of this Word, which was to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, God has shown it to be both wisdom and power; for this Word alone was able to raise up and save that which the world looked down on and despised. Thus God puts to shame that which is great and strong and wise in the eyes of the world. The Christian has, therefore, nothing of which to boast before God; for all that he is or has is given him by reason of his being in Christ, and Christ in him.

*Paul's Preaching.*

2: 1-5. Paul did not come to them in the character of a traveling lecturer, with smooth speech or deep speculations. But in simple language he preached to them the testimony of God concerning salvation in the crucified Jesus; that all might understand that the persuasive power of his words was not a result of his skill as an orator, but was caused by the Holy Spirit, who through these words showed forth His power.

*Wisdom Among the Fullgrown.*

2: 6-16. However, Paul also can speak wisdom. He can do it, he says, to them that are somewhat advanced in Christian knowledge. But remember that it is *God's* wisdom which he speaks; the wisdom that has been hidden, God's eternal decree of salvation, whatsoever thing God prepared for them that love Him. This is something which no man of himself could ever con-



ceive. For the mind of man, drawing its wisdom out of its own depths, can not grasp the thoughts of God; these are of another nature, and to the natural man they are foolishness. Only *God's Spirit* can reveal God's thoughts to us; for the Spirit alone knows God's heart; and the Spirit alone can teach us to present these thoughts of God in the right way. It is not possible to judge the thoughts of God by means of our little systems of so-called philosophy. None but such as have the Spirit of God in their heart can judge of these matters. Neither can men properly judge the children of God; for they do not know the Lord's mind, nor can they instruct God's children in spiritual things. But we Christians have the mind of Christ.

*Spiritually, the Christians in Corinth Have Not Come of Age. Their Partisan Strife Is Evidence of Their Childishness.*

3: 1-15. The Church in Corinth has not reached such spiritual maturity that the apostle can lay before them the deeper things. In the matter of religion the Corinthian Christians are as little children who need milk. There is too much of carnal jealousy and strife among them, as evidenced by their violent partisanship. What can it profit them to wrangle about Apollos and Paul? These are but God's servants. They may plant and water, but God must give the increase. They may build the Church of God, but there is only one sure foundation, Jesus Christ. The several builders build, each as well as he can. Some do better, and some poorer work. The great day of judgment shall reveal whether or not the work of each can stand the test. Therefore we would better leave the question open till that day comes.

*The Congregation Is God's Temple.*

3: 16-23. God dwells in the Congregation, and there he will be worshiped. Therefore the Church is holy and must not be destroyed; for if any man destroy it, him shall God punish. It is not only unwise teachers who may destroy the Congregation. It may be that some member of the Church is puffed up, is wise in his own conceit, and fondly imagines that he surely knows a thing or two. If such there be, he should know that God takes the wise in their craftiness, which in the sight of God is mere vanity and foolishness. Let the members of the Church in Corinth be on their guard. And then they must no longer boast of being followers of a certain teacher. They are to bear in mind that all the teachers, no matter what their name, are sent of God to show them the way, and that whatever meets them is sent for their good; and first of all they must remember that they belong to Christ, and through Him are the children of God.

*Paul Is the Lord's Servant, and the Lord Is Paul's Judge.*

4: 1-5. They whom the Lord has called to preach the Gospel are servants of Christ; and the Lord demands that they be faithful. The servant must render an account to his master; and only the master has any right to judge the servant. This has been the apostle's rule of action. He leaves the judgment to the Lord; and when the Lord comes to hold judgment, much that was hidden will be brought to light, and we shall see that we often were mistaken in our judgments.

*Paul's Defense of Himself.*

4: 6-21. The apostle fairly lashes the Corinthians in most scathing terms for being puffed up and for their

foolish and conceited idea that they were the proper persons to judge him and Apollos. With fiery eloquence he describes his life in strife and suffering because of them. This part of the letter especially shows Paul as a man who could put his words cunningly together, and who was a brilliant orator. One is in reading it strongly reminded of the Old Testament prophets.

The Corinthians are arrogant and overbearing. They think themselves so superior, wise and strong, that they can look down on their foolish, despised and maltreated apostle. They imagine themselves as perfectly able to sit in judgment on him. The apostle does not, however, now wish to put them to shame; he merely reminds them that no matter how many teachers they may have, they have him, Paul, as their only spiritual father. Therefore it is highly improper of them to put themselves up as his judges. They should imitate him rather than judge him.

They must not think that he fears them because of their arrogance, and dares not come to them. But he sends his faithful friend Timothy to look into the matters complained of among them. And now it will depend on the behavior of the Corinthians themselves, whether Paul is to come to them in a spirit of gentleness, or come to punish them.

## 2. AGAINST IMMORALITY AND DISSENSIONS IN THE CHURCH (5: 1—6: 20).

### *Sexual Immorality in the Church.*

5: 1—13. Paul has said what he had to say against the spirit of partisanship; and he has spoken his mind on the subject without himself becoming a partisan of either faction. But there were other causes of complaint also against the Corinthian Church. All sorts of offenses against sexual morality are a part of the

heathen life; and it takes a long time for converted heathen to rid themselves of these vices. The reports of missionary workers have always and everywhere told the same story.

There had been an especially flagrant instance of such vice among the Corinthian Christians. One of these lived in incest with his stepmother. But the Corinthians had in their arrogant conceit been so busy passing judgment on the apostle, that they had found no time to punish this outrage against all decency. It is a matter easily disposed of, says the apostle. There is but one thing to do, and that is to expel the man from the Congregation; turn him out into the wicked world, where Satan rules, and there will soon be made an end of such an unclean animal. Or it might be that the sinner would come to another way of thinking, and be saved, before the day of grace is ended.

The Congregation must cease their boasting, and rather begin a thorough house-cleaning. This would be especially appropriate at this season, just before Easter. Let them shun the company of those who call themselves brethren, but who openly lead vicious lives. Such people should not be tolerated in the Church.

*Members of the Congregation Go to Law with One Another before the Heathen Courts.*

6: 1-11. There are other matters also that cause the apostle much sorrow. Christians have suits at law concerning things of only temporal importance, and before heathen judges. It is a disgrace that Christian Church members cannot settle such little matters among themselves. Some time the Christians are to judge even angels. These suits at law are a blot on the Church. Christian people should rather suffer than do wrong. Licentiousness, covetousness, drunkenness and backbiting are sins which exclude one from God's Kingdom.

While the Corinthians yet lived as heathens, many of them had been guilty of these sins. But they had been washed in Baptism, and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of God. They are set free from their former life of sin, and have begun a new life in purity and holiness, having received forgiveness of sin.

*Christians Must Lead a Chaste Life.*

6: 12-20. Christian liberty is a great thing, but it must not be abused. It must not be made into liberty to do wrong. Unchastity is not to be regarded as something of little account, as merely an innocent gratification of a natural want, like that of hunger. For the body is "not for fornication, but for the Lord." The body of the Christian is a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Christian must shun all forms of unchastity, and lead a clean life to the glory of God.

3. CONCERNING MARRIAGE (7: 1-40).

The Congregation in Corinth had sent a letter to Paul, asking him a number of questions, mostly concerning matters of discipline. These questions he answers in the chapters now before us. One delicate matter with which to deal in the earliest Gentile Churches was the question of marriage. In heathen circles there were even at this time certain persons who praised the unmarried estate as being morally more clean than the married estate. It is not difficult to understand how such an idea came to be born in the Churches. Later on this idea was to spread and gain strength, until it ruled the Church. It still holds full sway among the Roman Catholics. Another difficulty was caused by the so-called mixed marriages, in which one of the parties

was an unbeliever and the other a Christian. The apostle deals with these matters carefully and tactfully.

*Marriage Is Not a Sin.*

7:1-9. Marriage is not an immoral institution. Quite the reverse. The unmarried are exposed to much temptation. Therefore, in the case of most people, marriage is advisable.

*Divorce.*

7:10-16. It is not advisable to dissolve the mixed marriages. Interest in the Christian training of the children should keep the Christian husband or wife from taking such a step. Besides, the unbeliever might possibly be converted to the Christian faith. But if the unbelieving husband divorces his Christian wife, this is another matter. Then it is he who has dissolved the marriage. The wife is not a slave. God has called us to live our life in peace.

*Christians Are to Remain in Their Old Calling.*

7:17-24. In general, it is a good rule that the Christian should remain in his old calling and condition of life; and he must obey the laws of the State. This the slave also should remember. The liberty to which they are called is liberty in Christ. It is to make them spiritually free that Christ has bought them with His blood.

*Young People and Marriage.*

7:25-38. To the young people, and particularly to the young girls, the apostle gives the advice that on account of the distress and dangers threatening the Christians, they would better remain unmarried. For the affliction may be more keenly felt when one is living with a wife or husband. Paul wants to spare his young

friends this greater sorrow. And then, the unmarried are more free to take the proper measures when the troubles come. But the apostle does not want them to be understood as holding the view that the unmarried state has any peculiar sanctity.

### *Widows.*

7: 39-40. Widows have full liberty to marry again; but they should then see to it that they find a Christian husband. Under the existing circumstances they probably do best, however, in remaining unmarried.

## 4. OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND ITS LIMITATIONS (8: 1-11: 1).

One of the questions put to him by the Congregations causes the apostle to take up this matter of Christian liberty in temporal matters. The city markets sold meat which had been bought from the heathen temples. In the sacrifices to the idols the whole carcass of the animal was not used, and what remained of it was sold. This placed many Christians in a difficult position. Some said: "All things are lawful," while others had their serious scruples. To these it seemed that the meat in question was not exactly as other meat. Even though the Christians believed in the one true God only, and regarded idols and their worship as an empty farce; still the minds of many were muddled in this matter. They had grown up as heathens in heathendom, and had feared the gods. It was, therefore, not easy to break loose from all this. The old feeling that the idols might be something after all was hard to be rid of. They might be demons or other mysterious beings, and might be dangerous. Now, the whole carcass of the animal had been dedicated to the idol; and if a man should eat some of this meat, he would in a way be forced into this

mystic circle of witchcraft. He would in some degree come into a sort of relationship with the idol, which would thus gain some power over him. Again, even if one did not himself buy such meat, he might be invited to a meal with a friend who was a heathen; and there the meat was on the table. What was a Christian then to do?—The liberals simply laughed at the matter; but there were others, whose conscience was troubled, and who did not see their way clear.

The answer of the apostle is marked by far-seeing wisdom. On the one hand it is important to hold fast the principle of Christian liberty in such things; while on the other hand one must avoid becoming a stumbling-block to the weak brethren.

#### *Puffed-up Knowledge and Brotherly Love.*

8: 1-3. All have made up some kind of an opinion concerning the sacrifices to the idols. That is an easy matter. But there is this danger in connection with "*puffed-up knowledge*," that people who have it, and are so sure of always being in the right, are also prone to act with no regard for others. And then things go wrong. Such people forget that "*love edifieth*." One who thinks that he understands it all, merely because he has framed up some kind of opinion, is apt to find himself badly mistaken. His knowledge is very superficial. But if we love God, we are known of God; and he will help us to understand aright and to act in accordance with the law of love.

#### *The Eating of Meat Sacrificed to Idols.*

8: 4-13. On these premises it is not difficult to see the true answer to this question concerning the eating of meat which has been sacrificed to the idols. This much is certain, that *there is but one God*. As Christians



we are His own. The idols do not exist; they are nothing. But all Christians have not reached any clear conviction on this point; and they may take offense if we make use of our proper and undoubted Christian liberty. Then it is better to let love rule, and to abstain from eating the meat in question.

*Paul as an Example for Imitation.*

9:1-27. In this matter, says the apostle, Christians may well follow his example. None had spoken stronger words concerning Christian liberty; and Christianity had come to the Corinthians through Paul's preaching. He had the right to marry, as the other apostles had done; but he had not done it. He had the right to be paid for his work, as had every soldier, or laborer, or beast of burden, or the priest in the temple; but he had not made use of this right. However, they must not understand him as meaning to say that he was at liberty to preach the Gospel, or not to preach it. No, he *must* preach. This was the deepest desire of his heart, besides his greatest happiness. So his reward is, that he can give them the Gospel without charge; that the cost could keep none away from hearing his preaching. "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under the bondage to all, that I might gain the more."

On this rule Paul had acted. Among the Jews he lived as a Jew, observing the Law; and among the Greeks as a Greek, free from the bonds of the Law;—"not being without law to God, but under law to Christ." So the rule of his life had been: All things to all men, that he might by all means save some. He does all for the sake of the Gospel. In the games held near Corinth they had seen how every man who was to take part in the race trained himself for it, hoping to

win the prize. This is what Paul does also, he says. He runs, he fights, he brings his body into bondage; that he, who preaches to others, may not himself be rejected, but may receive the incorruptible crown.

Here the apostle has given us a beautiful picture, a grand charter of liberty: Willing surrender of one's personal rights; in love making one's self the servant of all in order to save as many as possible.

*Admonition from Israel's History.*

10:1-13. The Christians in Corinth are asked to take warning from the old Israelites, who are the fathers of the Christian converts among the Gentiles also (Romans 4:12-11:17). God was with them with His protecting love. When they passed through the Red Sea they received a Baptism which united them with their deliverer, Moses; and they were fed by supernatural means,—a Lord's Supper. They ate the Spiritual Bread and they drank from the Spiritual Rock. In the Old Testament the Lord is often called a Rock; and the apostle here speaks of this Rock as being Christ, the Messiah. In spite of all this the Israelites gave themselves over to one sin after the other; and they again and again brought down upon themselves the anger of God, because they did that which was evil in His sight. And "these were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things," but shun them.

*Of Taking Part in the Sacrifices to the Idols, and in the Feast Connected with Such Sacrifices.*

10:14-11:1. Christians must have nothing to do with any form of idolatrous worship. They know that in the Lord's Supper we have communion with Christ and with one another. Thus it was also with the old Israelites. In eating the sacrifices they came into communion

with God, to whom the altar with everything on it was dedicated. To eat the sacrifice is to come into communion with the god to whom the sacrifice is offered, and with them that worship him. So if one take part in the sacrifices and feasts to the idols, he comes into communion—not with the idols, for they do not exist—but with the demons, or evil spirits who stand back of it all, and have seduced the heathen, and caused them to worship idols.

It is not specially difficult to do the right thing in these matters. Every man must do that which his conscience dictates, with all deference to the opinions of others. But first of all he should remember that all his acts should redound to the glory of God. Thus he best promotes the salvation of others. This has been the apostle's rule of life, and Christians do well to follow him; for he walks in the footsteps of Christ.

5. ANSWERS TO A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN REGARD TO CONDITIONS IN THE CONGREGATION, AND IN REGARD TO THE PUBLIC CHURCH SERVICE (11:2-31).

11:2-16. As Christianity made its way to the peoples, and gained adherents among Jews and Greeks, and these were to be organized into Congregations, there naturally were many new questions demanding an answer. The Jews and the Greeks had their different ideas and customs; and it was not in every case an easy thing to decide as to what might be best. Naturally, then, these people looked to the apostle for advice (11:2, 16). Such a question it no doubt was which the apostle here undertakes to answer: the question in regard to the proper dress for women in attendance at the public Church service. With the Greeks it was the custom for men and women to perform their religious ceremonies with unveiled faces. With the Jews it was

an ancient custom to veil the head when they offered prayer. Of course, it took some time before a new Christian custom was established. In the meantime some Christians were offended by what the others held to be entirely proper; and so there was a great opportunity for wrangling.

As to whether or not women should be veiled during the public Church service, the apostle emphasizes that this is not a specially important matter; but at the same time he points out that even in such a question as this the new Christian view of life will have certain results. Christ is the Head of the man, and the man is the head of the woman. It is most seemly that a man prays to God with unveiled head, while a woman should be veiled, as a sign of womanly modesty. Nature itself seems to have suggested this. Man was created first, in the image of God, and with the dignity of a ruler. But woman receives her dignity through the man; and nature suggests this, also in that there is given to woman a natural veil in her long and luxuriant hair. Therefore women should have a sign of respect on their head, because of the angels.

There has been much controversy as to what the apostle means by this "because of the angels." It may be that here, as in 4:9 (cf. Hebrews 1:14 and Galatians 3:19), the angels stand as representatives of natural law; or we may understand it to mean that each Christian has his angel, who is always with him, rejoicing or grieving because of his good or bad deeds.

#### *Love Feasts and the Lord's Table.*

11:17-34. The apostle here utters a sharp reprimand because of certain much worse things complained of as having occurred in connection with the Church service.

In the Greek Churches it was a common and favorite custom to serve a full meal whenever they celebrated Holy Communion. The custom of having such banquets was one of long standing. In the Churches certain abuses now crept in. The members belonging to the more wealthy class brought with them more and better food than the poor could afford; and they hurriedly ate and drank what they had brought, while the poor went from the table as hungry as when they sat down. So it was very far from being a love feast. The poor felt themselves slighted and despised; and instead of being a joy and a means of closer brotherhood, these common meals became a cause of unseemly contentions.

Such conduct is an insult to the Church of God, and a most improper preparation for receiving Holy Communion. Here is a matter of grave importance. Therefore the people are admonished to remember and bear in mind what Paul has taught them concerning the Lord's Holy Supper. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed. He gave them with the bread and wine His body and blood. When partaking of the Supper they should remember Jesus and keep clearly in mind, that in His blood, which He shed for them, there is made a New Covenant between them and God. By coming together about the communion table they proclaim the Lord's death till He come. But by their unseemly conduct they show contempt for the Lord's body and blood, and they shall be held to answer before God for this wickedness. Therefore each man shall prove himself before going to Communion; for he who goes to the Lord's Table in the same way in which he goes to another meal, brings down upon himself God's judgment. The many cases of sickness and death in the Corinthian Church at this time should cause the members to take serious thought.

and to pass judgment on themselves. If we do this we are not judged of God. Yet the judgments of God during our days of grace have the purpose to promote our salvation. If the Corinthians wish to continue their common meals in the Church, they must conduct them in a Christian way. If they want to make them just like ordinary meals, it would be as well for each family to eat in its own home; else these Church gatherings may bring down the judgment of God upon the Congregation.

#### 6. OF GOD'S SPIRIT, AND OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12: 1-14: 40).

On the day of Pentecost the Spirit of God had been poured out on the new Church; and with the Spirit came a fulness of spiritual gifts as evidence of the new life which so mightily stirred the Congregation of believers. These spiritual gifts were the clearest mark of cleavage between the Christians and the unbelievers, showing that the souls of the Christians were mightily stirred with aspirations of a higher nature. These gifts and the expectation of Christ's speedy coming again to judgment characterize the earliest Church more markedly than any Church of later date. "The Lord will soon come again" and "we have the Holy Spirit," these are the thoughts that sustained the earliest Christians in time of trouble, and gave them the courage and the wish to work for God's Kingdom. But even these things could be misused and become a source of dissensions, envy and fanaticism. This is what had happened in Corinth, and it caused much irritation. They quarreled over the question as to which of the spiritual gifts was the greatest. Some held the gift of prophecy to be the greatest; but the one gift which had the strongest party of admirers was the gift of speaking in tongues. None other was so much admired as the one who had this gift.

No doubt the Congregation had in their letter asked the apostle to instruct them in this matter also; and so he takes up the question, and answers it at some length. In this he has done the whole Church a great service. He saved it from disintegration through ecstatic excitement. The apostle holds fast that these gifts come from the Spirit of God; but for all that they are dangerous if put to a wrong use.

*The Spiritual Gifts Are Gifts from the Spirit of God.*

12:1-3. The difference between a heathen and a Christian is this, that the heathen is led by the dumb idols, while the Christian is inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. So much the Christians in Corinth know of their own experience. The Christian is known in this, that he confesses Jesus as the Lord. If he has the testimony of the Holy Spirit he can not do otherwise. With this statement the apostle lays the sure foundation of his later argument. The unanimous confession of all Christians shows that in all of them the source of life is the Holy Spirit; and that the work of the Spirit in the Churches has the one purpose: that from everything, from all hearts and all lips, shall come the confession, that *Jesus is Lord*.

*There Are Diverse Gifts, but the Same Spirit and the Same End in View.*

12:12-31. It is with the Church of Christ on earth as with our body. This consists of many members. Each member has its purpose. All are necessary. No member can be lopped off without injury to the whole body. When all the member work together the body prospers and finds life enjoyable.

So it is also with the Church. It is the body of Christ, and the Christians are its members. Each re-

ceives his special gift and must use it for the benefit of the whole body. But all shall try for *the greatest of all spiritual gifts*. To this the apostle now wants to point out the way.

*The Greatest Spiritual Gift of All.*

13: 11–13. The several spiritual gifts are good, and it is well enough to desire them. But there is a still better way of service in God's Kingdom; and this way may be found and followed by *all* Christians. This is the *bright and flowery way of love*. It is better than the gift of prophecy and speaking with tongues; better than the greatest knowledge, the strongest faith, the most sure hope. Everything here on earth is imperfect and incomplete; we can not see the innermost kernel of things. But when everything is at last open before us, there shall abide faith, hope, love, these three; and standing out in the brightest splendor of Heaven and eternity is love. It is the greatest of all.

In this hymn to the praise of love the spirit of the apostle has soared to heights unknown, as we sometimes find him doing. There is not in the world's literature anything to bear comparison with this inspired "Love's Song of Songs." No other eye has looked so deep into the heart of God as did the eye of Paul; and therefore these things could be better depicted by him than by any other tongue or pen. How small everything else seems! Strive to reach the greatest — Love!

*Speaking in Tongues, and the Gift of Prophecy.*

14: 1–25. Striving after love can well go hand in hand with the striving after other spiritual gifts. And the highest of these is the gift of prophecy. It is not true, as many in Corinth thought, that speaking in tongues is the greatest. Paul gives the simple, plain



words which all can understand a much higher place than the incomprehensible speaking in tongues, which many looked up to with admiration, regarding it as the highest inspiration.

There is a wide difference between speaking in tongues, as it was called, and prophecy. The man who "spoke in tongues" spoke to God, and none understood what he said, unless some man at the same time received the gift of interpretation and was thus able to explain what was being said, and edify the others. The gift of prophecy was something entirely different. The "prophet" was inspired to speak in a way to be understood by all. He received grace from God to reveal the hidden thoughts of the heart, and God's thoughts of mercy; and God opens the eyes of the prophet, that he may see the meaning of the Scripture and of God's providence. Thus the prophet may with divine authority comfort, admonish and edify the Congregation; so that all, whether they belong to the Church or not, may understand that here is revealed the power of God. The speaking with tongues may be well enough, but the speech of prophecy is much more to be desired. The first is compared by Paul to the noise of a musical instrument which "gives not a distinction in the sounds." It is speaking into the air, and means no more to the hearers than if they heard a language of which they had no knowledge. The man who speaks in tongues has some sort of spiritual exaltation, but his sober judgment has nothing to do with the matter. It is much better, then, to pray to God, or sing his praise, in words which all can understand, and by which they may be edified. This is what Paul himself does. "I had rather speak five words with my understanding than ten thousand words in a tongue" which nobody understands. The putting of too high a value on the gift of tongues is childish. The Word of God wants to be spoken in a

way to be understood. A stranger coming into a Congregation in which all were given to this form of religious ecstasy, or frenzy, must regard them as demented. But if they prophesy, his conscience will be touched, and he will fall down and worship, declaring that God is among you indeed.

*Decorum in the Public Church Service.*

14:26-40. The purpose of the service is *edification*; and the spiritual gifts are to be used with this purpose in view, so that all things may be done decently and in order. The speaking with tongues is to be limited to not more than two or three persons; and if there is no interpreter, it should be stopped. Two or three prophets may speak, each in his turn, that all may be instructed and exhorted. Good order must be maintained; for God is not a god of confusion, but of peace. Women are to keep silence in the Churches. If they are inspired to pray and prophesy, they may be given the opportunity (11:5); but if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home. In Corinth they had followed another rule; but this could not decide the matter for other Churches. People of spiritual discernment should agree with the apostle in this matter. At any rate, let them desire to prophesy, and not forbid to speak with tongues; only that all be done decently and in order.

7. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (15:1-58).

Here we come to the last of the questions asked by Corinthians. It concerns one of the most important articles of the Christian faith, that dealing with the resurrection of the dead. In the Congregation there have been some whom this question has involved in difficulties. To many it was a stumbling-block. The doctrine concerning resurrection from the dead had not

stood out clearly among the people of Israel. It is one of the truths which did not come fully out into the light till brought out by the resurrection of Christ. To the Greek way of thinking, this doctrine was meaningless or something to be laughed at (see verses 12 and 35). So it is not strange that the Christians were sometimes troubled with doubts. But this very dogma is especially prominent in the preaching of Paul. Christian faith and hope grow in this soil; take it away, and they wither. Paul, therefore, discusses this important matter soberly and without reservation, in order that all may understand that their faith and hope have a sure foundation.

*Christ Dead and Risen Again.*

15:1-11. Paul first reminds the Corinthians that he had always preached to them as the fundamental truths of salvation: that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. He had also told them that this was something on which they could firmly rely; for many men and women had with their own eyes seen the risen Savior; and many of these witnesses were still living. Paul himself, also, can bear testimony to this truth. For he also had seen Jesus; and this sight had changed him from a persecutor into a confessor of Christ. It can, then, be no mere hallucination; it is something about which all Christians are agreed.

*If Christ is Not Risen, the Whole Christian Religion Falls to the Ground.*

15:12-19. The resurrection of the dead must not be denied; for such denial would be the same as a denial that Christ was raised from the dead. But if this denial were true, the preaching of the apostles would be a great swindle. For the central idea of their preaching was

Christ's death and resurrection. And the Christian faith would be vain; there could be no forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness depends on the death and resurrection of Christ. If he is not risen, then they that have died in faith in the crucified and risen Savior are now lost; for they believed a lie. And we who live are the most pitiable of all men; for we cling to a hope which does not reach out beyond this present life.

