

26 Studies in
Galatians
and
Ephesians

Dr. Fred G. Stevenson

26 STUDIES IN GALATIANS AND EPHESIANS

By Dr. Fred G. Stevenson



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. FRED G. STEVENSON

was born and reared on a small farm in Dallas County, Arkansas, near Fordyce. His elementary education was received in a small school near Fordyce, and he received his high school work in the Missionary Baptist College at Sheridan, Arkansas. He attended Arkansas A&M College at Monticello for two years. In the late 1920's and early 1930's, he taught for five years in the public schools.

Dr. Stevenson was saved July 4, 1932, and surrendered to the work of the gospel ministry in November, 1932. He was among the first students who enrolled in the Missionary Baptist Institute and Seminary when it opened for the first term in 1934. In 1935 he moved to Magnolia, Arkansas, where he remained for nine years. During that time, Dr. Stevenson



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was instructor in English and Bible languages in the Columbia Baptist Bible School. In autumn 1943, he returned to Little Rock, and began his work as an instructor in Bible languages and Bible subjects in the Missionary Baptist Seminary, a position he held until the summer of 1971.

Dr. Stevenson reads both the Hebrew and the Greek manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments with almost as much ease as the English translations. God has blessed him in that he is able to retain almost everything he reads. He has not allowed this great talent to lie unused, but has put it to good work for the honor and glory of God.

Dr. Stevenson says: "The great doctrinal point I have tried to put over in recent years, with doubtful success, is that the New Testament is not the discussion of a new plan of salvation, but it is rather the discussion of a new way of God's dealing with His special people in the world, this special people being the church."

In December 1934, Bro. Stevenson married Lyda Johnson. Of their five children, one son was a casualty of the Vietnam War and the youngest son was a drowning victim.

Brother Stevenson passed from this life in May, 1981.

Lesson I

PERVERTERS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Galatians 1:1 – 9

INTRODUCTION

Galatia was a province in Asia Minor, which was subject to the Roman Empire in apostolic times, as was Palestine and most of the rest of that region of the world at the time.

This epistle is said to have been written by Paul from Corinth, in Greece, at the time of his third visit to Corinth in the year, 60 A.D.

The Galatian people are said to have been Gauls by nationality. In a general way the Greeks had colonized most of that region of the world, but in the third century before Christ, the barbarian Gauls seemed to appear out of nowhere in swarming thousands, and they overran western Asia and Europe and settled most of the country. Our own ancestors were most likely of these tribes of people.

They were only half civilized, and they were worshippers of idols. This was the kind of people who formed the masses of the citizenship of the land of Galatia. Of course there was also in the land many Greeks, Romans, and Jews of the dispersion. It is not evident to the writer whether the churches of Galatia first had their nucleus among the sojourning Jews of the land or among the barbarian Gauls. Certainly, by this time those of other nations were generally accepted into the church relationship just as readily as were Jews. It makes no difference whether these were founded as Jewish or Gentile churches. In either instance they were soon filled with a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers.

It was Jewish teachings that were causing trouble in the Galatian churches, regardless of whether they were introduced by the original membership of the churches, or whether they were introduced by Jewish teachers from Jerusalem and other Jewish centers. However, we should not blame it all on the Jews, for Gentiles who had come out of idolatry were prone to inject ceremonies, ritualism, and legalistic righteousness into the churches as were the Jews. There is some evidence that the trouble in Galatia was a combination of Jewish legalism and pagan ritualism.

It was religious sins with which Paul charged the Galatian brethren. When the subject of fleshly things comes up in the Scriptures, we are prone to think only of such things as adultery, drunkenness, lying, stealing, and a catering to the lusts of the flesh in general. One thing we need to learn once for all is that every religious system on earth, except the true churches of our Lord, is just as fleshly as any of the other practices of the flesh. These Galatian churches are charged with walking after the flesh, and the only specific charges brought against them is teaching circumcision and keeping feast days.

I. PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST

Verses 1—2

Paul says he did not receive his apostleship either from men, nor through a man (Greek text). But he received it through Jesus Christ and God the Father. Just as definitely as Jesus walked by the sea of Galilee and called Simon, Andrew, James, and John to be His apostles (Matt. 4:18—22), so He called Paul to be an apostle. And so He definitely calls men to preach the gospel today.

Paul connects his apostleship to the Father in that the Father raised Jesus from the dead. John 8:29 tells us the Father is always with the Son because the Son does the things that are pleasing to the Father. John 5:27 states that God has given Christ authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of man. Ephesians 4:8 says that when He ascended up on high He gave gifts to men, and the eleventh verse describes His gifts as preachers of various sorts. Along with resurrection power, the Father gave the Son authority to administer affairs of the church as He pleases, including the matter of setting men into the gospel ministry.

It is mentioned that certain brethren were with Paul as he wrote the letter to the Galatian brethren. He does not here tell us who any of them were. We find that Timothy was an almost constant companion of Paul in this latter part of his ministry, so possibly he was one of those with Paul. It is said that this epistle was written from Corinth, which was a city in Greece where Paul had established a thriving church.

II. GREETINGS FROM THE BRETHREN

Verses 3—5

Paul and his companions in Corinth sent greetings to the brethren in Galatia. He invokes grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. This manner of salutation which came in with the New Testament order of things. In the first place, the name of Jesus was not known to Old Testament saints. In the second place, there is a reign of grace and peace among church saints which was not known and experienced by Israel under the Law of Moses. This grace and peace is confined to church saints, as should become more evident as we advance in our study of Galatians.

Christ had given Himself for our sins, in order that He might deliver us from this present evil age.

We must take the viewpoint that Christ will deliver us from the present evil world, or age, either in death or resurrection. However, the meaning is more inclusive than this. In the latter part of the seventh chapter of Romans, Paul expresses his despair at any effort to live righteously after the flesh. He states that he has deliverance from it in Christ. Then he goes on to state that there is now no condemnation to those who are Christ Jesus. A careful study of this passage will yield the idea that his deliverance is a present thing

which comes by walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is simply walking according to the New Testament rule.

It was the will of the Father that the saints should be delivered from the present evil world. The new birth is not the primary consideration here; rather it is a matter of the saints attaining a deliverance as the people of God which Israel could not attain so long as they were under the Law of Moses.

Glory is ascribed to God the Father into the ages of the ages. This is the only way eternity is expressed in the original languages of the Bible. On the basis of this fact there are false religious teachers who attempt to destroy the doctrine of Hell, since an age comes to an end. Some ages do come to an end; however, the expression here and where the duration of Hell is described means eternity. Otherwise, we will have the glory of God coming to an end. Let us not establish religious doctrines on technical points which will destroy things we wish to accept if carried out to their logical conclusion.

III. MOVED UNTO ANOTHER GOSPEL

Verses 6—9

Paul marvels that the Galatian brethren are so removed from the one who called them. He does not tell us specifically who had called them, but it is evident it was himself. Of course they had been called by the Holy Spirit also as the gospel was preached to them. But this calling seems to refer to the human agency through whom they had been brought into the knowledge of the things pertaining to the operation of the grace of God in church capacity.

They had been called into the grace of Christ. Let us admit that the grace of God had been operating in the world in the saving of sinners since the fall of Adam back in Eden. This transaction was nothing new in the world. The dispensation of the grace of God through Christ involves more than saving people in the new birth. It goes on to establish them in a rule of life to which they can attain. The result is comfort, assurance, and hope such as saved people did not have in Old Testament times.

Paul says the other gospel into which they had been called was really not another gospel but a perversion, or a turning about, of the gospel of Christ. In the professing Christian world today there is more perversion of the gospel by far than there