*Now Christ Is Risen; and Salvation Is Sure.*

15:20-28. However, thank God, the doubters are wrong; *Christ is risen*. And so *all who believe in Him shall rise also*. It is certain that death came upon all by the sin of Adam; and it is equally certain that all who belong to Christ shall be made alive. With Adam begins the long line of those who die. With Christ begins the line of those who rise again, each in his own order, till the last among them is saved. For Christ shall not lose any of them that are His own. When He shall have finished His work of salvation, and conquered the last enemy, which is death, He shall place in God's hand that kingdom of grace in which God had made Him Lord and King; and God shall then be all in all. The love and glory of God shall shine upon and bless the hosts of the saved in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

*In Their Habits of Life the Christians Show that They Are Sustained by Their Faith in the Resurrection.*

15:29-34. If there were no resurrection it would be meaningless to follow the custom, which was common in Corinth and other places, of letting one's self be baptized for the dead; that is, for deceased brethren in the faith. And if there were no resurrection it would be the greatest foolishness to submit to all those severe

trials which afflict all who believe in Christ. Then it were better to live after the heathen adage: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.—The subject is of prime importance; they may lose their souls if they foolishly listen to the false and confusing talk concerning this matter. They must awake to soberness in their Christian life, and shun evil companionship.

*The Body Which Dies, and the Body Which Is Raised Again.*

15: 35–58. But just *how* is the resurrection of the *dead* to be understood? One must guard against speaking lightly of this deep truth. All nature here testifies through a striking analogy. It is with us somewhat as with the grain of corn; this is deposited in the earth, and dies. But God gives it a new body, to each seed a body of its own; of the wheat comes wheat. There are also many different kinds of flesh, and different bodies, differing in glory. And all this is God's creation. He can give us a body as it pleases Him, and change it as He wills. This is evident in the resurrection of the dead. The circumstance that death destroys our body has no bearing on the case; God gives us a new body, incorruptible and glorified. The body we now have is in the image of the first Adam; in its origin and nature it is of the earth. But the body which God shall give us in the resurrection is in the image of the Heavenly Adam, Christ, and is therefore a heavenly and spiritual body.

Our earthly body of flesh and blood is corruptible, and can therefore not have part in the incorruptible life in God's Kingdom. Not only shall they who have died before the coming again of Christ be raised with a new and incorruptible body; but we also, who still live, shall at the last trump be changed, and put on an incorruptible body. Here again Paul soars to one of his must sub-

lime heights. Triumphantly he looks beyond death and the grave to the day when the corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then is God's great promise fulfilled: *Death is swallowed up in victory.* Then sin also, the sting of death, is forever done away with; as also the Law, whose barbs have entered deep into the tortured heart. Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian must, then, stand steadfast against every objection and doubt, and live a full Christian life in the Lord's service. Work for the Lord shall never fail to bear fruit. After the night of death comes the glorious resurrection morning.

#### CONCLUSION AND GREETING (16).

##### *Concerning the Collection for Jerusalem.*

16:1-4. Finally the apostle here answers the last question of the Corinthians, as to how they are to go about the work of collecting money for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. He gives them some pointers as to the best procedure.

16:5-24. The apostle concludes the letter with the announcement that he intends coming to Corinth as soon as possible; and he bespeaks their good will for Timothy. Apollos can not come to them at this time. The apostle particularly asks the Congregation to do proper reverence to Stephanus and his family, who have done so much for the Church in Corinth.

Then follow a salutation and Paul's signature with his own hand. At the very last, before the benediction, Paul writes: "Maranatha." A comparison with Phil. 4:5 suggests that this mysterious "Maranatha" probably means: The Lord comes; or: The Lord is near.

The letter was written at Ephesus in the year 57.

## 2 Corinthians

In regard to conditions in the Church during the time elapsing between the sending of the two letters, see Part I, pages 114-115.

### THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

- I. Paul's apostolic office. 1-7.
- II. The collection for the poor in Jerusalem. 8-9.
- III. Defense and attack. 10-13.

#### 1. PAUL'S APOSTOLIC OFFICE (1-7).

*Superscription and Salutation. Affliction and Comfort.*

1:1-11. The letter begins in the usual way, with a superscription and a greeting (v. 1-3); and then follows: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

We see right here in the beginning that the heart of the apostle is filled with deep joy. In Ephesus he has just lived through a time of heavy trouble; and he has experienced that when the heart is racked with pain the harp of joy is tuned again, that it may sound the better. The child has been wonderfully helped and comforted by his heavenly Father. This fills his heart with thanksgiving and praise. And he is especially glad to have suffered for Christ's sake. The world hated and persecuted Christ while he was on this earth; and that is what they do who hate and persecute His disciples.

Thus the sufferings of Christ are continued in the sufferings which His disciples bear for His sake. To the disciples there is wonderfully sweet comfort in this thought. God has caused His apostle to be trained in this school of suffering and comfort, that he might learn how to comfort others who suffer for Christ's sake.

In Ephesus the enemies of Paul had nearly taken his life, but God saved him. Thus God had again shown him that his life was safe in the keeping of his heavenly Father.—Paul had also found great help and comfort in the prayers of his brethren in the faith.

Now the Congregation in Corinth, also, had experienced what is meant by suffering for Christ's sake; therefore they are to have the same comfort.

It is a rich and warm heart which is revealed to us in these words. Ten times the apostle here uses the word *comfort*. He shows us a heart which has been comforted by the Lord, and has ceased from troubling; and which now longs to help others who are afflicted to find the same peace.

#### *Charges Against the Apostle.*

The apostle dwells on the thought of peace and comfort; and then he also remembers the strife and trouble, which are always present. His enemies were all the time busy with all sorts of charges against him, hoping to ruin his character with the Congregation. The Judaists were especially diligent in this. Now they had labored with great zeal among the Corinthians, and, of course, with some measure of success. There always are people to believe those who speak ill of others. In Corinth the apostle was charged with double dealing and want of courage; he wrote one thing, and meant something else; and he postponed his coming, as he was afraid to show himself in Corinth according to promise. Paul had learnt of these charges, and he now answers them.



*Dishonesty.*

1:12-14. There is one thing, says the apostle, in which he takes pride: He knows in his own heart that he always had tried in the grace of God to lead a life in holiness and sincerity; and that he had not, as his enemies charged, been actuated by any sordid motives. Nor is there in his letters anything hid behind the plain meaning of his words. There is nothing to be read between the lines; and he hopes that the Corinthians will more and more learn to understand this. On the Lord's great day all shall see it. Then they who now do not understand him, shall see that "we are your glorying, even as ye also are ours."

*Cowardice.*

1:15-22. Nor need the Corinthians think it strange that he had changed his route in coming to visit them. He is not a man who is all the time changing his mind. Of his gracious God and Father he has learnt that "yea" should mean "yea," and "nay" should mean "nay." This is right; as God has shown in Christ, whom Paul and his friends have preached. For Christ was not yea and nay at the same time. He is the yea and Amen of all God's promises. And God has sealed us to Christ and given us His Spirit, and placed His own stamp upon us. We have His mark; and we are to be trusted. And God gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

*The True Reason Why He Did Not Come Sooner.*

1:23-2:4. Paul declares before God, that the only reason for the postponement of his visit to the Corinthians was his wish to *spare* them. He did not want to give them the impression that he was a lord over their faith. On the contrary, he wished to do everything possible to make them happy; for they stood fast

in the faith. He had no wish to cause them any grief. It was with a heavy heart that he had written his former letter to them; that they might understand how he loved them, and be able, before he came, to correct the abuses of which he complained, and that their joy in meeting one another might be the greater.

(There has been much discussion as to the identity of the letter mentioned in 2:3; and the question will, probably, never be definitely settled. Some scholars assume that the letter referred to is chapters 10 to 13 of the Epistle here under consideration; while other scholars hold that the letter referred to is one which has been lost.)

#### *A Case of Discipline.*

2:5-11. There was a member of the Church in Corinth who had caused the apostle and the Congregation much sorrow. We do not know who this man was, nor what he had done. It is reasonably certain that this is not the man referred to in 1 Cor. 5:1 as being guilty of incest. It is more probable that he was one who had brought dissension into the Church by slandering the apostle and his supporters. Paul had written to the Congregation about this matter and asked them to put a stop to the activities of this man; and this the Congregation had now done. Therefore they must now forgive the offender, says the apostle, even as he, the apostle, had forgiven him. Now they must let love rule, in order that "no advantage may be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

#### *Days of Anxiety.*

2:12-17. The apostle goes on to say that he came to Troas to preach the Gospel, and all went well. But he was troubled in mind; as Titus, whom he was expecting with a message from Corinth, did not come. So

Paul went on to Macedonia, hoping to meet Titus; and there he at last received the long-expected message. (See Chap. 7.)—Thank God, who always gives us victory in Christ. In every place where the Gospel had been preached it had shown its power. To them that received it in faith it brought salvation; to the others, death. But what man is fit to do this work? Certainly not one who corrupts the Word of God for his own profit. But Paul has as the servant of Christ preached the pure doctrine, such as God gave it to him. Therefore God had so wonderfully blessed his labors.

*The Ministry, Old and New.*

3:1-11. Do I write this in order to commend myself? asks the apostle. His enemies charged him with being given to boasting. No, declares the apostle; his *enemies* may need some letters of recommendation, but *he* does not. His recommendation is written in the hearts of the Corinthians; written there by the Spirit of God. For through Paul's work they were become an epistle from Christ to all men. Of himself he could not have accomplished this; but God had given him the ability to be a minister of the New Covenant established through Christ. And this ministration far exceeded in glory that of the Old Covenant established through Moses. For the letter of the Law, written on stone, kills and condemns the man who tries to keep it. To be sure, the Old Covenant also has a certain glory; for it is given of God. But its glory is as nothing compared with that of the New Covenant; for the glory of the old shall pass away (Romans 7). The same holds true in regard to the ministry of the two covenants. The new is engraved by the Spirit of God on *our* hearts; and by our ministration God works, not death and condemnation, as did the Law, but life and

righteousness. The glory of the New Covenant surpasses all other glory, and shall never pass away.

*"Seeing We Have This Ministry, We Faint Not."*

3:12-4:6. As ministers of the New Covenant we may proceed with boldness; and we do not need, as did Moses, a veil to hide the truth that the glory passes away. This veil even now prevents Israel from understanding the Holy Scriptures of the Old Covenant. Not until they turn to the Lord do they see that the Old is replaced by the New Covenant in Christ. In the Old was a trinity of the Law, the letter, bondage; in the New it is Christ, the Spirit, liberty. Here we see with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, as in a mirror suited to the spiritual eye which we now have. And thereby we are changed more and more by the Spirit into the image of the Lord.

Thus, as the Lord's servants, we do not lose courage, nor do we follow ways of craftiness. We do not corrupt God's Word, but preach the truth as it is, and thus win souls for Christ. The fact that not all accept the Gospel need not surprise us; for the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they may not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, in whom we see the image of God. Him we preach. God has made His glory to shine into our hearts, in order that we may let it shine on others.

*The Glory of the Apostolic Office Compensates for All Afflictions.*

4:7-5:10. This glorious treasure is ours to keep, says the apostle; but that we may ascribe the honor to God, and not to ourselves, we are as earthen vessels; and furthermore we are pressed on every side by af-

ffliction and persecution. But we do not despair or lose heart; for that which we suffer we *suffer for Jesus' sake*. He is the real object of the persecution; Him they would put to death. But the only result of their efforts is to make the eternal life of Jesus to be manifested in us and in the Congregation. For as we suffer for Jesus' sake, continues the apostle, so also *for your sake*; that through your afflictions and our words the grace may be multiplied, and cause thanksgiving to abound the more to the glory of God.

Even if these afflictions cause our outward man to decay, we do not lose courage; for the inward man is renewed day by day. The affliction is light and but for a moment, and is followed by an eternal weight of glory. We do not look on the visible and temporal, but on the invisible and eternal things; for we know that when the earthly tabernacle of our soul is dissolved, God will give us a new body, eternal, in the heavens. For this we long when the troubles come upon us; for we know that we shall exchange this earthly life for a real life in Heaven, and not, as is the heathen idea, for a life which is but the shadow of a dream.

God, who has made us able to reach the glorious goal, gives us the earnest of the Spirit. So we are of good courage; for we *know*. Here on earth we must be satisfied to believe without seeing. We often wish that we were already at home with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim to live in a way well-pleasing to Him. Some time we must, before his judgment-seat, answer for everything done in the body; and so will be decided what the judgment shall be.

In this beautiful section of the letter, where every line shows us the skill of a great literary artist in finding gripping words in which to clothe his sublime thoughts, the apostle lets us look into his heart. We see a deeply emotional religious life, a spirit of resignation,

a courage in affliction, a confident hope, such as is not often seen. All for God! All for his fellow-men!

*Self-Defense and an Explanation.*

5: 11-21. Knowing that he is to answer before God for everything, he is striving to win souls for the Lord, says the apostle. This is known to God; and also to the members of the Church in Corinth, if these will but ask their own conscience. Of this glory they can not rob him; though this is more than can be said for his enemies, who had wormed their way into the Church. If he had been "beside himself," or had been in an ecstatic mood, it had been unto God. But he had not, as his enemies charged, boasted that his being given a special commission made him the special friend of God on high. And when we are sober-minded, continues the apostle, it is for your sake. For the love of Christ constrains us; who died and rose again for us all, to the end that all may die unto themselves and live unto Him. Therefore we no longer base our knowledge of people on externals; and even if I, before my conversion, did know and judge Christ from such an outward viewpoint, I do it no more.

No, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away. But all this is the work of God; who in Christ has reconciled the world unto Himself, in that He laid all the sin of the world on Him, the innocent, that we in Him might be righteous before God. And He has sent us as ambassadors to announce this good news to reconciliation to all the world. Therefore we beseech all on behalf of Christ: be ye reconciled to God.

*Paul and the Church in Corinth.*

6: 1-7: 16. Paul here continues: Truly, the apostolic office is one of great honor, and God has given me

this office among you. And the purpose of our preaching has always been that you might accept the grace which God gives you, and be blest by it; and we have tried in everything to show that we are ministers of God who go on with their work in spite of all afflictions and anxieties; through evil and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

You have, he continues, a warm place in our heart, you Corinthians. We have dealt openly and honestly with you, and now you must do the same toward us. Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for believing Christians can have no fellowship with unbelieving heathens in their iniquity. God can no more dwell together with idols in a man's heart than Christ can dwell with Satan. If we would inherit God's promises, we must shun the wickedness of the unbelievers.

But you should open your hearts to us; for we have always tried to do you good. I have said to you before, that we are bound together in life and death. I have great confidence in you, and I am not afraid to glory on your behalf; and in the midst of our many trials I still look confidently to the future. The reports which Titus brought from Corinth were very comforting. He told me of your longing for me, your sorrow over the pain which you had caused me, and your earnest desire that all might again be well; so that I rejoiced yet more.

Now, even if I made you sorry through the letter I sent you, I do not repent of it; for it was a godly sorrow, which works repentance unto salvation. Such repentance brings no regret; but the sorrow of the worldly-minded brings death. Your love for me has

filled me with great joy. Titus, also, has come to love the Congregation in Corinth.

## 2. THE COLLECTION FOR THE POOR IN JERUSALEM (8-9).

The apostle here begins to discuss the collection in which he is interested. He tells of the splendid record made by the Churches in Macedonia, though they had been in all sorts of trouble, and were very poor. And he urges the Corinthians to show similar zeal in the cause. Titus is to encourage them in this matter. They must not forget God's many benefits; and the remembrance of these should make them zealous in this labor of love. Above all things they must keep Jesus before their eyes; who though rich became poor in order to make them rich. So they must go to the work cheerfully, and finish it to the best of their ability.

He is glad that the Congregation sent one of the Christian brethren to him (verse 18 sqq.); for thus he is guarded against any possible charge of dishonesty in connection with the large charity fund. He wants to have clean hands before God and men.

Let every man give, then, according to his means; for the Lord loves a liberal and cheerful giver. And as these gifts were to relieve the distress of brethren in the faith, the Corinthians would gladden the hearts of these brethren also by showing them the genuine Christian spirit of charity, and causing them to thank God for the power of His Gospel everywhere. Thus the bond of fraternal union will be the stronger.

## 3. DEFENSE AND ATTACK (10-13).

With cutting severity Paul here, in the closing chapters of his letter, attacks his Judaistic opponents. Without mincing matters he shows up their double-dealing



and hypocrisy. And with equal emphasis he defends the truth of his preaching and his right to speak with authority as the apostle of the Lord. And so the Corinthians must choose whom they will follow.

*The Attitude of Paul in This Fight.*

10: 1-6. I entreat you, that you do not by your conduct compel me to use my full authority as an apostle when I come to you. Thus the apostle introduces his powerful plea in the pending controversy. It is the trumpet-call to battle. It is not true, as his enemies have asserted, that he is brave when at a distance, but loses his courage when face to face with the danger. He does not want to be unduly severe with those who charge him with walking according to the flesh. It is that that he walks *in* the flesh; but it is not true that he employs other than spiritual weapons. Fleshly weapons would have no value in a war of this kind. No, his weapons are mighty before God to overcome any strongholds which human ingenuity may seek to build against the true knowledge of God; and they are able even to take the thoughts captive, and make them obedient servants of Christ. And Paul declares himself prepared to punish those who continue to be disobedient after the obedience of the Congregation has been fully reëstablished.

*Paul's Work Is His Witness.*

10: 7-18. If they would but look to that which is before their face, they should have no difficulty in understanding on which side the truth is. Paul's opponents are sure that they "are Christ's," and it is this, they claim, which inspires their efforts. But then they should in common fairness give him the benefit of the same presumption. He might well boast of the power which God has given him to build up the Congregation, and not, like his opponents, to tear down what others have

built; but he does not do it. For he does not want to give his enemies any excuse for saying that he is bold in his letters, but cowardly when with them in person. He asks those who say this to take notice that he is consistently the same when writing and when present with them. But he does not pretend to be able to compete with them in the art of boasting. They measure themselves by their own yardstick, and compare themselves with themselves; in which they show a plentiful lack of sense.

No, he can not compete with them in boasting of himself. But he measures himself with the measure which God had apportioned to him: That he might reach Corinth with the Gospel. To this measure he comes up, but does not go beyond it. He does not push his way into another man's field of labor, nor does he give himself credit for the work of others. And he hopes to be equal to his duties in Corinth, in order that he then may extend his efforts still farther toward the west. To commend one's self profits nothing. But when the Lord commends a man by prospering him in his work, this is something really worth while.

*Paul's Praise of Himself.*

11: 1-15. Still, Paul says, they must put up with a little foolishness from him also. For his soul burns with godly zeal for them. He had hoped to present the Congregation in Corinth as a pure virgin to the heavenly Bridegroom. But now there seemed to be danger that the crafty old serpent might destroy the Congregation and lead them away from the simple faith in Christ. For they willingly open the doors to any strolling preacher who may come to them; without taking any thought of the fact that these Judaistic exhorters come with another Christ, another Spirit, and another Gospel (Gal. 1: 7).

The apostle continues by saying with biting scorn, that if there must be a comparison of men, he hopes not to be a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. Even though he be rude in speech, he surely has made it plain to them that he was not absolutely ignorant of spiritual matters. Or had he, perhaps, done wrong to preach the Gospel to them without being paid for it? He did not wish to be a burden on them; so he let the brethren in Macedonia supply his necessities. They deserved thanks for their liberality. He had acted out of love for the Corinthians, God knows. And his purpose was to continue to work without pay; so that those false apostles, those deceitful workers, those servants of Satan, who masked themselves as ministers of righteousness, might be compelled also to work without pay, if they wanted to boast that they were Paul's equals. They shall lie on the beds they themselves have made.

11: 16-33. Even if it be foolish to boast, says the apostle, he must be excused for doing it. For it does seem as though the church members in Corinth, themselves so wise in their own conceit, have a weakness for fools; they allow themselves to be enslaved, eaten, oppressed, slapped in the face, by these braggarts, who can put forth nothing in which they excel. If there is to be any competition in such childish amusement as boasting, then the apostle may say that he, also, as fully as any of them, is a Hebrew, an Israelite, a son of Abraham, a servant of Christ. Yes, more truly than any of the others; for none of these can show up anything equalling Paul's experience.

On this subject the apostle grows violently and indignantly eloquent. His anger because of the efforts of these mischief-makers to destroy him and his Congregations inspires him with a forceful eloquence which is irresistible.

12: 1-10. Now that he is touching on this theme, on

which it is not profitable to dwell at any length, he must mention briefly the visions and revelations which God has given him. He, Paul, had been allowed to look straight into God's Paradise; and there he heard and saw things which it is not lawful for a man to utter. This might tempt one to boast. But in order that Paul might not be great in his own conceit there had been given him a thorn in the flesh. When he prayed three times that he might be rid of it, he received the answer: My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect when exercised through weak instruments. Wherefore, says Paul, I glory in my weakness, that nothing of my own may keep the power of Christ from resting upon me. And I am of good cheer in every affliction suffered for Christ's sake; for I know that when I am weak, then am I strong.

This "thorn in the flesh" probably is a reference to a painful disease of which the apostle often had violent attacks, and which had a peculiarly depressing influence on his mind.

12: 11-21. The others have forced him into this boasting, though he does not like it; the others should rather have done the boasting of him. They knew very well that he had done signs and wonders and mighty works in their midst, thus proving himself one of the Lord's apostles. There is only one thing in which the Congregation in Corinth has been slighted: He had not been a burden on them; a slight which he hopes that they will forgive him. Nor does he intend in the future to take any money from them; neither he nor his messengers. What he has said here is not to be understood as a defense. He is a servant of Christ, and has laid all these matters in the hands of God. But all is to be for the edification of the Corinthians, whom he tenderly loves. However, he is afraid that the expected meeting between them and him will not be exactly such as they

might wish. It looks as if God would humiliate him through the dissensions and the wrangling in the Congregation. Moreover, the apostle had been deeply grieved by learning that many of those who had offended by their immoral life had not yet repented and changed their shameless conduct.

13:1-10. As he has said beforehand; if conditions are not improved before he comes, he will not spare the Corinthians. They shall find that it is not the weak apostle who is speaking; but that Christ himself, who sits at the right hand of the Father, is speaking through his servant.

Now they must try their own selves, whether Christ is in them. The apostle earnestly hopes that he may not be obliged to deal harshly with them. He could wish to be weak, were they but strong. Therefore he now writes to them; in order that when he comes to them, he may be able to use the time in building up, and not in tearing down.

13:11-13. The letter closes with a salutation and hearty good wishes, and the benediction.

That was a hard fight which Paul had in the Church at Corinth. His enemies, and especially the Judaists, had been willing to use any means through which they might hope to undermine his apostolic authority. Whatever he said and did they managed to turn into weapons against him. They would stoop to anything; falsehood and slander and all sorts of secret schemes. But Paul took up the gauntlet thrown down to him, and he won the victory. Titus had in this war been his active lieutenant.

Soon after writing this letter the apostle did visit Corinth; and his stay in that Congregation seems to have been peaceful and in every way satisfactory. The letter to the Romans, which he wrote in Corinth, shows him as one whose mind was at peace.

The present letter was, as we have seen, written from Macedonia, though the particular place is not mentioned. It was written in the year 57.

## The Letter to the Galatians

It appears from the superscription that this letter is not addressed to any one Congregation, but is a circular letter to the Christians of Galatia. Just where these several Congregations were, and at what time Paul had first visited them, are questions which have been much discussed, but have not been answered.

In the fourth and the third century before Christ great numbers of the Celts, living in western Europe, went east and overran the peninsula of Greece. During these plundering expeditions an army of the robbers, twenty thousand strong, separated from the main force, and under the leadership of thirteen chieftains they went over to Asia Minor. As chief among the leaders are mentioned Leonorios and Lucrarios. The army was an army of brigands; and they laid the lands waste with fire and sword, until they were conquered and their depredations stopped by the brave king Attalos I. of Pergamus. They were then forced to retreat; and they settled on the beautiful plain around the headwaters of the rivers Halys and Sangarios in the central districts of Asia Minor.

There were three separate branches of these Celts, or Galatians. The territory was divided among them; and they formed three kingdoms, each with its own capital. In the course of time they were merged more and more into one people; and they continued to have a weakness for setting out on expeditions of plunder.

When the Romans made their way through Asia

Minor they had little trouble in getting the upper hand over the Galatians; but they let these keep their own rulers and have political liberty, on condition that they no longer follow their old trade as robbers. The Galatian princes found it necessary to keep faith with Rome; and Rome repaid them by giving them more territory. Under king Amyntas, who had won the favor of Caesar Augustus, Galatia had its borders extended to embrace, besides Galatia proper, the countries of Pisidia and Isauria and parts of Lycaonia and Pamphylia, Phrygia and Cilicia. After the death of Amyntas the whole kingdom was made a Roman province, under the direct rule of Rome, and an imperial *propraetor* was appointed governor. He had his capital at Ancyra, and the whole district received officially the name of Galatia.

During these two centuries in Asia Minor the original national characteristics of the Galatians had gradually disappeared, owing to the influence of the neighboring Greeks. Thus at the time of Christ the old Celtic language had died out; as may be seen by inscriptions dating from that time.

The religion of the Galatians had become identical with that of the Greeks and Romans. Thus there was in Tavium a colossal statue of the god Zeus. Festivals were held in honor of the Greek gods, and Galatian women then acted as priestesses. In Ancyra the Galatians had built a most splendid temple to the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma.

It may be mentioned that there were in Galatia also many Jews; especially, according to Josephus, in the capital Ancyra. They were in lively communication with the Jews in Jerusalem.

Now, *where are the Congregations to whom this letter is sent?* Some hold that they were in the Roman province of Galatia, and think that the letter is intended for the Churches of Antioch, in Pisidia, of Iconium,

Lystra and Derbe, and other places visited by Paul on his first missionary journey (Part I, p. 64-65).

Other scholars hold, that the people in these cities hardly have been called "Galatians" as Paul addresses them (Gal. 3), and think that the Galatians are the inhabitants of Galatia proper, and that Paul came to this part of Asia Minor for the first time on his second missionary expedition (Part I, p. 82-83). When he came there, sickness obliged him to stay there quietly for a time. He made use of this enforced vacation to preach the Gospel, and his labor bore abundant fruit (Acts 16:6; Gal. 4:13 sq.).

On his third journey Paul came to this place for the purpose of strengthening the brethren (Part I, p. 104 sq.). The Judaists had at that time begun their efforts to destroy Paul's work; and the apostles impressed on the brethren how dangerous it was to listen to these false teachers (1:9; 4:16; 5:3).

When he had gone away the matter took a turn for the worse. The Judaists became more active, and the results to the Churches were most serious. Their loyalty began to waver. It was to save the Church that Paul wrote this letter, so full of vigorous determination to fight.

The Judaists had among the Galatians taken the position that righteousness was to be reached through the Law; and that they must through circumcision be grafted on to the Jewish people if they wished to be joint heirs with them in the kingdom of the Messiah. When God had given the Law, said they, it must have been his purpose that it should be obeyed. For this very reason Christ had come to the world. Christ had Himself put Himself under the Law and followed its precepts; and the same thing was true of the Congregation in Jerusalem.

In this manner they addressed the Galatians, who still were young children in the Christian faith.



The Galatians loved and admired their apostle; and this bond must be severed before the Judaists could hope to gain a foothold. So, in order that they might introduce their doctrine, they tried first to undermine the authority of the apostle. They contended that Paul was not rightfully an apostle at all. Jesus had not called him; and Paul had, in fact, never even seen the Savior. So it could not be right to follow Paul in matters of faith.

Thus it became necessary for the apostle to guard these dear Congregations against the impending danger; therefore he sends them this circular letter. He points out the injustice of the personal attacks made on him by the enemy; and then he reminds the Galatians that both his apostolic office and his preaching were endorsed by the council of apostles and the Mother Church in Jerusalem. Finally he shows them, by proofs from the Scriptures, the radical differences between his preaching and the false doctrine of the Judaists.

#### THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

Salutation and introduction. 1: 1-10.

- I. Paul has received his apostolic office from God. 1: 11-2: 21.
  - II. Christian liberty. 3-5: 12.
  - III. The use and abuse of liberty. 5: 13-6: 10.
- Conclusion. 6: 11-18.

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#### SALUTATION AND INTRODUCTION (1: 1-10).

1: 1-5. As is the case of those already discussed, we often find in Paul's letters the gist of the letter summarized in the introduction; naturally enough, since those are the thoughts which for the time are uppermost in the writer's soul. The words are, of course, to some extent colored by the impulses which for the mo-

ment are stirring the heart. The introductory words are therefore, as a rule, the key to the apostle's thoughts and present state of mind.

This is especially striking in the case of the letter now before us.

The efforts of his Judaistic enemies occasioned the writing of this letter. They had done what seemed like irreparable damage to the Churches of Galatia.

The apostle had more than once experienced that he lived in an evil world. His whole life as a messenger of Jesus Christ had been a life of ceaseless trouble. When he had begun the work in a new place, and it seemed to prosper, the billows of sorrow and adversity were not far away. War and wounds had been his lot and life. And back of nearly all his troubles stood the fanatical Jews. They hated the apostle, and did everything possible to bring ruin upon him. They incited the Gentiles against him; they had no difficulty in making fanatics of their own compatriots; and they forced their way by hook or crook into his Congregations, and there did their nefarious work. In the Galatian Churches they had found a favorable field of operations, and had been exceedingly active; hoping that they might, by slandering the apostle's character, prevent the spread of his Gospel.

Their main argument was this: that Paul could not rightfully be an apostle; for the other, real apostles received their commission direct from Jesus, while He was on earth. This was well known. And everybody also knew that Paul had not been called in this way. He had merely been sent by certain men. Therefore his "free" Gospel could not be true; the Churches must listen to the real apostles, and not give ear to this teacher of false doctrines.

At the thought of what the Judaists had done, the apostle loses patience; and we see his grief and indig-

nation expressed in the very first words of this letter. We feel that they contain a sting.

Paul here declares that he has received his apostolic office of no man, directly or indirectly. *He had been given his commission from God the Father through the Lord Jesus.* When God had raised Jesus from the dead, and Jesus had taken His seat at the right hand of the Father, He had called Paul to be an apostle; and the apostolic office of Paul was thus just as regular as that of any other apostle.

Paul has submitted this letter to the Christians in Ephesus, and they have endorsed it; and thus it is to be regarded as coming from them also.

In the superscription Paul has defended his claim to apostolic authority, and thus his divine commission to care for his Church. In his salutation he now gives them the kernel of his preaching: Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ; who gave Himself to die for our sins, in order to deliver us out of this evil world, even as the Father in His wisdom had determined; to whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

### *The Galatian Attitude of Uncertainty Toward the Gospel.*

1:6-10. Here is the joyful message of grace which the apostle had brought to the Galatian Churches, and they had received it in faith. It became their life and comfort. Therefore it fills him with grief and surprise to learn that they are so easily led to doubt and to turn away from God, who had called them through the message of grace in Christ, and to accept another gospel than the one which Paul had preached to them. Albeit, *there is only one Gospel.* Therefore, if any come with another doctrine this is really nothing but an attempt to distort the Gospel of Christ. And this is the greatest possible sin. If anyone preaches another gospel, even

though he be an angel from heaven, let him be accursed.

Now, does it seem to the Galatians that Paul here was writing like one to whom the most important thing was to win the favor of men? This was one of the charges made against the apostle by the Judaists.—Was Paul seeking the favor of men, or of God? If it were the purpose of his life to gain the favor of men, he would not be the servant of Christ. As a messenger from Christ he must say that which Christ had told him to say, no matter whether men liked it or not.

#### I. PAUL HAS RECEIVED HIS APOSTOLIC OFFICE FROM GOD (1: 11-2: 21).

##### *His Apostolic Calling Is of God, Not of Man.*

1: 11-24. The situation in the Churches of Galatia makes it necessary for the apostle to defend himself and his preaching against the attacks of the Judaists. And he does this by the simple method of telling the history of his life, in order that every unprejudiced person may judge for himself as to the merits of the controversy.

When he is able to speak with such assurance concerning his Gospel,—as he does in v. 8 and 9,—declare it to be the only true Gospel, the reason is this, that he knows beyond the least shadow of doubt that *this Gospel is not of human invention*. Paul has not invented it; nor has he received it of other men. *It has been revealed to him by Jesus Christ Himself*. In this respect Paul stands on the same footing with the other apostles. Jesus revealed Himself to him; the first time on the road to Damascus, when Jesus appeared to him, and told him what he was to preach (1 Cor. 11: 23; 15: 3, 4).

Paul submits that all who are acquainted with his life must understand that no *man* could have induced

him to believe in Christ. Before his conversion he was the most fanatical of all Jewish fanatics. The goal of his life was to exterminate the Christian Churches; so he became the worst among the many who persecuted the Christians. He saw clearly that the victory of Christianity meant the death of Judaism; and so there must be a fight to the bitter end. How could, then, anybody think that one of these Christians, whom he so cordially hated and despised, could induce him to become a Christian? And yet—just as he was carrying on his persecution of the Christians with the most senseless zeal, the change suddenly came on him. No man could have stopped him; none but God could do it. The risen Savior had met him on the way near Damascus. The scales then fell from his eyes; and all at once the fundamental fact stood revealed: Jesus is risen, and lives. This fact sheds new light on the death and the teaching of Jesus. Then came to Paul the change of heart: and he now saw Christ by the bright light of God. Through this revealing of Jesus, Paul had been called of God to the apostolic office. Now Paul saw clearly that God had far other plans with him than any of which he himself could dream. While Paul was yet unborn God had chosen him to go out as a missionary with the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Thus it had come about that Paul confessed the faith which he had persecuted, and which to that moment he had sought utterly to destroy. Such a change is not the work of man; it was brought about by God himself. God called him to be an apostle, and God gave him the Gospel.

From this moment of his conversion three things became clear to him: He was a new man; he had a new purpose in life; he had been entrusted with a new message. Everything from God. And when Paul saw that this was God's will he determined in his own mind that

he would *preach only that which God told him to preach*. God must Himself give him the needed instruction. So Paul conferred with no man. He let himself be baptized by Ananias in Damascus; but he received no instruction from Ananias, nor from any other man.

Had Paul wanted any endorsement or any guidance from others, he would, as a matter of course, immediately after his conversion have gone to the Mother Church in Jerusalem, to meet the older apostles and receive instructions from them. But this was the very thing which he did not do. No man should meddle with the history being enacted in the soul of Paul. Therefore he went to the desert of *Arabia*; that he might study the matter undisturbed, and learn to see clearly and exactly what it was the will of God that he should do. Then he returned to *Damascus* and began his labors as an apostle, preaching that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9:20-22). So far no man had anything to do with Paul's apostleship and his preaching.

In order that he might not appear to be in any way dependent on the Church and the apostles in Jerusalem, *he purposely kept away from that city for three whole years*. Then at last he went to Jerusalem, and stayed there fifteen days. The purpose of his visit was not to secure any sort of endorsement of his office and his preaching, but *to become personally acquainted, especially with the apostle Peter*. During this visit he was the guest of Peter. But during these two weeks there could not, of course, be time for any sort of instruction. He became acquainted also with James, the Lord's brother. The other apostles seem to have been absent on their travels.

This is the true and the whole history of this visit. So Paul solemnly declares before God. And when the Judaists tell another story they do not tell the truth.

Paul's stay in Jerusalem was brought to a sudden

close. His enemies conspired to kill him, and he was compelled to leave the city. He then went to Syria and Cilicia and there preached the Gospel. But the Jewish-Christian Churches in Palestine did not know Paul personally, as he was entirely independent of them. That which they knew of him and his work was only that which had been reported to them. But these reports caused their hearts to swell with joy. They glorified God for that the former persecutor of the Christians now confessed the faith which he had formerly wanted to destroy.

*The Conference of Apostles in Jerusalem.*

2:1-10. Then fourteen years pass by. The apostle says nothing about those years, as they had no bearing on the present case. But then was held that *conference in Jerusalem* of which his enemies had tried to make so much of a story. So now he wants to make a statement of the actual facts. During these fourteen years Paul had worked as a missionary and founded a number of Gentile-Christian Churches without any aid whatever from the Church or the apostles in Jerusalem. He had stood absolutely independent in his missionary work. So it was not for his own sake, or for the sake of his work, that he went up to Jerusalem. Nor had any man told him to come. But the Church in Antioch had wanted him to do in order to bring about a settlement of the controversy raised by the Judaists on account of their demand that the Gentile-Christians should be circumcised. For his own part Paul did not need any decision in this matter from the Church or the apostles in Jerusalem; for in his mind there was no doubt. He showed this by taking with him his co-laborer Titus, who was an uncircumcised Greek; he was living evidence that circumcision was not practiced in Paul's Mission Churches. Paul did not wish to go to Jerusalem before

receiving a plain sign from God; for he knew how his opponents would misconstrue his action. But when God revealed Himself to him, and said that he was to go, he at once went. Barnabas and Titus, who were with him, could testify to the truth of his statement.

In the conference which then was held Paul laid before the Church, and particularly before the apostles present as being highest in authority, the Gospel which he had preached to the Gentiles; and he asked for a positive statement from them as to whether he had or had not been running in vain. Had his work been right and for the salvation of the Gentiles? This question and nothing else was discussed at the conference.

And the victory of Paul was complete; not even Titus was urged to allow himself to be circumcised.

But the Judaists, these omnipresent false brethren, were in Jerusalem also; and they did everything in their power to destroy the liberty of the Gentile Christians and place the yoke on their necks. However, they had only their labor for their pains. Paul stood firm on the truth of the Gospel, and did not yield an inch. Any compromise with the Judaists was out of the question. But for the sake of the Church he could make the concession, that his Gentile Christians were to keep away from certain things which were especially offensive to the Jews; for such a concession was not a yielding up of Christian liberty, but merely an act of Christian love. The plain truth is, that instead of being in any way endorsed by the conference, the Judaists suffered a crushing defeat.

With regard to the men of greatest repute among the apostles, whom Paul's enemies exalted in order to humiliate him the more, it makes no matter to him how great they were, says Paul; "God accepteth not man's person." The important thing is, that they had nothing to say against his work. Quite the reverse; they fully



approved of it. They saw that God had called Paul to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, even as Peter was to preach it to the Jews; and James, Peter and John, regarded as the foremost men among the apostles, extended to Paul the right hand of fellowship.

*Paul Opposes Peter.*

2: 11–21. Paul has never recognized these men or any others as having authority over him. He could not; for they had no such authority. He was absolutely independent of them; he had received his office and his doctrine from God. His independent position was brought out clearly when he felt himself forced to oppose and take to task even the apostle Peter himself. It happened in this wise:

Peter—the rock—the foremost of the apostles, came on a visit to Antioch. At first he freely associated with the Gentile Christians, adopting for the time being their manner of living. God had in Jaffa shown him (Acts 10) that the rules of the Mosaic law concerning clean and unclean animals did not apply to the Gentiles who became Christians. When Peter had spent some little time in Antioch there came to him some messengers from Jerusalem. They were adherents of James—the righteous, as he was called—and belonged to the more strict sect of Jews, and their view of the situation was different from that of Peter. They held that Peter had gone too far in yielding to the Gentile converts; and he was not strong enough to be uninfluenced by their representations. He felt less sure of his ground, and withdrew from the Gentile brethren and their more liberal Pauline customs. Then there was great confusion in the Church. People naturally looked up to Peter with the greatest reverence; and they did not now know just what to think. Even Barnabas, Paul's close friend and co-laborer, began to waver. It goes without saying that

the situation was critical. If this noxious weed were not nipped in the bud, it would grow up to choke the Congregation.

When Paul came to the city and saw the sad trouble which the unmanly and hypocritical conduct of Peter had brought upon the Congregations, he was filled with indignation. So he called a meeting, and there set forth only his complaints against Peter. Paul pointed out to Peter how unreasonable he was in trying to force the Gentiles to conform to the precepts of the Law, which did not at all apply to them.

It is probable that Peter tried to defend his action in going over to the more strictly Jewish party by urging that he himself, being a Jew by birth, had no right to ignore the precepts of the Law, and that these were binding on him, even if they were not binding on the Gentiles; he must keep to his own people.

At the meeting this or a similar statement by Peter gave Paul the chance to show him, without mincing matters, how indefensible his position of uncertainty was, and what the result of this wavering attitude must be for Peter himself and for all other Christians. Here was not a mere difference of opinion concerning non-essentials, but a radical disagreement touching the very foundations of the faith. Peter's attitude would deny and reject the grace of God unto salvation in Christ. Peter was now tearing down that which he himself had built up; to become righteous in the sight of God he was leaving the way of faith and putting his trust in the works of the Law.

The settlement which here took place of the controversy between Paul and Peter is one of the most important single events in the history of God's Kingdom. Here there is for the first time presented a clear statement of the wide distinction between the Old and the New Covenant, between Judaism and Christianity. Here

are brought to the front those fundamental truths which Paul later on outlines with such wonderful clearness in his letter to the Romans. Here we have the meat of them in a few strong words. However, the contemporaries of the apostle were not able fully to grasp the mighty meaning and great depth of his Gospel. The storm in Antioch was stilled; but the wavering attitude of Peter had its aftermath, and was the cause of trouble long after the death of both Peter and Paul. In fact, it lay as a cloud upon Christendom for 1,400 years; until Paul's greatest disciple, our own Church Father Martin Luther, again placed the Pauline Gospel in the candlestick and let it shine brightly as the light of God's Church on earth.

This wavering between the way of the Law and the way of grace has recurred again and again. There have been many movements toward a more strict bondage under the Law. They have appeared under new forms, but have had their roots in the same old opposition to the Gospel of free grace. And every Christian has felt this opposition in his own life. There is, however, but one Gospel which give peace to the heart; the Gospel of free grace according to St. Paul.

The great central idea of Paul in the settlement of this controversy with Peter is expressed in the words: I live in faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.—If that is clear, everything else is clear also. This is the deep undercurrent in the whole religious life of Paul, and on it is carried his view of the salvation in Christ. This is the innermost kernel of the Christian religion.

Paul begins his argument to Peter in this wise: Both of us are *by birth Jews*; and thus we have from our birth belonged to God's chosen people, to whom He has given His promises and blessing (Romans 2:17; 3:2). *As true Jews we led an upright life according to the*

*Law.* Like other men we were sinners; but we were not "sinners" in the sense in which the term is applied to the Gentiles. These Gentiles led a life of idolatry, godlessness and the most abominable vices (Romans 1: 18-32). This we did not do; and if any could be saved by works, it should have been we. *Yet we are the very ones who have found that we must seek salvation through means entirely different from this.* Our eyes were opened, and we saw that it was impossible to become righteous before God by keeping the Law. We had tried it, but it could not be done. And it was given us to see that *the righteousness which we never could earn by keeping the Law, that righteousness was to be had as a free gift of God through faith in Christ and His atonement for us.* When this was made clear to us we in faith laid hold on Christ, in order that we might on this foundation stand as justified before God; and in this matter the deeds of the Law were of no account whatever. Any suggestion of their merit in this place would mean that we are trying to make ourselves righteous by our own works. But we can not reach the goal in this way, for no man can fulfil the Law's demands. The Law makes all men to be transgressors, and condemns them. So that way of obtaining righteousness was closed to us.

But when we thus resigned every thought and effort to obtain righteousness before God by fulfilling the Law, and turned in faith to Christ, then *we showed by the very act of seeking our righteousness in Him, that we did not have it in ourselves, but were sinners, as are all others.* Thus, even though we were not "sinners" like the heathen, we were condemned and powerless, with no means of helping ourselves to become righteous before God. No other way of salvation was open to us than that open to the heathen: The faith which accepts the grace of God in Christ.

But do we not by this teaching *make Christ the minister of sin?*

This was the steady complaint of the Judaists against Paul. They said that in teaching the impossibility of coming into right relations with God by obeying the Law, he in effect abrogated the Law entirely. And when Christ, according to Paul's teaching, gave righteousness as a gift to persons living in sin and doing nothing to obtain it, this was equivalent to declaring people righteous who were not righteous in fact. Instead of taking sin seriously, and punishing it, and demanding of people that they live a righteous life according to the Law, Christ, as presented by Paul, seemed to be at the service of sinners, and to smooth over their sin with His righteousness; and thus the most upright Jew would seem to be no better in the sight of God than the most wicked heathen. Can this be good doctrine? asked they. Paul made Christ out to be the minister of sin, the friend of publicans and sinners.

Paul repudiates this idea. No, he says, but if I, like the Judaists, "*build up* again those things which I *destroyed*, I prove myself a *transgressor*." When they through Baptism became members of Christ's Church, they discarded their old doctrine concerning righteousness by the deeds of the Law. Had they been able to save themselves by their own works, they would not have needed Christ. By joining the Christian Church they had broken with the old ideas of the Law; and now they are beginning to rebuild the broken-down structure, teaching that one must obey the Law in order to become righteous before God. Thus they really admit that they committed a sin when they gave up the attempt to earn righteousness, and accepted it as a free gift of God. It is they, and not Paul, who are transgressors and make Christ a minister of sin. The apostle could

never have been guilty of such inconsistency; first to leave a way, and then return to it. Never!

I could not act in that way, says the apostle. I am not a transgressor in that sense. It is the *Law itself which has forced me to go the way which I have gone*; which forced me to accept Christ, that I might in Him find the righteousness which it was beyond my own power to reach. And *this was the very purpose of the Law*. The Law put me to death (Romans 7:10 sq.), showed me my utter inability to keep the commandments, and showed me my own sin (Romans 3:20). But the Law did not help me to keep the commandments, nor did it give me forgiveness of sins; and it was even more impossible that the Law could make me righteous before God. It would not give me any of these things; for it could not, and should not. *It was the purpose of the Law to bring not life, but death*. "Through the Law I died unto the Law"; and the Law has nothing to do with one who is dead; when it has killed him its work with him is done. But the *purpose of God* in all this is that I might *live unto God*.

Through Baptism I was crucified with Christ, and became partaker of the righteousness which is of grace, and which Jesus earned for me by His death of atonement on the cross. His death was my death. But when I thus became partaker of the grace which Christ earned by His death on the cross, there was also something in me which was crucified. That was "the old man" (Romans 6:6; Gal. 5:24) with its sinful lusts. And the result of this crucifixion is that "I" no longer live, but that Christ lives in me. To accept the righteousness in Christ means to break with the old life in the flesh. *One can not at the same time have the grace of God and live in sin*. The life of Christ was to do the will of God. Thus when Christ lives in me, my life becomes a life unto God. Still, the circumstance that

Christ lives in me does not change the fact that here on earth I always have the "flesh," the weak and sinful human nature. This is the great change which came upon me when I became a Christian, that I now live in the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me. *When I believe in Jesus I live unto God.*

After this statement the apostle summarizes it: Now, do I make Christ a minister of sin? Do I despise the grace of God? No, it is not *I* who do this; but the *Judaists*, who again want to burden the Christians with the yoke of the Law. I will not abandon my way of grace, and of righteousness through faith, and follow the *Judaists*. That would be to make void the grace of God. For if righteousness were to be had by obedience under the Law, we could help ourselves, and would have no need of Christ. Then had Christ died on the cross for nought; He had died absolutely to no purpose.

In this strong statement the apostle has thus presented the very fundamentals of Christianity. Our relations to God can not be built on the loose sand of our own works, but must stand on the foundation which God has laid in Christ. And all vital morality is grounded in our communion with God in Christ. I live my life in faith on the Son of God, who died for me; and thus I live unto God. The distinction between the way of the Law and the way of the Gospel has never been put more plainly into words. God had set Paul the task of lighting up this particular domain, where there are so many pitfalls, and where even Peter made a false step.

Though Peter thought otherwise, there is no compromise possible between the view of Paul and that of the strictly Jewish Christians. Paul's statement stands for all time as a guidepost for the Christian Church.

## CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (3: 1-5: 12).

Paul has now confuted the slanders of the Judaists, and shown that in his office as an apostle of the Lord he was wholly independent of the other apostles. And then he has defended the truth of his Gospel as the only teaching in full harmony with God's gracious plan of salvation.

Now, there was in Paul's teaching especially one point with which his opponents found fault, and that was his doctrine concerning *Christian liberty*: To the Judaists this doctrine seemed a denial of all religion. It was blasphemy, and it meant the throwing away of everything which God had given to his chosen people through Moses and the prophets; it was contempt for God, and an insult to his people. And, as Paul was made to feel, the Jew is a fanatic in that which touches the national religion.

*Not by the Works of the Law, but by the Message of Faith the Galatians Received the Holy Spirit.*

3: 1-5. That which is true of the other points concerning our relations with God, holds good in regard to the question of religious liberty also: It can not be rightly understood unless it is seen in its connection with Christ and faith. These form the groundwork of the apostle's explanation of the principles of Christian liberty. To the apostle this doctrine is the very apple of his eye. It is a necessary inference from the doctrine of justification by faith. One must not muddle the doctrine of justification by dragging into it the works of the Law; and so it is also with the question of Christian liberty. By confusing the doctrine of justification with the keeping of the Law the Judaists robbed the Christians of their certainty in regard to their state of grace; and in like manner they robbed people of their Christian



liberty. These truths the apostle had all the time been preaching with all the force of his fervent soul and his keen mind. Therefore the wavering attitude of the Galatians grieved and disappointed him. His troubled state of mind is strikingly revealed in the series of terse questions put to them. The questions strike down among them like flashes of lightning from the lowering thunder-clouds.

He addressed them as "*foolish Galatians.*" He can not understand how people who have heard what they have heard, and have had their experience, can have let themselves be so easily led into the snares of the Judaists. To be sure, his Judaistic enemies are cunning deceivers; but the Galatians should not have been such easy prey, allowing themselves to be cheated of their evangelical liberty, and to be led into bondage under the Law. They must have been bewitched. The Gospel which Paul had preached to them had left no room for any misunderstanding of its meaning. The apostle could boldly declare that before their eyes "*Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified.*" Christ crucified was at all times the apostle's one great theme. It was the picture which his teaching had continually painted before the eyes of his hearers. Earnestly and vividly he had described to them the crucified Savior as the only way of salvation. They must have understood that there was here no room for any salvation through their own works. Nothing but the atonement of Christ, received through faith, could lead them to God in Heaven.

Not only had Christ been thus painted before their eyes by the apostle, who preached to them the plain gospel truths, but they had been further *taught by their own spiritual experiences.* Should not these have kept them free from these dangerous Judaistic errors? *They had received the Holy Spirit* as earnest of God's power and their salvation; and miracles had been wrought

among them, showing that here was a power greater than any power of man. This every one of them knows; and there is not one among them who in answer to the apostle will declare that it was obedience under the Law which helped them to accept the Spirit, and which caused the miracles to be wrought in their midst. Far from it. When the way of faith was preached to them as the only way of salvation, and they accepted this Gospel of grace, then they received the Spirit, and miracles were worked among them.

The apostle then fires one question after the other at them. He asks if they really have gone so far in their foolishness, that they, who *had begun in the Spirit*, now *wish to finish in the flesh*. It was by the work of the Spirit that they began their life as Christians; and they did not then build their hopes of salvation on anything of the flesh, anything of their own, any outward fulfilment of the Law. No, they began in the Spirit, in faith, accepting the salvation in Christ as a free gift of God's grace. But now it seems that they want to build and finish their Christian estate "in the flesh," turning aside to follow the way of the Law and its works, circumcision, and the like fleshly things. It would be easy to see the inconsistency of such conduct.

Another question: Can it be possible that all their experiences have been to no purpose? If they end "in the flesh," these Christian experiences will have done them no good. Paul loved his erring brethren too much to believe that such is to be the end; that which he and they have lived together can not have been in vain. When he now has explained these matters to them again, and the brethren have had time to think it over, they will, he makes no doubt, return to the good old paths of God's gracious mercy.

*The Way of Faith is the Only Way Which Leads to Salvation, as Shown by the Example of Abraham.*

3:6-14. The "Spirit," not the "flesh," is the important thing in God's Kingdom, as always has been the case. But now the Judaists are trying to seduce the Galatians into thinking that the "flesh," the externals of religion, is the thing of prime importance; that none can be justified before God except through the deeds of the Law; that to become a child of God, one of the children of Abraham, one must by circumcision be made a member of the Jewish people. *The Judaists wish to make a carnal matter of that which God wants to be a spiritual matter.* They were all the time boasting that they were the true children of Abraham, and that they had the Law and the promises; the Gentiles could come to God only by becoming Jews.

Now let us see what God says about this matter, continues the apostle; see how it came about that Abraham was justified. There is no mistaking the words of Scripture: Abraham was justified in exactly the same way as were the Galatians. In Genesis 15:6 it is declared in plain words that Abraham *believed* God, and *it was counted to him for righteousness.* *To be righteous means, then, to have been counted as such,* or that God *has declared* one to be righteous. And He does this in the case of such as *believe.* *God did not look to Abraham's deeds, but to his faith,* when declaring him to be a righteous man. So it was when the Galatians became righteous. They had not tried to wipe out their sins by doing the deeds of the Law, but they believed what God told them of grace in Christ Jesus; and then God no longer counted or treated them as sinners, but as being righteous.

So it was not his "flesh," but his faith which caused Abraham to be counted as righteous; and it follows, despite the assertion of the Judaists to the contrary, that

*it can be nothing of the "flesh" which causes one to be counted a son of Abraham. No, it is faith; for righteousness and sonship go together.*

And God, who knew, and in his wisdom had fore-ordained, that He would grant the grace of justification to Gentile believers also, announced the good news to Abraham, saying: In thee shall *all peoples* be blest. He says not a word of the Law, or circumcision, or anything "fleshly." Thus, according to God's own word, *the faithful are the true children of Abraham, no matter whether Jew or Gentile*; and being his children, they receive the same blessing which he received. *In God's Kingdom it is not carnal, but spiritual relationship which counts*, and this spiritual relationship depends on the common faith. The *blessing*, then, is dependent on *faith* and the *promises*; while it is the *Law* that *condemns*. The Word of God is as clear in regard to the curse as in regard to the blessing. For it is written, in Deuteronomy 27:26: "*Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the Law, to do them.*" But who dares to boast before God that he has kept all the commands of the Law? The harvest of his efforts reaped by one who is under the bondage of the Law is, then, not a blessing, but a curse.

Nor has it ever been God's purpose that man was to obtain righteousness by keeping the commandments. It is not possible by this means to escape the curse and the eternal death. *God has not willed that the way of works should be the way of life.* Therefore He has said through His prophet: The righteous shall *live by faith*.

If our status before God were to be determined by the Law, faith would count for nothing. For the Law does not say: Believe this. It says: Do this. Thus it is declared in plain words in Lev. 18:5: He that *doeth* them shall *live* in them.—Thus the apostle refutes by the Word of God one Judaistic doctrine after another.

Now, which way will the Galatians choose? God's way, or the way of the Judaists? Can any thinking person doubt which is the right way? The way of faith leads to righteousness and blessing, while the way of the Law leads to condemnation.

*Through the Law we can merely come in under the curse*; the curse resting on all the people of Israel, and keeping them in prison, as it were, because they were under the Law, and still did not do that which the Law commanded. The Jews should therefore be the very first to rejoice and to accept in faith *the great message of liberty*: "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.*" And this is confirmed beyond all doubt by the declaration in Deut. 21: 23: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The cross of Christ is our banner of liberty. And now, asks the apostle, will the Galatians place upon themselves the yoke of the Jewish Law, which God never has imposed on the Gentiles, and from which Christ has redeemed the Jews?

The *purpose of God* in letting Jesus die the death of a malefactor on the cross was to *make the Gentiles partakers in the blessings promised to Abraham*. When Christ died on the cross the old dispensation of the Law was closed, and the way of salvation to all men through faith was opened, and the promises to Abraham could now be fulfilled. Israel was then redeemed from the bondage of the Law; they were no longer subject to the Law. Thereby the Gentiles, also, were redeemed from the Law. If Christ had not died, and thus opened a new way of salvation, the Gentiles as well as the Jews would have been compelled to bear the yoke of the Law. But now all this had been done away with by the death of Jesus on the cross. *There is but one way for all*, both Jew and Gentile; and through faith we can receive the Holy Spirit, which God has promised us.

*The Law Cannot Disannul the Promises.*

3: 15-18. Here the language of the apostle becomes more calm. Brethren, he writes, let us take an illustration from our everyday experience. It is a matter of common knowledge that when a man has drawn up a legal instrument, as a last will and testament, and it has been witnessed in the regular way, and is made a matter of record, no man may come and make this document void or add anything to it, but must let it stand as recorded.

Now, God gave the promises to *Abraham and his descendants* (Gen. 13: 15; 17: 8). But when God at that time said "seed" and not "seeds," he had in mind one, not many; and this one is Christ. In Him and of Him are all the promises; and there is no promise except through Him.

God made this definite promise to Abraham; and then, after the lapse of 430 years, the Law was given. But it is not possible that this Law could disannul the covenant made 430 years before the giving of the Law; for God does not have one mind today and another tomorrow. The Law could not make void the provisions in regard to the inheritance. If we received this as a result of obeying the Law, then the provision that we are to receive the inheritance by faith in God's promise concerning Christ, would be made of none effect. Our right to inherit the promise can not be conditioned on two provisions, one of which directly contradicts the other. We receive it either by obeying the Law, or by believing the promise; there is no third alternative. But *God granted it to Abraham by promise.* Thus, he who believes God's promise regarding Christ, is heir to all that which God has promised.

*The Office of the Law Was Merely Temporary.*

3: 19-29. What good purpose, then, could the Law serve? The Judaists were all the time complaining that Paul wanted to repeal the Law. To them the Law was the way by which God had appointed us to reach righteousness; and as to Paul, who taught the directly opposite, they held him to be an anarchist in God's Kingdom. This charge was made against Paul in all his Congregations; and so he was compelled to be all the time defending his position, and pointing out what it is that the Word of God teaches of the relation between the Law and the promises.

The Law has nothing to do with the question of our receiving the inheritance. What, then, is the office of the Law? *It has a merely temporary purpose*, says the apostle. It was added as a means of teaching that sin is disobedience to God (Romans 3: 19; 4: 15), and how sinners stand convicted before God as deserving of punishment—until Christ came, concerning whom the promise had been made. This is in agreement with the manner in which the Law was given. Both the Law and the promise are given of God. He gave the promise to Abraham in person, without any mediator. But in the giving of the Law there were two parties to the covenant: God, who gave the Law, and Israel, who were to keep it. And where an agreement is to be made between two parties, one or more mediators, or agents, are needed to conduct the negotiations. Thus it was when God gave the Law. Angels brought it; and a mediator, Moses, received it. But in the case of a promise—as when God gave the promise to Abraham unconditionally—there is no need of a mediator.

But since the Law, in its purpose and the manner of its giving, is so widely different from the promise, in that the Law, instead of securing to us the inheritance,

makes sinners of us, and instead of coming directly from God alone, was given through angels and a mediator, does it not follow, then, that the Law is against the promises of God? By no means. For *God never intended that we were to obtain life and righteousness by keeping the commandments of the Law.* No, Scripture clearly says that God has “shut up all unto disobedience,” that all mankind are helpless in the power of sin, and deserving of punishment (Romans 3:9-20; 11:32); in order that God may according to His promise give life and righteousness to all who in faith accept His grace in Christ Jesus.

Thus the Law was to serve a merely temporary purpose. *Before* faith came we—particularly the Jews—were to be “kept in ward under the Law,” that we might not escape, but all the time feel the heavy yoke upon us. The Law was a wall which God built up between Israel and the heathen world, in order to keep Israel from sinking down into idolatry, and from losing the revelation which God had given them.

In the meantime the Law was to stand over us as a *schoolmaster*, with its commands and restrictions, that we might see our misery and look to God for help; in order that we might be ready to receive Christ when He came, and to find our righteousness in Him through faith.

Now, however, the situation is entirely changed. For *after* faith came we Christians are no longer under the *schoolmaster*; but all who believe in Christ are God’s *freeborn children*. This change came when they were united with Christ through Baptism. Then all national and social barriers were broken down, for all men are one in Christ Jesus. The Law made a separation between Jew and Gentile; Christ and His salvation unite them. And they who by faith and Baptism belong to Christ are the seed of Abraham and inherit the blessing.



according to God's promises. The circumstance that the Jews are the seed of Abraham after the flesh does not give them any advantage over the Gentiles; and it is not true, as the Judaists asserted, that the Gentiles must through cricumcision become members of the Jewish people and put themselves under the Law in order to become partakers of the inheritance.

*The Position of Israel in the Old Covenant Was That of a Child not yet Come of Age.*

4: 1-7. The apostle has drawn a sharp line of distinction between the time "before faith came" and now "that faith is come." And he has explained in respect to the Jewish Christians, that not until Christ came, and with Him faith and the glad tidings of salvation, had they been made free from bondage and come into their full heritage as the children of God. He also explained that at the same time the Gentiles who accepted Christ in faith were thereby placed in the same happy position as the Christian Jews without having been under the yoke of the Law.

This placing of the Gentiles on an equality with the Jews was most offensive to the Judaists; they never could be reconciled to it. The Jews were God's children long before the coming of Christ; this was a prerogative of which none could rob them. God himself had said it (Exodus 4: 22; Hosea 11: 1).

Of course, Paul did not deny this. Certainly, the *Jews had the adoption of sonship* (Romans 9: 4); they were God's chosen people. But their position under the Old Covenant was that of *children not yet come of age*. Israel was as the son of a man who has left a large fortune. But as long as the heir is a child, he is under guardians and stewards until the day fixed in the father's will. Not until then does the heir come into full pos-

session of the property. Before that time he has, with respect to control of the inheritance, been no better off than the bondservant. This was the situation till the coming of Christ. We were "in bondage under the rudiments of the world."

But *in the fullness of time*, when the heir was to reach his majority, and when Jew and Gentile, each in his own way, had been made ready to receive the fulfilment of the promise; *God sent His Son* from Heaven, where he had been with God from everlasting, let him be *born of a woman*, being made in the likeness of men, that He might take the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). And God let Him be born as one of the Jewish people, who were under the Law, and thus Christ Himself came *under the Law* also.

God's purpose in this was a double one. Christ must be a man, and be under the Law, first of all in order that the Law might make its demands on Him, and that He might by His death on the cross set free the children of Israel, who were under the yoke of the Law (3:13; Deut. 21-23). And then God wanted to open the way to sonship for the Gentiles without first placing upon them the yoke of the Law.

*In order that we all*, whether Jew or Gentile, *may be sure of our adoption as God's children*, he has sent forth *the Spirit of His Son* into our hearts; and it is this Spirit who makes us to cry: Abba, Father. He warms our hearts with the blessed assurance that we are in truth God's children; and may call God by the name of Father; and that we may with confidence and without fear approach God as our heavenly Father, in the same way as Jesus did (Mark 14:36). The Father knows the child's voice, no matter what the language; Jews and Greeks are alike His dear children.

There can be no better proof that the time of bondage is past. You no longer are a bondservant, nor a minor

child, but a *son who has come of age*. *The inheritance is now yours*; you have received it of God, your Father in Heaven. It is this blessed assurance and confession which the Spirit wishes to create in the hearts of God's children. They are not to be in the state of uncertainty, as not having reached their majority, nor in the state of anxious servitude; *their estate is that of the free son full grown*. And yet the Judaists want to put the yoke upon such a son, and again make of him a mere bondservant!

*The Gentiles Also Were in Bondage.*

4:8-11. It was not the Jews only who were in bondage, and were set free through Christ; the same is true of the Gentiles. *These, also, have ceased to be bondmen, and have become children*. They were in even *worse bondage* than were the Jews. The Jews were in bondage, to be sure, but under the true and living God: while the Gentiles were slaves under the *idols*, who did not even exist. The Gentiles created their own gods and then served them. This was the situation of the Galatians before they became Christians.

That they had formerly put up with this slavery was not so strange; for they did not then know better. But when they were converted *they came to know the true God*; or, as Paul would prefer to put it, *to be known of God*. For the important thing in our Christianity is not that which we may have done, but that which God has done for and with us. To be known of God means to be known by Him as one of His own, to be embraced in His grace and love. And to think that anybody could want to throw away this glorious liberty and the estate of sonship, in order to follow Judaism and be made a slave! Would it not be the very height of foolishness? Formerly they were in slavery under the idols; and now they seem in a fair way of making themselves slaves

under the yoke of the *Law*. Now they desire to be in bondage over again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, to the former teaching; which can neither give them righteousness before God, nor anything else of that which they so sorely need; because it is "weak through the flesh" (Romans 8:3). It only demands; weak and poor as it is, it has nothing to give.

The fear of the apostle that the Galatians might change their liberty for the old bondage is not without cause. They had in fact already taken *the first fatal step* which will, unless they are stopped betimes, reduce them to bondage under the Law. They had begun to observe the rules of the Law in regard to Sabbaths and new moons and seasons and years; which rules were of force as regards the Jews, when these were under the Law as children not yet of age. And now that even the Jews have been set free, the Galatians seem disposed to place the yoke on their own necks. Yet the foolish people do not see the danger. But if they continue in their course Paul's work among them will have been done in vain; they will be led astray from the good way of salvation.

*Admonition to Remain Loyal to the Apostle and to the Gospel.*

4:12-20. After this severe reprimand and warning the apostle here changes his tone, using words of endearment which show how tenderly he loved these Congregations. He is like a mother anxiously correcting an erring child. He uses all his arts of *persuasion*. He begs them as a brother: Become ye as I am; live in faith as God's free children; for I am as you, I have left Judaism in order to be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles. The Galatians must not think that he feels himself personally aggrieved. They have not done him any wrong. He *reminds* them of the love and en-

thusiasm with which they met him when he preached the Gospel to them for the first time; in spite of the fact that he was sick, so that his appearance and manner could not have inspired confidence. But now all this is changed, and his heart is full of *grief* as he asks: Am I become your enemy by telling you the truth? Is their love turned to hatred, because he has warned them of the danger of losing their soul? Do they prefer the false flattery of the Judaists to the truthful admonitions of the apostle? The only purpose of the Judaists is to estrange the Galatians from their apostle, and induce them to join and support the party of the Judaists. They are actuated by selfish motives, not by interest in the welfare of the Galatians. Therefore the apostle *warns* the Galatians against these false friends, and urges them to be as zealous in the good cause when he is absent as when he is present. Then he *closes his winning appeal with the loving declaration*: My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you; I could wish to be present with you now, and to change my tone; for I am perplexed about you.

*Ishmael and Isaac as Prototypes of the Bondman and the Free Christian.*

4:21-31. After these admonitions the apostle returns to his explanation of the difference between the Law and the promise.—Now, you Galatians, who so much desire to be under the Law, why do you not read the books of the Law? Do read the history of Abraham; it is most instructive.

Abraham had two sons, *Ishmael* and *Isaac*. They were sons of the same father; in that respect there was no difference between them. But *in respect to the condition of their mothers there was a wide difference*. Ishmael's mother was the *handmaid* Hagar; while

Isaac's mother was the *free woman* Sara, Abraham's rightful and lawful wife. This of itself would imply that *Ishmael is born to bondage, and Isaac to the freedom of sonship.*

Furthermore, *Ishmael was begotten and born in the natural way, "after the flesh";* while *Isaac was born "through promise."* The birth of Isaac was one of God's miracles, as Sara was at the time far beyond the natural age of child-bearing.

But there is a deeper meaning in all this. The two women *represent the two covenants* in God's kingdom. Hagar is Mount Sinai, the Old Covenant of the Law. As Hagar bore Ishmael into the estate of bondage, so the *covenant of Sinai* means spiritual bondage under the Law, which all the time says: Thou shalt, thou shalt not. It brings nor peace nor happiness, but hopeless labor; and we are never done with it.

*Mount Sinai is in Arabia, not in the land of Canaan.* The children of Ishmael are to dwell outside of the land which God gave to Abraham and his children. The children of Ishmael and the covenant of the Law *did not really belong in the Promised Land.* They correspond to "*the Jerusalem that now is*"; and Paul as well as the Galatians know very well that *this Jerusalem is in bondage with her children, the Jews.* These had rejected the Gospel of salvation and liberty in Christ; and in their unbelief they clung to the Law as their means of salvation. Thus they were in spiritual bondage. They are born "after the flesh" as the children of Abraham, but spiritually they are Ishmaelites. Their true home is not in Canaan, but at Sinai in Arabia. They are slaves, and their children are born into slavery.

The *freewoman*, on the other hand, is not representative of the Jewish Jerusalem, the capital of old Israel; but of the *Jerusalem that is above, is free, and is our mother.* This new, heavenly Jerusalem is the Congre-

gation of the saved in Heaven (Hebr. 12:22); but as we see from the words of the apostle in the passage before us, it embraces also the Church of God here on earth. There is no sharp line of cleavage. Christ is the Head of the Church; and in Him the Church in Heaven and the Church on earth are one. From Him the vital force goes out to the members of His body, the Church. *This Jerusalem is free* from the curse and bondage of the Law, owns the grace of Christ, and *its citizens are free children of God*. The Church of Christ is a *Free Church*; and it is *our mother*. Here we have this beautiful statement that the Church is our mother; the most beautiful thing which can be said of it. This is a divine arrangement: God's children are born of God's Church; and the children are to revere the Church as their mother.

It is with this mother as with Sara. The children born of the Church are children born of the promise, as was Isaac. On the Church is fulfilled the promise made through Isaiah (54:1). It is this Jerusalem which is to become the mother of many children, embracing all Christians. These are born by the power of God through a miracle of grace, as was Isaac. The earthly Jerusalem has many children after the flesh; but the heavenly Jerusalem shall have many more, born through the quickening power of God in the Gospel.

These two women and their sons being representative of the Jews and of the Christian Church, we may expect to find other incidents in their life illustrative of later conditions also. As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now, says Paul. Jews and Judaists persecute the Christians. It can not be otherwise; for the son of the handmaid hates the son of the free woman.

Jews and Judaists shall, therefore, share the fate of Ishmael and his children. They have no place in the

Christian Church; they are to be driven out. The Galatians are to drive out the teachers of false doctrines; exclude them from the Church, in which they have no business. The heritage belongs to the sons of the free woman, not to the sons of the handmaid. Ishmael was not heir to the estate of Abraham.

This the Galatians must not forget. They belong to the Christian brotherhood; they are children of the free woman, and must not associate themselves with the children of the slave. If they do this they lose the free and happy mind of the child, and lower themselves to the estate of slaves, and fall into the slaves' way of thinking; and they lose the adoption of children and the right of inheritance.

*Stand Fast in Your Freedom.*

5:1-12. "For freedom did Christ set us free." It sounds like a trumpet blast. It is the war cry, which puts mettle into the soldier, and mans him with courage to stand to his guns in the face of the enemy. For freedom did Christ set us free. He bought our freedom for us by His death on the cross. Thereby He redeemed us from the curse of the Law, and purchased freedom for all who are His own. It is dangerous to waver at this point, and to listen to those who would try to bring Christians again under a yoke of bondage. And the apostle plants himself squarely before the Galatians, and shouts to them through this letter, and asks them to mark his words: "*If ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing.*" And he urges on them one thought, concerning which the Judaists preferred not to say anything; that *he who allows himself to be circumcised has thereby obligated himself to keep the whole Law.* And the Law pronounces a curse upon every one who does not continue in all



things that are written in the book of the Law, to do them (3:10).

To be circumcised is therefore to separate one's self from Christ. He who seeks righteousness through the Law is fallen from grace. Christ and grace are inseparable.

The Christian Galatians had begun well. Who is it, then, that has caused them to waver? Surely, it is not of God. But a little leaven can leaven the whole lump; a single error may destroy the Congregation, corrupt their whole conception of Christianity, and spoil the Christian life. When the Galatians have taken time to think, they surely will agree with the apostle; but the judgment of God will certainly fall upon those who have brought this confusion into the Church. If Paul would yield in this one matter, concerning circumcision, the persecutions would soon be ended. His opponents made no special complaint of his preaching about the death of Christ on the cross. This preaching would not then be offensive to them; for the Law would then have been given its old place as a means of salvation.

Through the Spirit the Christian life is a life in faith, hope, and love. It is a beautiful life, a happy lot. But in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything. Circumcision helps nobody into Heaven, nor does the want of it keep anybody out of Heaven. These things are not essential. But in the Spirit we await that which righteousness gives us the hope of obtaining in the life eternal. But while we are here on earth, faith works through love, in that we render service to our fellow-men.

The apostle is filled with indignation when he thinks of the persistent efforts of the Judaists to induce the Gentile Christians to be circumcised; so that he fairly shouts at them: I would that they might even go be-

yond circumcision; or that they would mutilate themselves so badly that they were beyond being repaired.

### III. THE USE AND THE ABUSE OF LIBERTY (5:13-6:10).

As is so often the case with the letters of Paul, the latter part of this letter to the Galatians is in the form of a direct admonition.

#### *The Limitations of Christian Liberty.*

5:14-34. This Christian liberty does not mean giving a free rein to the flesh and its lusts. No, Christian faith is to show itself in loving service to others; for such love is fulfilment of the whole Law. Love does away with bickerings and dissensions, which would destroy the individual members and the Congregation. The flesh and the Spirit are all the time striving for ascendancy over the will of the Christian. The believer has no choice; his orders are: Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. There is no difficulty in distinguishing between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. The flesh urges one to do that which is evil and destroys; the Spirit, on the other hand, brings forth good and blessed fruits. Against these the Law can make no complaint. They that are of Christ Jesus are at war with the flesh. Their liberty is something entirely different from the liberty of the flesh; they have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. This they did in their baptism (Romans 6:2-8).

Thus is refuted the Judaistic slander that Paul taught a spiritual liberty which really meant liberty to commit sin.

*Away with the Spirit of Partisanship.*

5:25-6:10. They who live by the Spirit must show this in a spiritual life; so that they do not become vainglorious, or show that uncharitable conduct which is the cause of so much trouble in the Churches. But if one does something wrong, the others must help him in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to himself, lest he also fall in the hour of temptation. They must be charitable toward all, and do good to all, but especially to their brethren in the faith; and they should see to it that their teachers do not suffer want. Let all bear in mind at all times, that God is not mocked; for what a man sows, that he shall reap. He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

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 CONCLUSION (6:10-18).

6:11-18. Paul did not, as a rule, write his letters with his own hand, but dictated them to one of his assistants, as we see in Romans 16:22. So he dictated the present letter also. Then with his own hand he subscribed his name and wrote these closing remarks. Once more he calls the Judaistic heretics to account and asks the Galatians to make their choice between him and these false teachers. The Judaists live only to receive praise and escape persecution. They care little about the Law, if they can only secure a large personal following in the Church. They are sure of having on their side those Church members who have been persuaded to let themselves be circumcised. To me the world and the approval of the world mean nothing, says the apostle; I have died to it. My glory is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Circumcision and uncircum-

cision have nothing to do with one's relation to God. The great and serious question is whether or not one has been born again.

It is not worth while, says Paul, for any one to trouble him with more questions in regard to these matters. What he has written must suffice. He is a soldier of Christ, and bears the marks of it branded on his body. The letter closes with a benediction.

This letter is written from Ephesus; and it seems from Chap. 1:6, that Paul must have been with them only a short time before writing the letter. It was, therefore, probably written in the year 56.

It seems that the letter accomplished the apostle's purpose. The Galatians turned away from their false teachers and again gave their allegiance to their apostle. The Galatians took an active part in the collection by Paul, 2 or 3 years later, of money for the poor in Jerusalem. And we see from 2 Tim. 4:10, that the friendship between Paul and the Galatians remained unbroken.

This letter is, to the Christian Congregation and to the individual believer, the great charter of liberty, a supporting pillar of the Church and of the Christian doctrine. In the providence of God it has been the special duty of the Lutheran Church to guard against the tearing down of this support. God grant that we may never waver, as did the Galatians, but that we may stand fast with the Lord's apostle.

## The Letter to the Ephesians

This letter is not addressed to the Church in the city of Ephesus. In the other letters of Paul there are allusions to local conditions in the particular Church to which he is writing; but there are none such in this letter to the Ephesians. The writer seems to have no personal acquaintance with those to whom he writes (see 1:15); and the greetings in the first verse of the letter is put into very few words. Chapter 4:21, also, and some other circumstances indicate that this is a circular letter to the Churches in the western districts of Asia Minor—Churches founded by missionaries from Ephesus. Thus Paul's Church at Ephesus was in a way the mother of the others; and this gives Paul the right to offer them advice and admonition.

The letter now before us is in many things different from those already dealt with. There we have seen the apostle in the strength of his manhood fighting against the Judaists, clearing away the difficulties in the new Congregations, and defending the truth of his preaching. Here it is different. Here we have the apostle writing from prison and in the evening of his life, to the Christian brethren, strengthening them and warning them against the *new danger of Gnosticism*, as it is called, *which would change the Gospel into a sort of Greek system of philosophy*. To the Gnostics, simple faith was not enough; they wanted some kind of philosophic interpretation. As against this the apostle impresses on his readers that they need a

*deeper Christian conception of the Christian faith and life; and that they must not lose themselves in philosophic speculation which would rob them of faith, and corrupt their life. As a protection against these dangers they need a more thorough understanding of the deep foundation of their Christian estate in the grace of God, and of the Christian Church as a unity, with Jesus Christ as its head.*

The theme of the letter to the Romans is the evangelical faith; the letter to the Galatians discusses Christian liberty; and this letter to the Ephesians treats of God's Church here on earth.

In regard to Ephesus, Paul's work and conditions in general at that place, read Part I of the present volume, pages 104-107, 112-114, 147-149.

#### THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

Introduction and salutation. 1:1-2.

I. The glory of redemption and the Christian estate. 1:3-3:21.

II. Admonitions to lead a Christian life. 4-6:20.

Conclusion and benediction. 6:21-24.

#### INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION (1:1-2).

This is here very short; and yet we find in these opening words a suggestion as to the main purpose of the letter. The apostle wants his readers to bear in mind always, that they *now are something entirely different from what they were*. They were buried in the spiritual darkness of *heathenism*, and lived in the lusts and vices of the flesh. Now they are *saints*; through their union with Christ and through the grace of the Spirit they now belong to God, and live in His holy Church. Now *they believe in Christ*; and thus God is their Father, and Jesus Christ their Lord. Therefore God's grace and peace rest upon them. Thus the

apostle gently smoothes the way to a consideration of the subject which he especially wants to discuss in this letter.

## I. THE GLORY OF REDEMPTION AND THE CHRISTIAN ESTATE (1:3-3:21).

### *In Favor with God.*

1:3-14. In spite of persecution and suffering, in spite of anxieties and crushed hopes, in spite of uncertainty with regard to the future; the imprisoned apostle here sings joyous praises to God for His infinite mercy. The heart of Paul is full to overflowing. The rules of prosody and logic are swept away by the flood. His heart simply must have air; he gives vent to his feelings, packing all the thoughts possible into few words. It is the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God which wells up in his soul and sweeps him off his feet, as it were. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" . . . "unto the praise of his glory"; thus begins and ends this short, but so infinitely rich and deep section of the letter. God our heavenly Father has through the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ His Son overwhelmed us Christians with numberless blessings, so that we really are in Heaven already. God had done this, because in His eternal love He has chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be His children. Thus God's children have from everlasting been in His heart. God knew them for His own, elected them, and made His plans to save them,—all in Him, Christ, who is the perfect expression of God's eternal love. And God chose us as His own, that we might stand before Him as holy and without blemish in Christ.

This was, then, the decree of God's eternal love

concerning us: We were to receive the adoption as sons of God through Jesus Christ. In resolving to do this for us God was moved by nothing whatever excepting His own free will, which is the same thing as His love. The children of God shout with joy, because the glory of God is shown in all its wealth and splendor through the grace with which He enriched us in Christ, His beloved Son. For Christ gave His life in obedient service for us. His blood was the price paid to set us free and make it possible for us to receive the remission of our sins. If we in faith lay hold on Christ, all these treasures are ours. This is altogether of God's grace; for when God measures out salvation to us, he gives us according to the riches of His grace. Thus only can we receive a sufficient measure. His mercy is great beyond compare; and he gives us the open eye of wisdom to look into the mystery of His gracious decree and plan, and the open ear to hear and understand that which He speaks to us. And in making known to us what He of His own good pleasure has done for our salvation, God makes it possible for us to lead a life which is pleasing to Him. He had decided on two things. In the first place He would in the fulness of time establish a new dispensation. Until God made this known through the Gospel it had been hid in Him; none other knew of it, but it was then revealed to all. In the second place, God purposed that He would then sum up all things in Heaven and earth, and make them one in Christ. Then should be restored the great harmony of creation, which sin had disturbed; and Heaven and earth should resound with the praises of God's glory. Thus the whole structure of salvation is built on Christ, and our share as Christians in the Kingdom of God with all its treasures is dependent on Christ. He that believes in Christ receives the heritage. Thus it has been foreordained from eternity in the counsel



of the divine will; to the end that we should be to the praise of His glory; whether we be of the Jews, who were awaiting the fulfilment of God's promise of a Messiah; or we were Gentiles who had heard the good news of salvation, and had accepted it in faith. Being united with Christ through faith in Him, the Gentile Christians also have received the Holy Spirit; who has sealed the word in their hearts, and thus made them sure of their being God's own children, and who is likewise an earnest that they shall surely receive all that which God has promised. The redemption of God's people is at hand. The joyful songs of praise shall thus sometime ascend to the throne of God's glory from the hosts of the saved, from Heaven and earth; a joy greater than all other joys, a joy without end.

*Interceding with God for the Readers, that They May Come to Understand the Glory of the Christian Estate.*

1:15-23. The heart of the apostle has been gladdened, he says, by his "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love toward all the saints." For these things prove that there is among them a strong and healthy Christian life. Therefore the apostle brings them before the throne of God with thanksgiving; praying that God may for Christ's sake give them His Holy Spirit, to the end that they may be preserved through the dangerous times awaiting them. False prophets are beginning to make themselves heard; and if the Christians are to remain in faith and love, the Spirit must give them wisdom, that with their hearts they may see and understand God's revelation concerning Himself; that they may understand the *hope* to which they are called, and the rich *inheritance* laid by for them; the exceeding greatness of *God's power*, and that He will use for the

benefit of us who believe. The power of God used in furthering our salvation is the strength of His might which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit above all rule as Lord over the hosts of Heaven, and over all things in this world and the world to come. And Him who sits at the right hand as Lord of all things in Heaven and earth, Him God has made the head of the Church, and made the Church to be His body. The two can not be separated; Christ lives in and governs His Church. Thus the Church has a share in Christ's dignity and power. Through Him the Church is ruler over all things in Heaven and earth. If the Church should be separated from its head, it would die; and if Christ is separated from His Church, he can not do His appointed work on earth. For that which He wants to have done he wants to have done through His body, the Church, and through its members. The great dignity of the Christians is that they are members of Christ's body.

*What the Power of God Can Do.*

2:1-10. This mighty power of God you have, declares Paul, experienced on yourselves. Once you were spiritually dead through your trespasses and sins. You lived as did the other children of the world; obeyed the suggestions of the devil, the prince of the air round about us; and led the same ungodly and immoral life as do the heathen unbelievers. And it was no better with us Jews. Like you we led a life of sin, and were by nature children of wrath. But God, who is rich in love and mercy, took pity on us, and raised us from the dead, and gave us the life in Christ, so that now, by reason of our union with Christ, we live in Heaven; for there is the home of Him who is our head. And God has done this for us, in order that in the ages to

come He may show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. God's children shall receive all the wealth of mercies to be found in the heart of God; and His heart is so rich that it needs all eternity in which to expend its riches upon us. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! Who hath first given to Him, that it should be recompensed unto Him again? To God be the glory for ever and ever.

By *grace* have you been saved, by accepting the gift of salvation from God through faith; not as a reward for anything done. There is no room for boasting; for it was not through our own good works that we became Christians; it is altogether the work of God. He made new creatures of us when we received the life in Christ Jesus. Then for the first time we were made able to do truly good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. We need be in no uncertainty on this point. In Chap. 4-6 of this letter we have a picture of what the Christian life should be.

This beautiful description is a song of praise to the honor of God's mercy. We see how God in Christ leads a lost sinner from death to life, from wickedness and misery to the bliss of Heaven. The apostle can not find words strong enough to picture man's lost condition in all its misery, nor to show us clearly the measureless love of God and the glory of His salvation. So the apostle piles up words and strings them together and builds of them a mighty temple to the honor of God. We feel how his whole being is shaken by the deepest emotions and by a great joy which is not of earth. He has more clearly than any other man seen God's glory in the countenance of Christ; and thus he can speak of it as can no other man.

*Through Christ's Work of Redemption Jew and Gentile  
Have Become One People.*

2:11-22. In the preceding verses the apostle has reminded the Christians in and around Ephesus of the great change which has taken place in their inner life. They were translated from death to life, from being lost to being saved. Now he calls their attention to the *outward* changes also. The old things have passed away; all is become new. They must not forget the difference between that which was and that which is. By bearing this change in mind they will be better able to resist the false teaching which would have them believe that they have not experienced the great conversion. But this is the very change which they have experienced, says the apostle.

They *were Gentiles*, and they can not have forgotten the hatred and *enmity* between them and the Jews; especially *bitter on the part of the Jews*, who regarded the Gentiles with disgust as something unclean. The Jews expressed their disgust and contempt in the word "Uncircumcision," which they applied to the Gentiles; while they spoke with pride of their own "Circumcision." They bore the mark in their body showing that they were of God's people. However, the saddest thing in regard to the condition of the former Gentiles was not that they were hated and despised by the Jews, but that they then *lived without Christ*, and had *no part in the Kingdom of God* with its promises. They were *without God* and *without hope* in the world; with no comfort in life, no light in the darkness of death. Truly a sad and hopeless existence.

And then, think *how different* from this their life *now* is. Now they *live in communion with Christ*, and have the whole grace of God in Him; so that they, who were strangers and far away from God, now are

His own dear children, through the blood of Christ, by His atoning sacrifice (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:25; 5:9). For *Christ is our peace*. The peace is in Him; and all who have Christ have peace. All, whether Jew or Gentile, who by faith are united with Christ are in the commonwealth of the Prince of Peace, as promised by the prophets (Micah 5:4; Isaiah 9:6). There is peace with God, and therefore peace between men. When Christ died *He broke down the wall of partition, the enmity*, which separated Jew from Gentile.

But if there were to be true peace "the Law of commandments contained in ordinances" must be abolished; for the Law is the foundation on which the wall of partition is built. It stood between Jew and Gentile; and while this Law was of force in God's Kingdom, Jew and Gentile never could become one. The wall must be broken down; and this was accomplished by Christ when He became a man like unto us (Gal. 4:4-5) and was nailed to the cross and was made a curse for us (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 3:15). Then all enmity, every wall of partition, between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, was sunk in the bottomless sea of mercy. Thus was peace established between the two former enemies; and *in Christ there was created a new generation of men, and a new God's people*. The Lord's promise through the prophet Ezekiel (37:22-27) was fulfilled.

By His death on the cross Christ brought about the great reconciliation between God on the one side and Jews and Gentiles on the other. In dying he destroyed the enmity. It is dead, and must not be recalled to life. And as peace came through Him, so it also is He who through His messengers announces the happy news of peace to all men; even as long ago foretold by the prophet of the Lord (Isaiah 57:19). For He has opened to all, whether Jew or Gentile, the door to

the Father's throne of grace; and He gives to all the one and the same Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of prayer.

The blessed result, then, of that which Christ has done for them (v. 13-18), is that they, who were heathen and therefore strangers and aliens, now no longer are in this condition, but are members of God's holy people and Church. They do not only belong to — they *are God's house* and Church; for in becoming Christians they were placed as living stones on the foundation laid by the teaching of the prophets and apostles. But *the chief Stone of the Corner*, on which the whole building rests, and without which it crumbles to earth, is *Christ Jesus* Himself. Through their vital union with Him all parts of this great temple are formed into one harmonious whole; and there is built up a mighty and holy temple of the Lord, consisting of all who are moved by the same Holy Spirit. And among these are the members of the Christian Churches in western Asia, to whom Paul is here writing.

*Paul Has Preached the Mystery of the Gospel to the Gentiles.*

3:1-13. This wonderful message concerning salvation and peace in Christ, and concerning the Church as the holy temple of God, has been preached to these Congregations also, and they have been incorporated into the Holy Catholic Church on earth. As the readers know, God has appointed Paul a minister of the message of salvation to the Gentiles; and it is for this his work in the service of the Gospel that he now is a prisoner. God has revealed to him the eternal decree concerning salvation in Christ, and the adoption of the Gentiles into the Church; and when they now read this letter they will understand that the apostle

has some insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not formerly made as plain as it now is revealed to the holy apostles and prophets of God by the Spirit poured out upon them. To be sure, God had during the time of the old dispensation said that the Gentiles were some time to come into the Kingdom; but not until now, in the new dispensation, had it been made clear just *how* the Gentiles were to come. This it was which God had made it the special duty of Paul to preach to the Gentiles. Paul, who had persecuted the Church of God, him God had chosen to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and the heretofore unknown dispensation of grace; namely, that God, the Almighty Creator of all things, would through His Church make known His manifold wisdom according to the eternal purpose which He purposed and now has fulfilled in Christ. This message of salvation in Christ gives us boldness in our prayers to Him, and makes our faith sure; and the wonderful wisdom of God, as made known through the Church, causes principalities and powers in the heavenly places to be filled with joy. So the Christians to whom this letter is sent are urged not to lose heart when they see the apostle's many tribulations. They are to know that he suffers all for their sake. His tribulations are their glory; something which should not cause them to faint, but to rejoice.

*Intercession for the Churches.*

3: 14–21. Having been chosen to be the apostle of the Gentiles, Paul makes intercession for these Churches whenever he bows his knees to the Father, asking that God may make them to understand the unsearchable riches of His love, and that His Spirit may make them to be strong Christian characters. Where the Spirit creates a healthy Christian life, there Christ dwells.

through faith in the hearts of the believers, and there they are rooted and grounded in love. Such close communion with the Lord in faith and love will in them, as in all the saints, have as its precious fruit a deeper insight into the love of Christ which passes all knowledge. And they will be filled more and more with all the fulness of God, and the fulness of His love and mercy, until God at last becomes all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). This is the wonderful hope and high calling of the individual Christians and of the Christian Churches.

As is always the case with Paul when his thoughts dwell on God's infinite grace and love, his words swell into a joyful song of praise. In no other way can he relieve the tension of his heart. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

## II. ADMONITIONS TO LEAD A CHRISTIAN LIFE (4-6).

### *Admonition to Preserve Peace and Unity in the Church.*

4:1-16. The apostle has in the foregoing chapters described the glory of the Christian estate and the Church; from which he naturally goes on to admonish the Christians to conduct themselves as is seemly in those who have been called of God to be His children and a light to the world; not in pride and wilfulness, but in humility and love. This should especially appear in their life as Church members; so that the unity which the Spirit has created in the Congregation may be preserved, and the peace which they received in Christ may be the strong tie binding them together as



brothers and sisters in the Lord. The Christian Congregation is one body, and has one Spirit. One faith, one hope, one Baptism, make all the members one in the one Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him all are become the beloved children of the one Father. This Father is over all, and thus is able to keep and protect them; all owe it to His mercy that they are His children; and He dwells with all His grace in the hearts of His children.

This unity among members of the Church does not mean that all are *exactly alike* in all things. The Christian Congregation is a living body, a body with many members. And each member is framed by the Creator to do its appointed work; and thus each in its own way is a servant of the body as a whole. So it is with each of us Christians. Each has his special gift which Christ has meted out to him. It was to purchase these gifts and distribute them to the several members of His body, the Church, that the Son of God came down to earth and won the great victory over our enemies, sin, death, and the devil—and established his Church; after which He ascended to Heaven, whence He now governs the Church and distributes His gifts among its members. The apostle puts these thoughts into words taken from the Old Testament. In the 68th Psalm David sings his joy for that God has cared for His own people, is come down to the earth, and has scattered the enemies of His people; and one of the fruits of this was to be the conversion of the Gentiles. And then, His work of salvation completed, the Lord returns to His heaven on high. But that which God then did for His people Israel, Christ has now done in a higher sense for God's people in the New Covenant, the members of the Christian Church. So he has power to equip His servants with the spiritual gifts necessary for the edification of the

Church; in order that all who are in the Church may be one in the faith, and may reach a deeper understanding of the Son of God and His work. In this way the individual Christian and the Congregation as a whole may reach the stature of a full-grown man. They will then be strong in the Lord; and will have reached such a measure of spiritual growth as will enable them to receive and keep that fulness of grace and gifts with which Christ wishes to endow them.

When the Christians have been thus equipped by the Lord they will not allow themselves to be carried away like babes by every wind of doctrine; but will have the mature judgment of full-grown Christians, and understand how to prove the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). They will not let themselves be tossed to and fro by false teachers, as dice are thrown by the players; but they will beware of such teachers. For the false prophets are crafty and know how to present their teaching in such a form that the unsuspecting may easily be led astray. We need to be animated by loyalty to the truth of the Gospel, and in all things to be actuated by love; and in that way we shall grow. We thus come nearer to Christ, who is our Head; and He becomes the bond between us, and promotes our growth, and love is increased in the Church, and every spiritual gift is allowed to be developed in accordance with the will of God.

*Christians Must Shun the Vices of the Unbelievers and Lead a Christian Life.*

4:17-5:21. Now it goes without saying, and must not be forgotten by the individual Christians, that in joining the Christian Congregation they have renounced their former way of living. The mind and will of the heathen are groping in darkness, and conscience has

been blunted. But they who know Jesus are to put off "the old man," their old nature, that it may no more control their life, lead them astray, and bring ruin upon them. They are to put on "the new man," whom God has created; a new person, with a new way of thinking, a will turned in a new direction, a new faith, new hope, new love. This new man is in the image of God; and being a result of the truth in Christ, this will show itself in righteousness and holiness.

Therefore they must put away deceit, anger, covetousness, filthy talk; and in place of these things be truthful, exercise self-control, be honest, diligent, use becoming language, and try to be like God. Him they are to follow; for they are His beloved children, and should walk in love, and shun all uncleanness in deed and word and conduct. They should walk as children of light, hear what the Lord says to them in His Word, and encourage one another with speech and spiritual songs, always to give thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus, and subject themselves one to another in the fear of Christ.

### *The Christian Family Life.*

5:22-6:9. In their homes, also, Christians must show that they are God's children. Let them consider the relation between Christ and His Church. Here man and wife may learn of the one great example what love means; and thus they may learn to build a truly Christian home.

And if all is to be well, the will of God must govern also in the relation between parents and children, between master and servant. Whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, no matter what his position may be.

*Final Admonition to Fight the Good Fight.*

6:10-20. The life of the Christian on this earth is a continuous fight against strong and evil powers supported by the wiles of the devil. If the Christians are to stand in this fight they must have put on the whole armor of God, and watch and pray without ceasing, for themselves and for all the saints. These Christians to whom the letter is addressed are asked also to pray for their friend, the "ambassador in chains," that he may boldly make known the mystery of the Gospel.

## CONCLUSION AND BENEDICTION.

6:21-24. Tychicus, who is the bearer of the letter, will tell them how the apostle is getting on. Then the letter closes with a "peace be to the brethren . . . and grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul was a prisoner in Rome at the time of writing this letter. Probably, the reference is to his first imprisonment in that city; in which case the letter must have been written in the year 62 or 63. With it, by the same hand, were sent the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.

## The Letter to the Philippians

Concerning the Church in Philippi and Paul's relation with it, see Part I, pages 84-89, 145-146.

This letter to the Philippians is in one respect much different from the others; in that the apostle here has no complaints to make, and no enemies to meet. The Church was in a healthy condition, and the members were leading a blameless Christian life. This was his dearest Congregation, the child of his heart; who had given him so much joy and comfort in all his many trials. So the letter has the character of a loving communication from the spiritual father to his dear children. He tells them how it is with him, lays before them the sorrows and the hopes of his heart, and calls their attention to some matters in regard to which he thinks that they might have done better than they have done. Information and admonition here go hand in hand. Therefore it is not easy to divide this letter into separate sections. One thought suggests another; and we have a beautiful chain of them strung together in this most lovable letter.

### SUPERScription AND SALUTATION.

1:1, 2. Even in the superscription we find a suggestion of the intimate tone of this letter. Paul does not here find it necessary to mention his authority as an apostle; nor does he make any allusions to faults which the Church should correct. There is the most cordial mutual affection between the apostle and the

members of this Church, and all the officials of the Congregation were his intimate personal friends. To these people he can say: "Grace and Peace to you," without accompanying the wish with a sigh.

*Thanking God for the Congregation and Making Intercession for It.*

1:3-11. The apostle has many tender recollections of his stay in Philippi. He here tells the Philippians that he often thinks of the many happy hours spent with them; and that he thanks God for all the joy they have given him by their fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel from the first day until now. They have supported him in his work as a missionary, and they have cheerfully sent money to help the Church in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1-5). This shows that God has begun His good work in them; and He will surely keep them safe in His mercy, until Christ comes in the clouds and has their reward with Him. The apostle always has them in his heart, and longs after them in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. He especially prays God that their love to one another may be even more strengthened, and that they may all the time gain a deeper insight into the revelation from God, and have a clearer understanding of life's many vicissitudes, in order that they may discern and approve the good things and do that which is right. Then they will be void of offense when Christ comes, and be filled with the fruits of righteousness in Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

*Paul's Imprisonment and Future Prospects.*

1:12-26. The apostle then gives them an account of himself. He knows that these friends are anxious to know from himself how he is getting on. He is able

to tell them the good news that his imprisonment has not injured, but rather helped the cause of the Gospel. Even his keepers, the praetorian guard in Rome, have understood that he is not a criminal, but is in chains for Christ's sake; and the brethren have come to have confidence in the imprisoned apostle. They, also, understand that he is persecuted for his faith in Christ. This has given them courage to preach the Gospel without fear. Unfortunately, however, it is not the whole Church in Rome which has this mind toward the apostle. There are some Jewish-Christian exhorters who preach the Gospel, not because it is in their hearts, but because they are envious of the apostle, and are trying to build up an opposition party against him. They are bringing discord into the Congregation in order to make the chains of the apostle the more heavy. Nevertheless, since it is Christ that is being preached the apostle rejoices in it, even while deploring that the preaching is done in such an unworthy spirit. But he knows that this also shall turn out to his salvation; for the brethren in Philippi are praying for him, and the Spirit of Christ is all the time near him with comfort and help. His one earnest hope is that he may never disgrace the Lord's cause, but may boldly speak the truth and magnify God. And then it is not important whether he himself lives or dies. In either case he will be well satisfied; for he knows that, whether living or dead, he belongs to Christ. For himself he would like best to depart and be with Christ. But he feels that it might be a good thing for his Congregations if he could be with them and guide them, and visit them once more, and have the pleasure of spending some time with them. And he is confident that he will see them again, and that there then will be great joy among them.

*Admonition to Harmony and Humility, After the Example of Jesus.*

1:27-2:18. Christians must always remember to let their manner of life be worthy of the Gospel, and to stand fast in one spirit, striving for faith in the Gospel, and not to let themselves be frightened by the adversaries. If they stand fast in the fight, it will to the adversaries be a token of perdition, while to the Christians it will mean salvation. And this shall be from God; for it is one of God's mercies when we are permitted to suffer for Christ's sake.

If there is any comfort in belonging to Christ and living in communion with Him; if there is any true brotherly love; any fellowship of the Spirit, and hence any feeling of compassion and sympathy with one another; then the dear Christians in Philippi will gladden the apostle by showing that they are of one mind, and are not actuated by empty vainglory, but by that mutual regard and respect which will cause them to promote the welfare of one another. Let them in this matter in all humility follow the example of Jesus. He might have appeared here on earth in divine majesty; for as the Son of God He was possessed of all the glory of God. It was His, and now that He is exalted He is again clothed with this divine glory. But He did not count this equality with God as something to be grasped and held fast. On the contrary, He of His own free will emptied Himself of this glory and took the form of a servant, that He might do the work which God had given Him to do (Matt. 20:28). To do this He must be found in fashion as a man, so that there was no difference between His estate and that of other men. He humbled Himself even more. He was obedient unto death, the most ignominious death which a man can suffer, the death of a criminal nailed to a cross.



Jesus thus proved Himself God's obedient servant, who willingly took upon Himself all the duties of the service; therefore God has raised Him to the highest pinnacle of honor, and given Him the greatest name in heaven or on earth, the name of Jesus, Savior. In that name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thus the way of Jesus led through humble obedience to the will of God onward and upward to the seat of honor in Heaven. This is the way of the Christians also: In obedience to God's will they must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. They must feel and understand their own personal responsibility in the matter of their salvation, in order that they may not by disobedience or carelessness prevent God from carrying out His purpose; and they must put themselves with their will and their actions under God's orders, that He may through them accomplish His good pleasure: their salvation. This thought, that with the inner life and the outward conduct they are in the hand of God, should help them to drive out all murmurings and questionings, which steal their strength. The Christians are to walk as God's blameless children in the midst of a perverse generation, and be as shining lights to the world, holding forth to men the Word of Life. Then the apostle will glory in them when Christ comes again; and it shall be made clear to all that he has not labored in vain. I stand before God as His minister, says the apostle; and the offering which I desire to place on the Lord's altar is your faith. This work is the great joy and pride of my life; and should my life be sacrificed in this ministry, I shall still rejoice; and so shall the Church in Philippi.

*Timothy and Epaphroditus Are Soon to Visit the  
Philippians.*

2:19-30. Paul has good news for the Philippians, which he knows will make them happy: It is his purpose soon to send Timothy to them, that he may bring back to the apostle a true report in regard to conditions among them. Timothy is a man whom he can safely send; for none other is so loyally devoted to the apostle. The two have faithfully shared each other's joys and sorrows. Others have sought their own, not the things of Christ; but Timothy has served Paul as a son serves a father. So Timothy is interested heart and soul in the welfare of the Churches; and he will be sent to Philippi as soon as the apostle learns the outcome of his own case before the Roman court of justice.

Epaphroditus, whom the Congregation in Philippi had sent to the apostle in Rome with encouraging words and more substantial gifts, has been sick nigh unto death, and is longing to go home. Therefore the apostle now sends him back to Philippi. Paul knows that the Philippians will be glad to see him. Men like Epaphroditus, who risk their life in the service of Christ, are to be loved and honored. His health is broken, and so he is a source of anxiety to the apostle, in place of being any assistance to him, and would therefore better be sent home.

*Let Them Rejoice in the Lord, and Stand Fast Against  
All Who Would Lead Them Astray.*

3:1-16. Finally, my brethren, says the apostle, *rejoice in the Lord*. It is this joy which supports the whole Christian life, and gives courage to fight against the false Judaistic teachers; evil workers, who go about like hungry dogs. They boast of their circumcision, which in their case has meant nothing more than that

they have been mutilated in the flesh. But we, says Paul, who serve God in the Spirit, and do not seek honor nor put our trust in anything of the flesh, but who have our everything in Christ—we have the true circumcision. In regard to any “fleshly” advantage Paul was in as good position as anybody. He had everything of which a Jew could boast. But the things which he as a Jew had regarded as gain, he now counted loss for the sake of Christ; for they would have hindered him in finding Christ and the righteousness in Him. There is only one thing really worth while: the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. If we have Him and are His, nothing else counts. Through faith in Him we have the righteousness which God gives to all who believe in Christ, and not a righteousness which we must strive to reach by keeping the commandments. In this way we learn to know Christ and that He is mighty to save, and we experience what the power of His resurrection can do in us and for us; but we also experience something of that which He suffered. It is possible, says Paul, that I am to suffer death, as He did; to die with Him. Blessed hope: I may with Him attain to the resurrection from the dead. To suffer with Christ and with Him gain the reward of victory; this would be a gain which would more than outweigh any possible loss.

But none must think that when he is justified, he has attained everything and is already perfect, so that he no longer needs to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. No, this is the exact reverse of the truth. Just because I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus, I press on toward the goal. I forget the things which are behind, and stretch forward to the things which are before. There I see the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

All adult Christians must have this mind. They

may hold different opinions in regard to certain questions; but God will give them light in these matters also, if they do but agree in the one main purpose: We press on toward the goal.

*Warning Against a Worldly Christianity.*

3:17-4:1. Brethren, be ye imitators of me. Thus Paul introduces a new admonition. In the life of the apostle they may see what the life of a Christian is; and they will be saved from the seductions of certain persons against whom the apostle has before warned them. These persons call themselves Christians, as do the Judaists; but in truth they are enemies of the cross of Christ. They want no religion which has a "cross" in it, and therefore their end is perdition. They live to fill the belly; this is their god, and their glory is in their shame. And with all their soul and desires they mind earthly things. There were many such worldly-minded Christians. But this is not Christianity. The citizenship of the Christian is in Heaven; there is his home and country. Now we are waiting for Christ to come from Heaven with the fulness of salvation which He has promised to all who believe in Him. Then he shall fashion anew this our body, weak and mortal as it is under the curse of corruption, and make it like to the body of His glory, resplendent in the light of Heaven. Then shall we even in our body experience something of the power of Christ.

"Wherefore, my brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved."

Anything more beautiful can not be found than these tender words addressed by the apostle to the Congregation which he loved so well. If any man ever had a heart beating with love for his brethren, it surely was the apostle Paul. He had the mind of

Christ in a higher degree than any other man whose name we know. He lived closer than others to the heart of his God and Savior; and therefore he is what he is. This is the secret of his faith, his hope, and his love. And he has been able as no other man to clothe his thoughts in words which make their way to the heart.

*Admonition and Thanks.*

4:2-23. There were two women who had helped to spread the gospel, and who now had fallen out over some matter. Paul here exhorts them to be of one mind; and he asks his true "yokefellow" Synzygos to help them in this matter and thus show that he deserves his name. For Synzygos means yokefellow.

Then the apostle again exhorts the Congregation to rejoice in the Lord, and to let all their requests be made known to God, and to be diligent in doing that which is honorable and of good report; then shall the God of peace be with them.

Finally, the apostle expresses his hearty thanks to the Philippians for the gift which they have sent him. It has done his heart so much good to see this beautiful proof of the love which they feel for him in these troublous times. Under such circumstances it especially warms his heart to see that he has such true friends. And the Philippians have always been loyal friends. The mutual love between them and the apostle was something unique. They were the only ones from whom he would consent to accept money support for himself. From them he accepted it with joy. God is well pleased in their kindness, and will reward it. Then follows a cordial salutation.

This letter was written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome; probably, shortly before he was set free, hence in the year 63 or 64.

## The Letter to the Colossians

This letter, like the one to the Romans, is addressed to a Congregation which Paul had not himself founded.

The city of Colossae had a most beautiful situation on the banks of the river Lychus in the province of Phrygia. At one time Colossae was a city of considerable importance, but it fell behind Laodicea and Apamea; and now nothing but ruins remain to mark the site of the once beautiful city.

The Congregation in Colossae was founded by Epaphras, whose home was in this city (Col. 1:7; 4:12). It is probable that he had been converted by the preaching of Paul during the long stay of the apostle in Ephesus, and that he then went back to his native town as a preacher of the Gospel. So it was the Pauline method of preaching which became the ruling system in this place (1:3, 8, 23, etc.; 2:1, 6, etc.; 4:1, etc.). As was to be expected in that district, a large majority of the Church members were Gentile converts (1:21, 27; 2:11, 13). The Congregation seems to have been pretty large and to have had their meeting-place in the home of Philemon (Philemon, v. 2). Later on we hear very little of this Church. It led a somewhat retired life and did not become as important as the Churches in Laodicea and Ephesus and some others in the Asiatic provinces.

Epaphras came to Rome while Paul was a prisoner in that city (1:7; 4:12). There came also a runaway slave named Onesimus. He was well known to the

Christians in Colossae, as he was the bondman of Philemon. Both Epaphras and Onesimus brought Paul some quite disturbing reports in regard to conditions in Colossae.

It was not the work of the Judaists which now was the great danger to the Pauline Churches. A *new intellectual movement* was spreading over those districts. It had a strong hold on the minds of many, and it robbed many of their Christian faith.

*The time was full of religious syncretism.* The old heathen religions were passing away. There were not many who believed in them; especially not among the more intelligent classes. These were more interested in "the higher thought," or philosophy.

The theory was then advanced that all religions were merely fantastic expressions of certain fundamental religious and moral ideas. These ideas were the kernel, and religion merely the shell. Now the shell must be removed by the aid of this wonderful philosophy. Then one would find that every religion enclosed some peculiar moral principle; and it would be possible to *get at the truth by taking the best in each religion* and making them all one.

This idea came to the fore especially in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. And from this place it spread over Asia Minor. Then it spread over a still wider area; and we now know it under the name "*Gnosticism.*"

The people in Phrygia, where Colossae was situated, were known as visionaries, easily moved to fanaticism. Two or three hundred years later these districts were swept by a wave of the fanatical movement called Montanism. But it was Gnosticism which toward the close of Paul's life began to bring confusion into the Churches. It was Jewish theosophy and Greek philosophy and certain oriental "mysteries" that were to be put in the melting-pot and made into one.

To these false teachers, faith in Christ was not enough. They wanted to come into some sort of connection with the mysterious supernatural agencies. In their doctrinal system they had some thoughts borrowed from the Judaism of the time concerning God and angels, and to these thoughts were added certain ideas borrowed from the Christian religion. Christ was supposed to be chief of the angels, and the angels occupied a position midway between God and man. It was important, then, to come into communication with these angels; and it was supposed that this could be most surely done by rigid abstinence in the matter of satisfying natural wants and desires, and by self-torture of various kinds. Everything material was evil, and should therefore be done away with.

This philosophic system they presented with great persuasiveness of speech (2:4); and they led astray many who regarded their abstinence as an evidence of piety (2:23). These false teachers treated themselves with great severity.

By reason of his being a prisoner Paul could not himself in person be at the front in this war; therefore he sends the Colossians this letter. Their false wisdom he opposes by setting up *the true Christian knowledge* concerning the person and the work of Christ.

### *The Contents and the Line of Thought in This Letter.*

It is not an easy matter to divide this letter into sections. It is one continuous whole, in which the thoughts follow each other without any special scheme of arrangement. In every part of the letter the apostle sets forth the true Christian doctrine, gives his readers due admonishment, and exposes and denounces all heresy.



*Thanksgiving and Intercession for the Church. A Statement as to What Christianity Is.*

1:1,2. The usual superscription and salutation.

1:3-14. The apostle begins by mentioning what joy he has had in the reports from the Church in Colossae. The members stand fast in the faith, and there is among them a strong feeling of brotherly love. But their faith and love have their strength in the hope which is laid up with God in Heaven. This the Gospel has brought them; and the Gospel is the word of truth and the gift of God to all the world. This word has been preached to the Colossians by Epaphras, and they received it in faith; and thus they are no longer like the Gentiles without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). But they stand on the immovable rock of truth, and not on the loose sand of empty speculations. Among them also the Gospel has brought forth rich fruit in their hearts and in their lives. The message of God's grace is everywhere victorious. The reports sent him have filled the apostle's heart with joy. Therefore he must needs give thanks and pray. He prays earnestly to God, that the Colossians in these dangerous times may be preserved from the false teachers, who would pervert the Christian doctrine and corrupt their Christian life. And he prays that the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of God's will concerning man's salvation, and may learn how God wants Christian people to conduct themselves. May the Holy Spirit give them such wisdom and knowledge. Then they will understand that when the apostle speaks to them of "wisdom" and "knowledge" and "understanding," these words have an entirely different meaning from that in which they are so boldly used by the false teachers. To him they do not express mere empty speculations, but the fruits of the labor of

the Spirit in the hearts of men. It is to be hoped that the Christian Colossians may have the knowledge concerning God which is a fruit of the Spirit; and it will make them able to lead a life worthy of God's children and pleasing to God, so that they will bear fruit and increase in every good work. And they will feel themselves strengthened with the might of God's glory, and be patient in times of affliction, and thank God for His grace in Christ, for the grace which the Christians have, and for that which they shall receive.

It is God who has delivered us out of the power of the prince of darkness, to whom we by nature belonged; and who has made us His children and citizens of the Kingdom of His beloved Son. It was the Son who opened the way to the Father's mercy. *None other than He could do it.* But that which He has done is done for good and all; for the Father is well pleased in whatever the Son does. In Him we have redemption; in Him it is sure; nothing can take it away from Him. He has cancelled our debt, delivered us from the power of the devil, saved us from all danger; in Him we have forgiveness of sins. In this way we have been prepared to have our inheritance with God's people in the blest estate in which all darkness has been for ever dispelled.

#### *What Christ Is.*

1:15-23. Our estate of grace and our hope of Heaven depend, then, on Christ. But He could not give us these things, if He were not much more than that which the teachers of Gnosticism would make of Him. An angel, no matter how high in rank, would not have been able to perform the work of Christ's atonement. Had Christ been no more than that, there would have been no salvation through Him. However,

thank God, He is something more. *Christ is the image of the invisible God.* No human eye can see God; but *in Christ we may see His exact image.* When God wished to reveal Himself exactly as He is, He chose to do it through Christ, who in his every feature is like God. Thus He could say, John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And John 14:9: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He can be the perfect image of God; for *He is the Son*, born of the Father, and thus *above any creature.* He was before anything was created; and hence *He is not one of the things created.* He could not be: for all things are created through Him. Without Him nothing would have been made; the whole world with all things in it is created *in and through and unto* Him. In Him is the first beginning of all things; they are made and preserved by Him. All things must finally find Him; Him they seek, consciously or unconsciously, as the magnetic needle, which does not come to rest before it points to the pole. He is *born of God*, while *all things else are created through Him.* Here is the wide distinction between God and His creation; and it is not true, as asserted by Gnosticism, that Christ is a part of creation; that all other creatures spring from Him, but that He is one of them. No, He is of the very essence of God. Neither is it true, as taught by Gnosticism, that matter is eternal as God himself. No: matter is created, made by the power of Almighty God through Christ; for Christ is the "Word," through whom God carried out His plan of creation. Thus all things were made, the visible and invisible, heaven and earth, and the countless host of angels. In Him is the beginning and the end of all things. Without Him nothing could be that which the Creator intended it to be.

The highest of His creations here on earth is His *Church*. It stands in a relation to Him as peculiar to itself; it is His body, and He is *its Head* (Rom. 12: 4; 1 Cor. 12: 12-27). Without Him the Church could not have been; and without Him it can not stand. He is exalted above the Church; His life courses through it, and His thoughts lead it. When He arose from the dead He took a position which none other can reach; He was *crowned Lord of all*.

More than this: When He was raised from the dead He *sundered the bonds of death*. From that moment death has lost its power. Christ was the first-born from the dead, translated into life eternal with God. And after Him follow the long line of the faithful in His Church. They follow Him from the land of death to the bliss of eternal life in Heaven. For where the head is the body must be. Thus has Christ brought the life into the world.

Christ could not have won this great victory with all that it implies, if *God* had not decided to *dwell in Him* with all the *fulness of the divine being*, with all God's attributes and power. This God did when Christ became man. As He is *God from everlasting*, He is *from His incarnation both God and man*. As such He carried out the work of redemption; by His death on the cross He made peace between God and man. Thereby God reconciled all things to Himself; sin was taken away, and thus the wall of partition between God and His creatures was torn down. A new generation of men, a new heaven and a new earth are thus made possible. Christ could bring about the reconciliation; standing, as he did, *the accredited representative of both sides*, he being both God and man. This is the firm rock of our salvation, something entirely different from the vain vapourings of Gnosticism.

So now you also are reconciled with God, says the

apostle; applying that which he has said (v. 12-20) as to the case of the Christian Colossians. Even them who in time past were alienated and enemies in thought and deed, God has once for all reconciled with Himself when Christ died on the cross. Now they have forgiveness of sins, and the grace and favor of God, in order that they may present themselves holy; without blemish and unprovable before Him; and this they can do if they continue grounded and steadfast in the faith, and cling to the hope which the Gospel gives to all who believe the glad tidings. The good news has been preached to the Colossians. The Gospel was for all men; and God has in His great mercy made Paul an apostle and sent him out to the great world of Gentiles with orders to light the torch of hope in the places where all was dark and hopeless.

When the apostle here has laid so much stress on the *body of Christ, the body of His flesh, the blood of the cross, death*, — the occasion of it is the perversion of the truths of salvation by the vain speculations, or what we may call the transcendentalism, of the Gnostic heresy. As against these false teachers the apostle points out to the Christians that their salvation does not rest in any philosophical system of mental gymnastics, but *rests on definite facts; on Christ*, such as He was and lived and suffered and died while here on earth, a man of flesh and blood. Our Savior is a reality. Faith grasps something which actually is, and thus the believer is saved.

*Paul Is the Minister of God for the Spreading of the Gospel.*

1:24-2:5. Paul was a prisoner at the time of writing this letter. His life has been full of suffering; but he is happy in the thought that he is suffering for Christ's sake.

His troubles and suffering will soon be over. He can not have much farther to go; and "I now fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." And he is filled with joy because God has deemed him worthy to suffer for Christ's sake; and his joy is the greater at the thought that his afflictions are for the benefit and the honor of the Church (2 Cor. 1:6; Eph. 3:13); for it has been his great happiness in life to be the servant of the Church. This was the place assigned to him in the Lord's house, that he should fulfil the Word of God, that is, preach the whole truth. In this light they must view his imprisonment and his afflictions; and not listen to those who say that his sufferings have nothing to do with his apostolic office.

In God's Word the great "mystery," God's plan of salvation in Christ, which had so long been hid, was now revealed to God's children, His saints. And now God had also made known to the Gentiles what is the riches of the glory of this mystery. In this mystery is revealed to us God's innermost being and His infinite love.

This mystery is *Christ* in the midst of the generation of men: *Salvation* for a lost world, and the *hope* of glory for despairing mankind. This was something different from the esoteric "mysteries" of Gnosticism, from which all but the initiated were excluded.

And it was *this Christ* whom Paul and his co-workers proclaimed, admonishing and teaching every man in all wisdom, in order that all might be made perfect in Christ.

As Christ is the Savior of each and all, so the Gospel is for *every man*, and every man is to be instructed in the way of salvation. All have a right to these things; and so it is entirely wrong when the Gnostics make salvation dependent on some sort of mysterious wisdom which is known only to the initiated, and which these select few want to keep as a secret among them-

selves. Such is not God's salvation. This is revealed to all through the Gospel; it is to come to the knowledge of all.

This is the end toward which the apostle labors, striving to reach it with all the strength which God gives him.

Though not personally known to the brethren in Colossae and Laodicea, the apostle has suffered great anxiety as to how they will meet the false teachers; and he has prayed earnestly for them, that they might be comforted and knit together in love, and reach a full assurance of understanding, and know the riches of the mystery of God, even Christ. There is no better protection against error than brotherly love; in that Christians are united, and together try to reach a deeper understanding of Christ. For in Him only do we have all the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge; but they are hidden, so that only he who seeks with all diligence may find him. To understand Christ is to understand God. Knowledge of Christ should therefore be sought by all who desire wisdom.

If they have this knowledge they will not fall into the hands of the false teachers, who try to delude them with the persuasiveness of speech. But the danger is great, and hence the apostle gives them this warning. Even if he can not come to them in person, he is with them in the spirit, and he is made glad by their steadfast faith in Christ. This faith will be a good line of defense and a strong bulwark against the assaults of the enemy.

#### *Steadfastness in the Faith in Christ.*

2:6-23. Now, if the Christian Colossians have accepted Christ as their Lord through the preaching of the Gospel, they must be steadfast in their faith in Him; be rooted in Him, so that they draw their life and

strength from Him. This is what they have been taught; and now they should with all their heart thank God for salvation in Christ.

Again and again in this letter (1:11; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2) the apostle returns to this: Thank God. As the letter to the Philippians is the "letter of rejoicing," this letter to the Colossians is the "letter of thanksgiving." These two emotions belong together, and they sound the keynote of the Christian life. The prisoner, awaiting in Rome the sentence of death, is in spite of his chains and other anxieties full of joy and thanks to God; and he urges his Congregations to follow him in this matter. The Christian heart is something marvellous. As the afflictions in this world become heavier, the joy in communion with the Lord becomes deeper, and gratitude toward God becomes warmer. The apostle has experienced this in abundant measure; and the experience is a lesson to his Congregations and to the Christians in all ages. The apostle Paul has learnt much in God's hard school; and he knows how to admonish and comfort others in the heavy trials of life. Rejoice always. Abound in thanksgiving.

Let them thus conduct their Christian estate, he says; and the heresy of Gnosticism will not gain any foothold. These false teachers come with their worldly wisdom and their mouthy philosophical ranting of their own invention; but there is nothing in it. It is altogether a vain deceit. These fine, philosophical phrases, with which they would make spoil of people, they have received from other mere men; and the whole is nothing more than the "weak and beggarly rudiments" of the world (Gal. 4:3,9). With Christ it has nothing to do.

The Savior does not deceive; in Him is no empty cant. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. As God and man He is now at the right hand of God on high. He not only has all the fulness of the



Godhead, but he also has a body. He is not, as the Gnostics would have people think, a sort of spiritual figment of the imagination, but a bodily reality.

If they have Christ, the apostle goes on, they have in Him the whole fulness of God in respect to a life worth living, a life true and eternal. They need none other than Him in order to receive all which God has for His children; and in Christ is given them all that they need and can receive. The frothings of the false teachers they do not need; these teachers have nothing to give them. There is nothing of this which can satisfy them. No, let them be filled with Christ; then they have God. And Christ is the head of all principality and power. He is the Lord; and no matter how great and mighty the angels may be, they are but His servants. But if the Christians in their communion with Christ have everything that they need unto life and salvation, it is meaningless to worship the angels, or to ask anything of them, as urged by the false teachers. If we need angels, their Lord Jesus will send them to help His believers; for He knows our wants, and how they can best be satisfied.

But if they in Christ have all that they need for salvation, it follows that *they do not need circumcision of the flesh* in order to be saved, as these same heretics would have them believe. How could such circumcision profit them? In their union with Christ they have the *true circumcision, that of the heart*; alluded to even in the Old Covenant of the Law (Deut. 30:6; cf. Rom. 2:29). This circumcision is not made with hands; for how could something done to the body by the hands save the soul? No, the Christian circumcision, which Christ has instituted, is performed by the Holy Spirit, and consists in putting off the body of the flesh by renouncing the carnal and sinful lusts. This circumcision they received when they were baptized; then they were

buried and raised again with Christ (Rom. 6:4); then they came into the most intimate communion with Him, and experienced the power of His death and the glorious fruits of His resurrection. Then "the flesh" died, and a new life was born, the life of faith; which was created by the same quickening power of God that raised Christ from the dead.

This great change you have experienced, says the apostle. You were dead by reason of your transgressions and your sinful nature, and by the uncircumcision of your flesh. Thus you were aliens to God and the life in Him. But you, even you, God raised from the dead, and gave you the life in Christ; in that He forgave you all your sins, for when we have forgiveness of sins we also have life and salvation.

In like manner as the old circumcision is done away with through Christ, and no more has any importance whatever, so also has the *Law* been abolished as a condition of our salvation. It was false doctrine when any said that the Law still was in force. The Law drew up "the bond written in ordinances that was against us." Our debt was large; we were hopelessly insolvent. The Law condemned us. Then God took the bond of our indebtedness and nailed it to the cross. Christ took upon Himself the whole debt and the curse of the Law. He paid for us, and He suffered the curse; and thus these barriers between God and us were removed. They no more exist (Gal. 3:13). Thus the Law can no more be a condition of salvation; God has in Christ done away with it. When we wish to know whether or not we are righteous and have the favor of God, we must not seek information in the Law, but look to Christ and ask if we are in Him and are justified before God through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:15, 16; Gal. 2:15-21; 3:21-29). If we have Him, nothing separates us from God; we are His rightful children.

The great victory was won on the cross, and it was complete. Christ despoiled the principalities and powers of their armor and weapons; He put them to rout, and made them harmless. Thus God's Kingdom came to mankind, and His grace could now rule. The spiritual powers can no longer stand between us and God. This was clearly shown when God by the death of Christ surmounted every obstacle and removed every barrier. *Salvation is the work of God through Christ.* It is an accomplished fact; and Christians must not let themselves be induced by the false teachers to place themselves under the power of something which God has abrogated. They must not be guilty of this sin.

Now that Christians are set free from bondage under the Law, they should not lend an ear to those who would judge them in respect of the old rules about eating and feast days and the like; for the *Law* and its precepts are only a "*shadow*" of the "*body*" that is to come. But the *body* which the old commandments vaguely foreshadowed, is the Church, and *the Church belongs to Christ.* Who will stretch his hands after an empty shadow when he can lay hold on the body itself?

Therefore, says the apostle to the Church: Let no man rob you of your prize. Salvation, which Christ has earned for them, is sure; it is laid by for them in Heaven. The false teachers will try with all their might to induce the Colossian Christians to come over to them. They will say that little man can not approach the most high God, but must *worship the angels* and beg them to intercede for him. And this, they will insist, is evidence of humility. And they will tell of revelations and visions which they will claim to have had. But instead of being humble they are in the highest degree puffed up with conceit. They trust their own natural reason rather than the Gospel of Christ. They do not hold fast the Head, Christ; they do not need Him. There-

fore they have broken off relations with the Church, His Body. For Christ and the Church can not be separated; to break with one is to break with the other. It is Christ who with His strong bands holds the body together. Life issues from Him; and it is through being knit together with Him that the Church, His Body, can increase with the increase of God.

Being thus joined with Christ, they are "dead from the rudiments of the world." And one who is dead surely can not subject himself to such rules as these: Handle not, nor taste, nor touch. If they still lived without Christ, out in the world, the rudiments of the world might be for them, but now they are not. The life in God does not, as claimed by the false teachers, consist in abstinence from meat and drink; for God has given us these things, that we may use them for our good. But men think of so many foolish things and call it deep wisdom. When they are not satisfied with the manner in which God wants to be worshiped, they invent some worship of their own, which has a finer appearance and may impress people as being evidence of great humility. They maltreat their bodies in order to show that they are altogether spiritual and lifted high above all bodily things. They want us to think that they live "in the spirit"; and that the body, being merely a hindrance in this living, is to be submitted to torture. However, the whole thing is mere empty talk. These people are the very ones to indulge their "flesh"; and their carnal mind and their vanity overleap all bounds.

*Seek the Things That Are Above.*

3:1-4. If you are raised together with Christ, you should bear in mind that you are dead from the things of earth, and have the life with Christ in God. Therefore it is not seemly in you to be earthly-minded; but you must *set your mind on Heaven*, where Christ is.

Now this your life is hid, and none may see its glory; but when Christ comes in the clouds, all shall see you with Him in glory.

*Put Away All Things Smacking of Heathenism.*

3: 5-11. Being dead with Christ, they must *put to death the carnal lusts*, which flourish freely among the heathen, but should have no place among God's children. For these have put off the old man like a worn out garment, and have put on the new man with a new rule of thinking and of living. As this new man attains a stronger growth by the grace of God, they will the better learn to understand what God expects of them. And where Christ dwells in the hearts, the wall of partition between man and man will be broken down; all will be one in Him, who is all, and in all.

*Lead a Christian Life in the Congregation.*

3: 12-17. As God's elect and saints they must show a Christian spirit and lead a Christian life in the Congregation, Christ being their great example. Him they must imitate, especially in the matter of charity. They must let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts, and the Word of Christ dwell in them richly. Let them praise God; and whatever they do, let it be done in the name of Jesus, and let them give thanks to God for all His grace and gifts in Christ our Lord and Savior.

*The Christian in His Home.*

3: 18-4: 1. Love and the fear of God must rule in the Christian homes. All that they do they are to do as in the sight of God and in the service of our Lord Jesus; and the heritage of Heaven shall be their reward.

*Sundry Admonitions.*

4:2-6. Continue in prayer and thanksgiving, says the apostle; and pray for me, that God may open to me a door for the preaching of the Gospel; and be at all times careful in your speech.

## CONCLUSION.

4:7-18. The letter closes with the announcement that the bearers, Tychicus and Onesimus, will give the Colossians further information concerning the apostle and his affairs.

Then there is a salutation and the name of the apostle written in his own hand.

This letter was written and sent at the same time with the letter to the Ephesians.

## The Letters to the Church in Thessalonica

In regard to the city of Thessalonica and the Church at that place, read Part I, pages 89-92, 100.

### 1 Thessalonians

#### THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

- I. The historical part: Paul praises the Congregation, and speaks of his longing to visit them again. 1:2-3:13.
- II. Admonition and instruction. 4:1-5:25.  
Conclusion and salutation. 5:26-28.

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#### I. THE HISTORICAL PART: PAUL PRAISES THE CONGREGATION, AND SPEAKS OF HIS LONGING TO VISIT THEM AGAIN (1-3).

*Thanks to God for the Good State of the Congregation.*

1:1-10. Paul and his co-workers, Silvanus and Timothy, send their best wishes to the Church in Thessalonica, and express their thanks to God and their joy because of the rich life of faith and love in the Congregation, and because of the perseverance in hope of this Congregation in the time of trouble. For we know, say they, that you are God's beloved children, His elect. When our Gospel was preached to you it did not come as empty words, but in the power of the Holy Spirit; and it was preached in the full assurance of faith. The Thessalonians surely had not forgotten Paul's stay

among them. He made many friends; and they turned from their idols to the true God, receiving the Gospel with gladness, in spite of all the persecution and the affliction which they must suffer. All Macedonia and Achaia had spoken of how the Thessalonians had turned from the worship of idols to serve the living God; and how they were waiting for the coming again from Heaven of His Son Jesus, whom God had raised from the dead, and who was coming to deliver His own from the wrath of God sweeping over the wicked world.

In verses 9 and 10 we have a short summary of the missionary sermon which Paul preached whenever he appeared before an audience of Gentiles: Faith in the true and living God, and in Jesus His Son; who died for our sins, and was raised again for our righteousness; and in His coming again to save His own in the last judgment.

#### *Paul's Conduct Among Them.*

2: 1-16. Paul's enemies, the Judaists, followed close at his heels wherever he went. They began this on the very first day on which he began to preach the Gospel, and they continued it to the end of his life. As soon as he had founded a Congregation, and everything was in good order, so that he might go on to a new place, the Judaists put in their appearance and began to slander the apostle in order to make Judaists of these new converts.

This was the case in Thessalonica also, though the Judaists had not as yet been able to accomplish any great results. In order to stop them in their work of tearing down, the apostle reminds the Thessalonians of his own coming to them and his stay with them. They must remember that in spite of the way in which he had been maltreated in Philippi, he had preached the Gospel boldly, without being frightened by the pros-



pect of a controversy. But in the consciousness of being a messenger from God he preached the Gospel pure and without guile, that it might be pleasing to God. And God, who sees the most secret thoughts of the heart, knows that Paul had no other purpose. His enemies slandered him when they said that he had at any time been actuated by dishonest or sordid motives. He had never flattered people; nor had he used the preaching of the Gospel as a means of drawing money out of their pockets. And he had not sought honor of men; not even the honor which he might justly have claimed as an apostle of Christ.

It was fervent love which moved him to give them not only the Gospel, but his own life if necessary. They must remember how he worked early and late at his trade in order to earn enough for his wants, and not burden any of them. These were the conditions under which he preached the Gospel to them.

All this they must know very well. They had seen that he walked uprightly among them; and they remember how with the love of a father he had exhorted them to walk worthily of God, who had called them.

Paul thanks God unceasingly that the Thessalonians accepted his preaching as a message from God. That the believers had experienced the power of it was shown when they were being persecuted by their own countrymen. Thus they had become fellow-sufferers of the Christians in Judaea, who also had been persecuted by their countrymen, the Jews. And these Jews had been true to their traditions. They killed the Lord Jesus, as they had killed the prophets who prophesied concerning Him; and they persecuted those who now preached Him. They respect neither God nor men, says Paul. Now they wanted to prevent him from speaking to the Gentiles, that these might be saved. But they succeed only in filling the measure of their sins;

and when it is full the wrath of God will come upon them.

*The Apostle's Longing to Visit the Congregation Once More.*

2: 17-20. The difficulties under which the new Congregation labored caused the heart of the apostle to be filled with anxiety and longing to come to their assistance. Several times he had hoped that now he would be able to do it; but each time something happened to prevent it. The blame for this must be placed on Satan, the origin of everything evil, Paul says; but we do not know exactly what the hindrances were. In most fervent and affectionate terms the apostle speaks of his love for this Congregation; it is the address of a father to the child of his heart.

*He Sends Timothy to Them.*

3: 1-13. The longing of Paul had been so strong that, not being able to come himself, he had sent his friend and co-worker Timothy to them from Athens, that he might comfort and admonish them in their afflictions, in order that they might not waver in their faith. God's children can not hope to escape affliction.

Paul was made very happy and thankful to God when Timothy came back with good reports of their faith and love, and told how they cherished the memory of their apostle. These reports made it so much easier for him to keep up his courage through his own times of trouble. The joy he feels in the Congregation at Thessalonica is a rich recompense for all his anxieties. The only thing that he can do for them in return is to thank God for all His mercies, and to pray that God may give them an abundance of love one toward another, and strengthen their hearts for a holy life before

our God and Father, that they may be unblamable at the coming of the Lord Jesus with all His saints on the day of judgment.

The apostle again expresses the fervent wish that God might so direct his way as to make it possible for him once more to visit the brethren in Thessalonica.

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## II. ADMONITION AND INSTRUCTION (4-5).

### *Admonition to Lead a Holy Life.*

4: 1-12. The Christians of Thessalonica have made a good beginning in their Christian life and in the setting in order of their Congregation; but they must bear in mind that in these things there is to be growth. They know the Lord Jesus and the will of God: their sanctification; and therefore they must shun the vices of the Gentiles: lust and covetousness. They must lead a clean moral life and be honest in all their dealings. God has called them to a life in holiness, and will punish all unrighteousness. To make this matter of little account is to show contempt, not toward men, but toward God; who has given them the Holy Spirit, so that their own hearts also urge them to lead a holy life.

### *Brotherly Love.*

In like manner God has taught them the great commandment of love toward one another. In this they must grow; and it must be a point of honor with them to live quietly and not meddle with other people's business. They are to work diligently with their hands, in order that they may not be a burden on others; and they must behave properly toward those who are outside of the Congregation.

*The Coming Again of the Lord.*

4:13-5:11. Christians must not grieve over their dead, as do those who have no hope. It is quite a different matter with the Christians. They must not feel anxiety with regard to those who die before the coming again of the Lord; nor must they think that these are not saved. Such thoughts are not in agreement with the Christian faith. For we believe that *Jesus died and rose again*; and God will see to it that *those who are fallen asleep in Christ shall be brought together with Christ*, that where he is there shall they be also.

The apostle goes on to explain this more in detail, as the Lord has revealed it to him. *They that are alive* at the coming of the Lord shall not precede them that are fallen asleep. At the sound of the last trump, when the Lord comes, the *dead in Christ shall rise first*. *Then they that are alive* (1 Cor. 15:51) *shall be changed* and meet the Lord in the air; and then they shall be forever with Him. This must be their comfort.

*Be Ready to Meet the Lord.*

None knows the exact time of the Lord's coming. On that subject the apostle can give no information. The Lord shall come as a thief in the night to them who have not made themselves ready to meet Him. However, the brethren are no longer in the darkness of heathenism, but have the light in Christ. Therefore, says the apostle, let us watch and be sober, put on the armor of God, and be on our guard; for God has not appointed us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation. For this reason it was that Christ died for us; that we might live with him for ever, whether we are fallen asleep or are alive at the time of His coming again.

*Closing Exhortations and Benediction.*

5: 12-28. As usual, the letter closes with divers exhortations. The apostle reminds the Thessalonians of their duty to esteem the leaders and teachers in the Church, to keep the peace among themselves, to admonish the disorderly, to encourage the faint-hearted, to support the weak, to be patient with all, not to return evil for evil, but be good toward all men. Their keynote is to be gratitude and joy, resting on ceaseless communion with God in prayer; for such is the will of God. They must not quench the Spirit, nor despise that which the Spirit says through the prophets. On the other hand, they must not accept without question everything offered them as truth, but carefully prove if it be from God. They must hold fast the good, and abstain from evil. Then they may put their trust in God; He shall lead them on the way of sanctification, that spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless till the coming of the Lord.

Finally, the apostle asks the Congregation to pray for him, to salute all with a holy kiss, and to let this letter be read to all the brethren.

The letter must have been written shortly after the visit of Paul in Thessalonica. The plane on which the Congregation stands shows that it has but recently been founded. The anxiety felt by the Congregation in regard to such questions as that concerning the fate of the dead would not have been possible among more enlightened Christians. According to chapter 3:6 the letter was written after the coming of Timothy and Silas to Paul in Corinth. This probably was shortly after the arrival of Paul himself in Corinth; that is, in the year 53.

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## 2 Thessalonians

The apostle soon received reports concerning conditions in the Congregation. We see from the first chapter of this letter that the Congregation continued to increase in faith and brotherly love, and that they remained steadfast and brave under their persecutions and other trials.

The first letter had rid them of their worries in regard to the second coming of Christ. But now there were other causes of anxiety. Some had conceived the idea that the Lord's coming might be expected at any moment; and this caused all their thoughts and their longing to be all the time busy with this one thing. One result of this was an alarming tendency to shirk their earthly duties; they neglected their work and showed a disposition to become purposeless enthusiasts.

This disease of fanaticism had grown worse by reason of the circumstance that certain persons among them claimed to have received divine revelation in regard to this matter. They had even gone the length of forging a letter, which purported to have been written by Paul, and which gave them his approval (2:2); and of course they had tried to explain his first letter as endorsing their position, and had quoted such passages as 1 Thess. 5:2, 3; 4:15, 17 in support of this claim.

Thus it came about that Paul found it necessary to send a new letter of instruction and exhortation in order to stop the false movement which threatened to corrupt the Congregation, and for the purpose of encouraging them to continue with a good heart in the way of faith and perseverance.

## THE PLAN OF THE LETTER.

- Introduction and salutation. 1:1-2.  
 I. Praise for the Congregation. 1:3-12.  
 II. Christ's coming again, and the appearance of the Antichrist.  
 III. Exhortation. 2:13-3:16.  
 Conclusion. 3:17-18.
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## INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION (1:1-2).

Paul begins this letter like the first one by sending the Thessalonians a cordial greeting from himself and his co-workers Silvanus and Timothy.

## I. PRAISE FOR THE CONGREGATION (1:3-12).

Paul can not sufficiently thank God for the Christians in Thessalonica; for the fact that such a rich Christian life is to be found among them, in spite of their many trials and temptations. Their faith has increased, and their mutual love has become more fervent; so that they are a beautiful example of patience and faith in afflictions and persecutions (1:3-4).

Therefore they are to be a living proof of God's justice. Through tribulation they must enter the Kingdom; but God shall punish those who have brought these troubles upon the Church. When Christ comes again He shall bring rest to the afflicted children of God, while those who have persecuted them shall feel the hand of vengeance upon them (1:5-10).

The apostle therefore prays for them always, that they may be preserved and that they increase in that which is good (1:11-12).

## II. CHRIST'S COMING AGAIN, AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANTICHRIST (2:1-12).

Here the apostle comes to the point which more than any other one thing has caused him to write this letter. The Thessalonians need further instruction concerning "the last things"—eschatology, as it is called. This is the case even today also. In the later history of God's Church it has not been unusual for people to give ear to all sorts of loose talk on this subject, resulting in scruples and visionary ideas. The apostle issues a most solemn warning. They must use sober common sense and not allow themselves to be frightened out of their wits by people who preach that the day of the last judgment is at hand, and that the Spirit of God speaks through them; or who tell them stories about Paul, or even read to them a letter which he is supposed to have written. These people have no word or letter from him for the Congregation; and the brethren must have a care lest they be led astray in this matter.

It is true, to be sure, that nobody knows the day or hour when Christ will come; but they must not conclude from this that they may believe any enthusiast who may take it into his head to shout: "Now He is coming." For before the last day there will be a great falling away from the Christian faith, and the Antichrist will appear. In him will be revealed just what sin is in its innermost nature, and he will be the chief traitor toward the Christian religion. He will brazenly exalt himself against God and everything holy; drive God out of His temple on earth, and set himself up as God. All this Paul had told the Thessalonians when he was with them.

However, before the Antichrist can appear certain hindrances must be removed. There is already enough



of active antichristian wickedness; but it hides its true character. The mystery of lawlessness is working, only until he who restraineth is removed. When that takes place, when the restraining influence is taken away, the Antichrist will show his true shape. The Antichrist shall not be victor, however; for Christ shall come and destroy him. Satan has equipped this Antichrist with all the powers at his disposal, with signs and lying wonders, and with all the deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish. And many fall into his snares, because they do not receive the love that would lead them to a knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved. So God punishes them by giving them over to the wiles of the Evil One, that they should believe a lie (Rom. 1:20-28), and thus become ripe for the judgment, as they had pleasure in unrighteousness and believed not the truth.

### III. EXHORTATION (2:13-3:18).

#### *Hold Fast That Which You Were Taught.*

2:13-17. After looking on the dark picture which he has just now unfolded, the apostle turns his thoughts back to the great and glorious things for which he can not thank God enough: the great mercy which God has shown them, when He called them through the preaching of the apostle to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and gave them grace to increase in holiness and faith in the truth. So now they must stand fast; and this they do if they hold that which they have been taught by the apostle. Then shall they also receive help and strength from God the Father, who in love gave His children eternal comfort and good hope through grace.

*Paul Asks Them to Pray for Him.*

3:1-5. As the apostle has them in his heart and in his prayers to God, so must they pray for him; that the Word of the Lord may be preached and glorified in other places also, and that God may deliver him from evil and unreasonable men; for there are many unrelenting enemies of the truth, who never will receive the preaching of faith. It is probably the Judaists whom the apostle here has in mind. But he feels sure that the Congregation in Thessalonica will give ear to his admonition and instruction; and that the Lord will be with them and save them from all evil, and so direct their hearts that they will love God and in patience await the coming of Christ.

*They Will Show Obedience, and God Will Keep Them.*

3:6-13. Before closing, the apostle again tenderly admonishes them regarding the disorder which had crept into the Church. He urges them to shun those members of the Congregation who do not lead lives worthy of Christians, and especially to hold themselves aloof from them that teach another doctrine than the one taught by the apostle. They must beware of idleness; let every man earn his bread by his own labor. In this matter they may imitate the apostle. Idleness causes people to lead a disorderly life, and to become mere useless busybodies. Let them do that which is right before God.

3:14-16. Discipline must be maintained in the Church. If any one will not obey the word of the apostle in this letter, the others should have no company with such a man, to the end that he may be ashamed. Yet they must not in fanatical zeal count such a man an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

## CONCLUSION.

3: 17, 18. The letter closes with Paul's personal autograph and benediction.

In all probability this letter was written not long after the other letter to the Thessalonians. Both deal with the same difficulties and contain the same admonitions. It would seem, then, that this second letter was written during the same visit in Corinth, at the time when Paul was being persecuted by the Jews (3:2). According to 1:4 several Congregations had been founded in the environs of Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:1). So we may fix the date of this letter at some time in the early part of the year 54.

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## The Pastoral Letters

All the letters so far discussed are addressed to whole Congregations. The letters to Timothy and Titus are something new, in that they are addressed to a single person; and then there is the one to Philemon, which is a purely personal and private letter. The two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus form a separate group and have from old been called the pastoral letters. They are directed to Paul's tried and true co-workers Timothy and Titus in order to counsel and guide these men in their pastoral work. Thus the letters may be called official.

## The Letters to Timothy

Timothy was, probably, a native of Lystra in Asia Minor. His mother was a Christian Jewess named Eunice; and his father was a Greek (Acts 16: 1; 2 Tim. 1: 5). His grandmother Lois also was a Christian; and thus he had in his home received a Christian training (2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 14-15).

Timothy was already a Christian when Paul on his second missionary journey became acquainted with him. It may be that the family was converted to Christianity when Paul visited Lystra for the first time (Acts 14: 6-7). At that time Timothy was a young boy. Thus he was educated in the Gospel as preached by Paul. From the time when he met Paul in Lystra on the occasion of Paul's second visit, Timothy became the faithful companion and trusted assistant of the apostle. As expressing their spiritual relationship, Paul often calls Timothy his "child." Timothy accompanied Paul through Asia Minor; and then over to Macedonia, Philippi, and Berea. Here he remained behind for a time, and then joined Paul in Athens. From this city he was sent to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3: 2); then he joined Paul in Corinth, and was with him there when the apostle wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1: 1; 2 Thess. 1: 1).

On the third missionary journey we find Timothy with Paul in Ephesus. From this place he was sent to Macedonia (Acts 19: 22) and to Corinth, in which latter

place he was to help the Congregation in the settlement of some difficulties (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10).

Timothy was with him in Macedonia when Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1). Then he went with Paul to Corinth (Rom. 16:21), and afterward through Macedonia to Philippi. After that he crossed over by himself to Asia Minor and waited for Paul in Troas (Acts 20:1-6). Later we find him with Paul in Rome, when the apostle was a prisoner (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1). From Phil. 2:19 and following verses we see that it was the intention of the apostle to send Timothy to Philippi.

We see from 1 Tim. 1:3, that when he had been released from prison in Ephesus, Paul went on a journey, leaving Timothy behind in Ephesus to hold the false teachers in check. Later, when Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote to Timothy, asking him to come to Rome before the winter set in, and to bring with him a number of things which Paul had left behind in Troas (2 Tim. 4:9-23).

In Hebrews 13:23, it is mentioned that Timothy at the time when that letter was written had been in prison and had just been set free. There is a legend which says that he was the first bishop of Ephesus, and that he suffered death in the persecutions under the emperor Domitian.

#### INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION.

1:1, 2. The superscription is short, but suggests the thought with which the letter will deal. It is not primarily the *man* Paul writing to his dear friend, but rather the *apostle* writing to his co-worker and child in the faith. In the controversies in which Timothy is involved with the Gnostic heretics, it may be some help to him to be reminded of the fact that his fatherly friend is one of the Lord's own apostles.

*A Call to Arms Against False Doctrine.*

1: 3-30. Timothy had, as Paul here reminds him, been *left behind in Ephesus* in order that he might *take up arms against the false teachers*, whose doctrine was not in accord with the Gospel. They were not preaching God and Christ as our salvation and hope; but they were inventing fantastic fables and piecing together endless genealogies of the angels; this foolishness was their religion. It leads to dissensions in the Church, and should be promptly put down. These teachers can not serve as God's ministers; for they do not believe the Gospel of salvation. The Christian preaching is not to deal in endless and unprofitable speculations, nor in wild flights of a diseased imagination; but is to teach love, which springs out of a pure heart and a good conscience and a faith unfeigned, or, in other words, to teach the necessity of being and living as a "new man."

But there are some who do not like this simple doctrine of faith and so they have turned to empty and foolish fables. They pretend to be teachers of the Law, and they use some high-sounding phrases which they do not themselves understand; even as they have no understanding of the subject on which they talk with so much assurance.

We Christians, who hold fast the sound doctrine of the Gospel, know that the Law is good, if it be used in accordance with God's will. But God has never willed that His children were to be under the yoke of the Law. This has nothing to do with people who are righteous (Gal. 5:22). It is the wrongdoer, following his own will and living an ungodly and immoral life, who is amenable to the Law. This is the sound doctrine. It does not abrogate the Law, but gives it its rightful place (Rom. 3: 31-8: 3).

The heart of the apostle swells with joy and gratitude at the thought that he, who had been a blasphemer and persecutor and had done much injury, had not only found salvation; but that the Lord had even appointed him to the service, sending him out to preach this greatest of all truths, that Christ came to the world to save sinners. If anything on earth is well worthy of acceptance, it is this truth. Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

As the true spiritual son of the apostle, Timothy must hold fast this pure Gospel, in order that the prophecies concerning him at the time when he was dedicated to the service, may be fulfilled (4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6); in that he with a good conscience wars the good warfare. Some have thrust this Gospel from them and suffered spiritual shipwreck. This was the case with Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom Paul had for that reason been obliged to deliver unto Satan, in order that perhaps they thus might be taught not to blaspheme (1 Cor. 5: 5).

#### *Intercession for the Government.*

2: 1-7. First of all the apostle exhorts to intercession and thanksgiving for all men, and particularly for those in authority; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and honesty. For such is the will of God our Savior, who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. *There can be but one truth*; for there is *but one God* and *one Mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (Gal. 3: 19). And he is a *true* man; not an angel of high rank, as taught by the heresy of Gnosticism. He, the man Jesus, it was who *gave His life as a ransom for all* from the guilt and the punishment; and therefore there can not be redemption through any

other, or by any other means. There is no help for anybody in the speculations of the Gnostics. The testimony concerning redemption from guilt and punishment is presented at this time, now that the salvation in Christ is come, and the fulness of time has arrived; and God had appointed Paul an apostle, that he should go out into all the world and announce the Good News, especially to the Gentiles. This is immovably true; while the false teachers in question never have received any credentials from God to preach their heretical doctrine.

*Men and Women Must Conduct Themselves in a Christian Manner in the Congregation.*

2: 8-15. There were other things also that had gone wrong in the Congregation at Ephesus, which Timothy must try to set right. The men were disputatious, and the women had a passion for finery and did not conduct themselves with becoming modesty.

Timothy is therefore instructed to urge upon the *men* that they must lift up holy hands to God when they offer prayer at their Church services; and they must not make a mockery of their prayers by wrath and a passion for bandying words.

The *women* must curb their love of finery and other vanities. They are to wear modest apparel, becoming to women who profess godliness; and whose proper ornament is not costly clothes and the like, but good deeds. Women have their mission in the home; they are not fitted to be the teachers of the Church. Even the history of the fall in the garden of Eden shows that woman was not created for the leadership. She is more easily persuaded than is the man by the arts of seduction. She is, therefore, not to be the teacher and ruler of the man; her life is to be the more secluded life of the wife and mother. She shall be saved through



her childbearing, says the apostle; if as a Christian mother she "continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety."

*The Church Officials.*

3:1-13. Furthermore it was the duty of Timothy to keep an eye on the different servants and officials of the Church; and in this matter also the apostle gives his young friend some good counsel.

The office of a *bishop*, or a minister, in the Church is a high calling and much to be desired. But he who is to fill such a position must keep clear of the loose and immoral life of the heathen. A bishop, or minister of the Church, should be the husband of one wife, and must be temperate and sober-minded. A man who can not maintain order in his own home is not fit to care for the Church of God. And he must be a mature Christian, a man of some dignity; else he may easily fall into the snare of the Devil, and come to be regarded as one not to be taken seriously.

The *deacons* of the Church, also, must conduct themselves in a seemly way, be honest in money matters, temperate and otherwise fitted for their position. And the same holds true of the *deaconesses*.

They that serve well will have the love and esteem of their Congregations, and will be able to do their work with boldness in the faith in Christ.

*How Timothy is to Behave Himself in the House of God.*

3:14-16. The apostle has written these things, he says, that Timothy may know "how men ought to behave themselves in the House of God." The office of a bishop is so great and holy, because the Congregation is not a mere worldly institution; it is the House of God and has its own domestic government. *The Church*

*belongs to the living God, and He has given it a unique and most important mission: It is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. The Church of Christian believers and confessors is to hold the truth unto salvation up before the eyes of men, in order that they may see it and believe. In the Church the truth is safe; none can destroy the Church of God. It is the keeper of the great mystery of godliness: Jesus Christ, manifested in the flesh, certified by the Spirit as being He whom He claimed to be, seen of angels, preached and believed on among the nations, and now in glory at the right hand of God the Father almighty.*

*The False Doctrine with Which Timothy Will Have to Contend.*

4, 1-5. The apostle again returns to the subject of false teachers. The Church of God is facing great difficulties; this has been expressly revealed to the apostle. Timothy must therefore be on his guard and have his weapons at hand. There shall come false teachers, to whom the simple truth of the Gospel is not enough. They fall away from the faith, giving heed to all sorts of lying doctrines, which come from the Devil. Instead of leading people to faith in God they seduce them into hypocrisy, though branded in their own conscience as hypocrites. They put forward as patterns of Christian piety the people who do not marry, and who punish their bodies by abstinence from food.

The apostle also might have advised Christians not to marry (1 Cor. 7:7, 26); but that advice was due to the dangers and uncertainties of the times, and did not assume that people who did not marry were for that reason any better Christians than those who did. The apostle might also under certain peculiar circumstances counsel abstinence in regard to meet and drink (Rom.

14: 15, 21); but he had never regarded such abstinence as indicating a higher degree of sanctity. But these Gnostics wanted to be regarded as more spiritual and saintly than the apostle. His manner of life was not holy enough to suit them. They wanted to demonstrate their spirituality by showing that they were independent of the mere bodily demands; they despised the body as being the prison house which kept the soul from making its highest flights. But the apostle was able to see through this hollow spiritual pride, and he stamps the whole thing as sheer hypocrisy. Their talk about abstinence is very far from being godliness; for that which God has created is good. And we must not forget that the good things come from God, and are to be received with thanks to Him, and to be sanctified through the Word of God and prayer.

*Timothy Is to Remain True to That Which the Apostle Has Taught Him.*

4: 6-12. Timothy is instructed to put down all this talk of the Gnostics as profane, and old wives' fables, not to be tolerated in the Church of God. As a good minister of Christ he is to find nourishment for his spiritual life in the good doctrine of faith which he so far has followed. There is little profit in self-torture, such as is urged by the false teachers; but godliness is profitable for all things, as it has God's promise for the present life and the life to come. The salvation which is worth all our labor and striving is not founded on abstinence and good works, which may delude certain shallow minds; but we build our hope of it on the living God, who wishes to save all men, and will bring safely home to heaven all those who live their life in faith on Him.

Timothy is not to trouble himself with *unnecessary anxiety* on account of his youth, but must so conduct

himself as to win respect. In doctrine and life he must be an example to others, and make good use of the gift which was given him with the laying on of hands when he was ordained as one of the Lord's ministers. Then his work in the Church shall be blest, and he shall save himself and them that hear him.

*How Timothy Is to Deport Himself Toward His Congregation.*

5:1-8. Timothy is to use Christian tact in his deportment toward *old* and *young*. Especially should he show deference to the old widows among the members of the Church, and see to it that they want for nothing. If they have children he must urge upon these the duty of caring for their old parents. But he shall also admonish the widows to lead a blameless life in godliness and chastity.

5:9-16. *Old widows* of good report in the Church may be very useful in the work of the Congregation. But the young widows are not suited for such work. They think more of marriage than of serving the Lord; and they soon come to be suspected of having violated their pledge to work for the Church. And there is danger that they learn to be idle and to be tattling busybodies. It is better that they marry again and are kept busy with their own household duties.

*The Elders of the Church*

5:17-25. It is important to be careful and tactful in dealing with the *elders in the Congregation*, especially if complaint is made against any of them. Great care must be exercised in the selection of a man to be an elder; in order to avert the danger that something may come to light which, had it been known at the time, would have prevented the man's appointment.

*Some Final Exhortations.*

Chapter 6 begins with an exhortation to the bond-servants (6:1-2); and then there is a sharp attack on teachers of false doctrine. These are actuated, declares Paul, by love of money, "supposing that godliness is a way of gain" (6:3-10). Then follows an earnest admonition to Timothy to shun the false teachers and their hypocrisy, and to follow after godliness and charity. Let him fight the good fight of the faith and remember the good confession which he has confessed. He is to live his life in the sight of God and Christ Jesus, and do his duty; that he may be without reproach when the Lord comes again to judgment;—He who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords; who alone has immortality. To whom be honor and power eternal. Amen. (6:11-16.)

After this comes a reminder to Timothy that he must urge the rich to give liberally to the needy (6:17-19); and then a final admonition to turn away from the profane babblings of science, falsely so called. And the letter closes with the short benediction: "Grace be with you."

This letter was probably written during the time between Paul's first and second imprisonment. Paul had made Titus overseer of the Churches in Crete, had put Timothy in charge of the work at Ephesus, and had himself gone to Macedonia.

## 2 Timothy

This letter is the latest we have from the hand of the apostle Paul. It bears the stamp of having been written with death at the writer's elbow. An undercurrent of melancholy runs through it. The apostle feels the nearness of death, and longs for the presence of his dear son Timothy to relieve his loneliness.

It was two or three years since the apostle wrote the first letter to Timothy. He was now again a prisoner in Rome, had been once before his judges, and was now awaiting the final verdict (1:8; 2:9; 4:16); and he did not doubt what that would be (4:6). He expected the death of a martyr. The only one of his co-workers now with him was Luke; and Paul was hoping that Timothy might come and spend the winter with him (4:9, 21).

Timothy had during these years continued his work as pastor of the Church in Ephesus; and it had not always been easy. False teachers had kept up their ruinous agitation, and there had been all sorts of unpleasantness; so that Timothy was near losing heart (1:6-8; 2:1-13; 4:1-2), and could well stand in need of some encouragement. Therefore the apostle sent him this letter. The imprisoned apostle, who was waiting for the sentence of death to be pronounced on him, sent a message of comfort to his young friend.

### INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION.

1:1, 2. The letter opens with a superscription and a greeting which shows the love and intimate friendship between the two men.

*Thanks to God.*

1:3-5. The apostle thanks God that he had come from a home in which piety was practised, and that he had enjoyed the happiness of giving his life to the service of God in a pure conscience, with no sordid ends in view. "And I remember you always in my prayers," he assures Timothy, "and my thoughts are with you day and night. I long to see you; and I have not forgotten how hard it was last time to part from you. Therefore it has done my heart good to hear of your unfeigned faith; which was no more, however, than I expected from you, who were so piously brought up by your good grandmother and mother."

*Keep a Stout Heart.*

1:6-14. Now Timothy must not lose courage, but stir up the gift of God received through the laying on of hands when he was ordained to the ministry by Paul and others. He must bear in mind that the Spirit of God is not a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore he must not be ashamed of the Gospel, nor of the imprisoned apostle; but must, like the apostle, be willing to suffer for the cause of the Gospel. "Then the power of God shall be with us," says the apostle, "and we will never be forsaken of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling to be His children and the heirs of Heaven, not according to anything which we have done, but because He had from times eternal purposed to give us His grace in Christ Jesus. But this eternal decree God has now carried out by the appearing of our Savior, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. God has called us to have a part in this salvation. And to me He has assigned the glorious privilege of going to the Gentiles with this wonderful Gospel message. There-

fore I am not ashamed of the Gospel, nor of my sufferings for the cause; for I know Him whom I have believed; and I know that He is able to care for the work which He has given me to do, against the coming of the day when each man's work shall be laid bare, that all may see what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13).

Timothy must in his preaching hold fast the sound words which he had heard from Paul, in faith and love in Christ Jesus; and he must guard the good treasure committed to him by the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart.

#### *Some Sad Experiences.*

1:15-18. During his imprisonment the apostle has had a number of disappointments which have touched him to the quick. In Rome there were quite many Christians from Asia who might have appeared in the court as witnesses for the apostle. But they kept away, either because they were ashamed of the prisoner, or because they were afraid. He mentions especially two who had disappointed him: Phlygelus and Hermogenes. But then, he had been made the more happy by another man from Asia, one Onesiphorus; who came to Rome and allowed himself no rest until he had found the imprisoned apostle. God will reward him for what he had done for the apostle, and for his services to the Church in Ephesus.

#### *Diverse Exhortations.*

2:1-13. The apostle again turns to Timothy, his beloved spiritual son, and exhorts him to seek his strength in the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Only in this way can he become strong to work and to suffer. And he must find a number of faithful men who shall be able to teach others; and he must instruct them in the truths of the Christian faith, which Paul has preached, and with which the many who have heard



Paul must be familiar. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy must make it the business of his life to please Him who enrolled him as a soldier. It is with a Christian as with the man who contends in a manly game. Unless he goes into it with a firm resolve to win the prize according to the rules of the game, he can not succeed. So it is with the Christian; he can win the prize only by contending manfully for it according to the rules which the Lord has laid down. The husbandman must do much work before he can reap the harvest; and so it is with the Christians. But when they do the Lord's will the reward is sure.

If the work of Timothy is to be successful, he must learn to understand these things; and in this the Lord will help him.

To a soldier of Christ there is no better cure for discouragement than always to remember Jesus Christ; who by His resurrection proved Himself the great victor over death; in whom all God's promises concerning the Messiah have been fulfilled, according to the Gospel as preached by Paul. For His sake the apostle endures hardship. The Lord's soldiers may be thrown into prison, but the Word of God can not be bound. Paul is willing to endure all things, that the elect may obtain eternal salvation in Christ. Thus Timothy may learn from the example of his old friend that hardship and suffering are the lot of those who preach the Gospel. It is a divine order: If we would live with Christ in glory, we must suffer with Him here. We can not have one without the other. And the saying of God is always faithful.

*A Pure Life and a Pure Doctrine.*

2:14-3:9. Timothy must charge the Christian brethren that they desist from wordy warfare, of which no good can come; it does not edify, but subverts them

that hear. He must also be diligent to handle the Word of Truth aright and shun the profane babblings of the false teachers. False doctrine and a godless life go hand in hand. And among the false teachers Timothy must especially mark Hymenaeus and Philetus; who deny the resurrection of the dead, explaining resurrection as being a mere spiritual awakening. However, even if some are caught in the snares of these false teachers, the firm foundation of God stands; and it has this seal: "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." This is the Lord bound to His Church. He knows its members and acknowledges them as His own; and they boldly confess their Lord and lead a godly life in His sight. But in a great house—like the Church—all the vessels can not be of the precious metals; there will be some which are not an honor to the house. Timothy is urged to purge himself from these, and strive to be a holy instrument in God's hand, that he may be to the honor of God, prepared unto every good work. And this he will be, if he flee the lusts which are the special danger of youth, and strive to have a pure heart and lead a godly life. Impertinent questions he must refuse to answer; they have no purpose but to cause trouble. But a servant of the Lord must be gentle toward all, be patient in teaching and explaining, and learn to be meek and not to avenge an insult. He is to correct mischief-makers without losing his temper. If God should give them repentance, they will learn the truth; and then they will discover with terror, that they are in the snare of the Devil and are doing his will.

But this he must know, that as the end of time draws near ungodliness will increase; and the seducers will be more dangerous and lead many—particularly silly women—astray; for they will know how to throw

a certain appearance of godliness over even the most abominable vices. But in good time their hypocrisy shall be unmasked and a stop be put to their further efforts. This is the kind of false teachers with whom Timothy also will have to deal; and therefore he must all the time be on his guard.

*Use the Holy Scriptures, and be a Soldier of Christ.*

3:10—4:8. As Timothy has so far faithfully followed his fatherly friend in doctrine and conduct, through labor and persecution, and has seen how God all the time held His protecting hand over the apostle; so he must continue, knowing that such persecution is the common lot of all Christians. But evil men and imposters are a curse to themselves and to others.

Timothy is fortunate in that he grew up in a Christian home, and from a babe has known the Sacred Writings; which are inspired of God, and therefore are profitable to teach us to know God and the way of salvation, to instruct the heart in regard to sin and righteousness, and to correct all errors; to the end that the inner man, which belongs to God and is to serve Him, may attain full growth and be furnished completely unto every good work.

Toward the close of the letter the admonitions become more urgent. The apostle feels that he is near the end of his life. He charges Timothy in the sight of Jesus, who shall come in might and glory to establish His Kingdom and to judge the quick and the dead; to preach the Word as a tireless servant of Christ, in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, soberly and clearly. This is to be his work while he lives, and as long as people are willing to hear the sound doctrine; for there will come a time when people with itching ears will run after teachers who are more to

their liking, and who will feed them on foolish fables. But Timothy must be sober in all things, hold a steady course, and fulfill his ministry which God has given him, and preach the good Gospel tidings, even though he suffer persecution for it. Now Timothy must take charge of the work; for Paul is near the goal. He has fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith. And he knows that the crown of righteousness is laid up for him, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to him at that day; and not to him only, but also to all them that have loved the Lord's appearing. Soon the apostle will be at home and stand before the throne. He is ready to quit the war and enter into everlasting peace and rest. He has not lived in vain, and therefore he now loves to think upon death. This is the apostle's swan-song of joy and victory as he stands on the threshold of eternity.

#### CONCLUSION.

4: 9-22. The letter concludes with an earnest appeal to Timothy, that he come soon to the apostle in Rome. Then there are some instructions and requests of a more personal nature, and finally a benediction.

This letter was, as we have seen, written shortly before the apostle's death.

## The Letter to Titus

We know but little about Titus. He was a Greek Gentile, and must have been converted to Christianity by Paul some time in the early years of this apostle's work.

In Titus the apostle found a talented and energetic co-worker, to whom was often entrusted work of the greatest difficulty and delicacy. In respect to natural endowments he seems to have been the superior of Timothy. Gal. 2:1 tells us that Paul took him with him on the memorable visit to Jerusalem. Titus was to be a living example of the uncircumcised Christian. Later the apostle sent him on the delicate mission to Corinth, where he was to adjust certain unpleasant difficulties in the Congregation; and Titus did it to Paul's entire satisfaction (2 Cor. 2 and 7). Then he rejoined the apostle in Macedonia. The reports which he brought from Corinth caused Paul to write his second letter to that Congregation; and Titus took the letter with him when he returned to Corinth. There he also finished the work, which Paul had begun, of collecting money for the poor in Jerusalem.

When the apostle had been set free after his first imprisonment in Rome, he and Titus went to Crete; where Paul left Titus with instructions to set in order the things that were wanting in the Church (Titus 1:5). He did not remain there long, however; for he soon received the letter from Paul urging him to come to him in Nicopolis. From 2 Tim. 4:10 we see that

during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome Titus was in Dalmatia.

We know nothing more of him. There is a legend that he was the first bishop in Crete, and that he died on that island at the age of 94 years.

#### THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER.

##### *Superscription and Salutation.*

1: 1-4. The superscription over this letter is unusually elaborate; and in forming it the apostle plainly has in mind those same Gnostic heretics, against whom Titus also was waging war. The apostle makes a plain statement of the purpose and foundation of his apostolic office. He has been commissioned an apostle of Jesus Christ, in order that he might lead God's elect to the faith, and teach them the truth which is according to godliness, and which gives a sure hope of salvation, promised before times eternal. This it is which Paul preaches in accordance with orders from God our Savior. Therefore he does not, as do the Gnostics, indulge in profane fables; and his preaching does not lead to an immoral life and a death without hope. So now he turns to Titus, his true child after a common faith, with the wish: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

##### *Concerning Elders in the Church.*

1: 5-9. Titus also has been appointed to this work of a preacher, and it must be continued. For this reason Paul had left him in Crete, and given him authority to appoint ministers, or elders, in every city. But in his choice of these men he must be careful; find men who lead a Christian life in the home, who show self-control and a friendly spirit in their conduct toward

others; and who are able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to hold their own against the teachers of falsehood.

*The Mouths of Deceivers Must Be Stopped.*

1:10-16. Only such Congregations as are firmly grounded in the sound doctrine of God's Word, and have pious and capable pastors, are able to stand in the fight against the teachers of false doctrines. Of these teachers there were many in Crete, and they had done much to bring confusion into the Churches. With their vain talk they had seduced whole families to apostacy, especially among the Jewish Christians. The mouths of these deceivers must be stopped before they do more damage in the Congregations. They are actuated by a love of filthy lucre. In Crete they have found a good field for their operations; for the Cretans were not generally people of good report. If one will not believe the testimony of others in this matter, one may believe that which one of their own, the poet Epimenides, says of them: that they are distinguished by their lying, their coarse sensuality and their idleness. — It will not do to handle these people with soft words. They must be reproved sharply, if they are to be made sound in the faith, and taught not to listen to the false teachers; who had taken some Judaistic ideas, and out of them had spun some fantastic fables, and invented some new commandments in regard to clean and unclean food. However, it is not that which a man eats which makes him clean or unclean; this will depend on the state of his mind and conscience. To the pure all things are pure. But if one has an impure mind, his whole life is defiled and brings forth nothing but evil fruits.

*The Life of Christians Must Be in Accordance with  
God's Word.*

2: 1-10. The life of Christian people must be widely different from that of the unbelievers. Titus must point out to all what a godly life really is when it is grounded in the sound doctrine. Regarding this he must instruct old and young, men and women, masters and servants; that they may learn to live in accordance with God's Word.

*The Grace of God Results in Holiness of Life.*

2: 11-15. It is for the purpose of enabling us to lead a holy life, that God reveals His grace. The grace of God is for the salvation of all men. It would instruct us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live a godly life in the present world; while in hope we look forward to the day on which God shall fulfil all his promises in Christ; who gave His life to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works. This is the goal aimed at by God's whole dispensation of grace. And this truth Titus is to teach with all authority against the Gnostic heresies in regard to doctrine and conduct.

*The New Life Must Manifest Itself in Humility and  
Meekness.*

3: 1-7. Titus must remind the Christians in Crete that Christian people are to obey the authorities, and to live in peace with their fellowmen. In this matter the people of Crete seem to have been found wanting, self-willed and quarrelsome as they were. They are to remember, that through God's goodness and love toward all men they have been saved from their former life of sin and shame, and have been made children of God



and heirs to eternal life. And this change did not take place in them or any others by reason of their own works of righteousness; for they had no such works to put forward. But God took pity on us; and in holy Baptism we were born again of the Spirit to a new life. Then our Savior, having ascended into Heaven, poured His Spirit in full measure upon us (2 Cor. 3:3-17); to the end that by His saving grace we might stand justified before God, and be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Eph. 2). The thought of God's mercy should create in us the humble mind which alone is seemly in the Christian.

3:8-15. Once more the apostle repeats to them that believe in God the exhortation to live a godly life and shun the oft-mentioned foolish questionings; and then the letter closes with an appeal to Titus to come to the apostle in Nicopolis, in Epirus on the Adriatic, where the apostle planned to spend the winter. Then there is a salutation and after that a "grace be with you all."

The letter was written, probably, in the fall of the year 65.

## The Letter to Philemon

This short and beautiful letter has been much admired by both Christians and infidels. The famous Frenchman Ernst Renan calls it a "true masterpiece"; and Holtzmann, the German scholar, says of it that it is a "model of delicacy, tact, and loveliness."

In this letter we see the character of the great Gentile apostle from a new angle. He, who could fight so valiantly against heretics and all manner of wickedness, also understand the art of using the utmost delicacy with even an admixture of harmless pleasantry (18, 19). It is a kind and lovable heart which speaks to us in every line of this letter.

Philemon was one of Paul's very dear friends. His home was in Colossae, and he had been converted to Christianity by the preaching of Paul. He became a zealous Christian, was a diligent worker in the Church, and may have been a minister, or elder, in the Congregation jointly with Archippus. The Congregation held their meetings in his house. We know nothing more about him. There is a legend, that he was bishop of Colossae and died as a martyr in the persecutions under the unspeakable Nero.

Philemon's bondservant, or slave, Onesimus had been guilty of some misdemeanor toward him, and had fled to escape punishment. This runaway slave made his way to Rome. There he fell in with Paul, who was then a prisoner; and he was converted to the Christian faith, and Paul came to be very fond of him.

Now, when Tychicus was to go to Colossae with the letter which Paul had written to the Church at that place, Paul advised Onesimus to go with Tychicus; and he sent by him this letter to his master, bespeaking for Onesimus a kind reception.

1-3. The imprisoned apostle sends this letter to his dear friend and fellow-worker, with a greeting to his wife; and to Archippus, who was the minister of the Colossian Church (Col. 4: 17), and is said to have been the son of Philemon; and to the Church in Philemon's house.

4-7. In words full of love the apostle speaks of his joy in the good reputation of Philemon for Christian faith and charity, and in the hearty good-will between him and the other members of the Congregation.

8-21. Paul feels sure that his dear friend will take it in good part when he, Paul — his old friend and now a prisoner of Christ — now begs him to receive his runaway servant with forgiveness and love. Onesimus comes home as a new man. Formerly he had not been very useful to his master; but now this is all changed. Paul would have liked to keep Onesimus with him as a dear friend and servant, but did not want to do it without the consent of Philemon. So now Philemon must receive Onesimus as a brother in the Lord; a brother whom he will never again lose. Therefore he must receive his servant as he would have received Paul himself. "And if he owe thee aught," says Paul, "put that to mine account." Paul is willing to be in the debt of Philemon, even as Philemon is in the debt of his spiritual father Paul. So the account may balance. The name Onesimus means: Profitable; and there is here a play on this name: Be profitable to me, as he is to you. Paul does not doubt that Philemon will do what he asks of him.

22-25. The letter closes with a greeting from the

apostle and the friends with him, and then with the usual benediction.

This letter is in many respects something apart from the others. Paul does not say that Philemon must set his servant free, but that he must treat him as a brother in Christ. In other places (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1) he exhorts the Christian masters to treat their slaves with kindness. In this way Christianity brought relief to the bondservants. The heathen masters treated them as dumb brutes; and this the Christians could not do. And Paul exhorts the servants to remain as they are, and to serve their masters faithfully (1 Tim. 6:1; 1 Cor. 7:21). But the Gospel of St. Paul (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11) would some time necessarily lead to the abolition of slavery.

\* \* \*

We have now finished with the life-work of the great apostle. No man has ever occupied a more difficult or more important position than he. His soul was filled with the most profound problems; and with God's help he was able to point out to coming generations till the end of time the way to God through faith in the grace in Christ Jesus. Paul is the foremost man in God's Kingdom. Through him Christianity emerged out of Judaism and became a world religion.

Let me close my presentation of Paul by quoting the beautiful words of the brilliant Godet: "If it be true that a man is great after the measure in which the contradictions united in his person are great and manifold, then there has perhaps never lived a man on earth who could bear comparison with Paul. A man with the broadest vision and the keenest intellect; a man most deep and tender in his sympathies, yet always immovably sober in his judgments; a man in whom the most brilliant intellectual gifts were united with the kindest heart and the deepest feelings — we may understand

that Christ had need of such an instrument to carry on the greatest work in the world after His own; and that Christ, there being no other way, took Paul as His servant by main force."

We can do no greater service to the Church of God than to hold up the Pauline Gospel in all its shining splendor before the eyes of mankind.

## *About the Author of This Work*

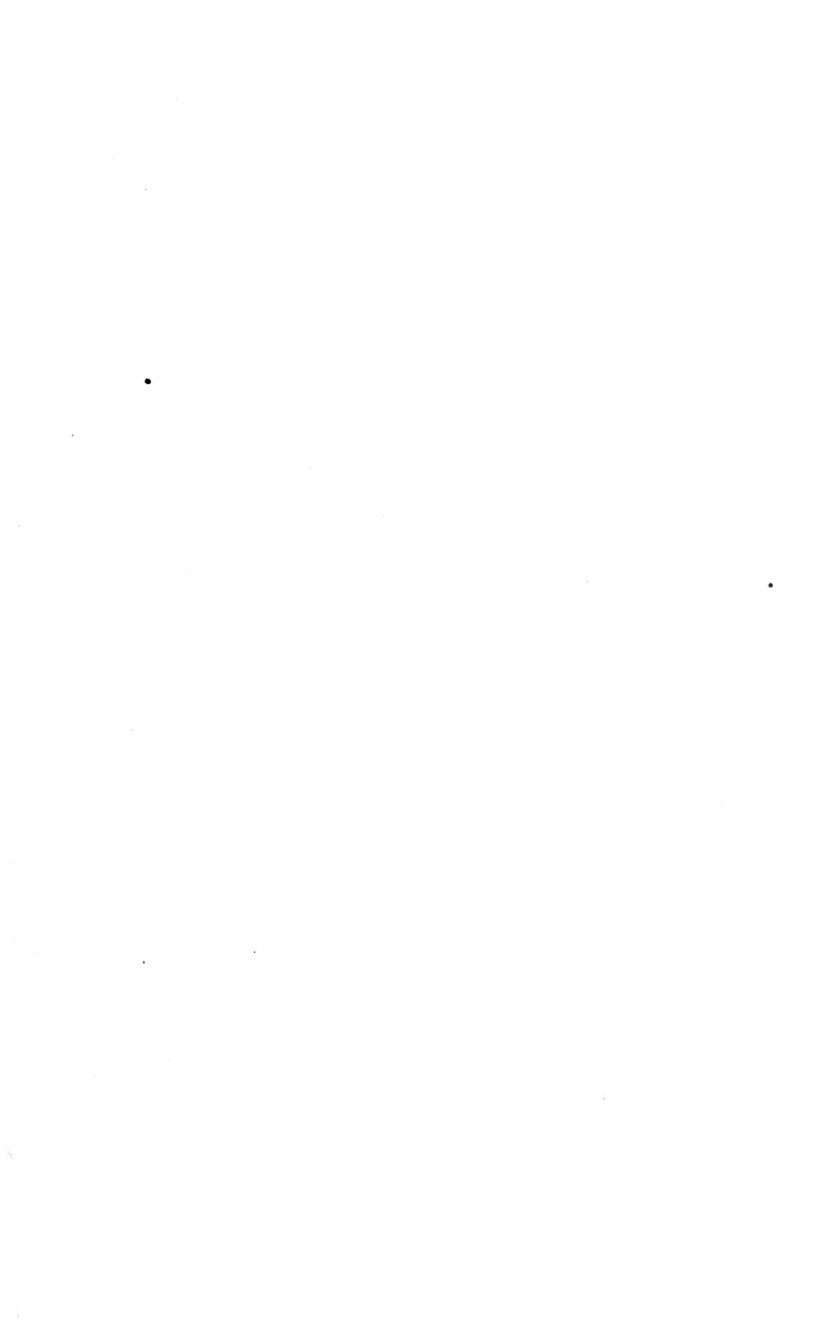
The author of this work on Paul and his letters, Rev. Prof. Erik Kristian Johnsen, was born in Stavanger, Norway, in 1863, and is a graduate in theology from the university at Christiania. At the age of 29 he emigrated, and has now for more than a quarter of a century been a teacher in the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. He was for some years a professor in the theological seminary at Red Wing, Minn. Then he served for three years as pastor at Ellsworth, Wis., and since 1900 he has been a professor in the theological seminary of the Lutheran Church at St. Anthony Park, St. Paul. He is known as a keen scholar and a most lovable Christian gentleman.

As a teacher he has devoted himself, during the years 1887-1900, especially to a thorough study of the apostle Paul and his letters; and many of his students have urged him to publish his lectures on these subjects. This he did in 1917, thus making his book a souvenir of the quadri-centennial of the Lutheran Reformation.

Of late years Prof. Johnsen has been studying the old history of Israel, and the Prophets, and has also delved into Babylonian and Assyrian history; and on these and kindred subjects he has published many brochures and pamphlets. In connection with his work as teacher and preacher he has been a prolific and versatile author.

The present volume is most interesting as coming from the pen of a devout and careful theological scholar.

PEER STRØMME.



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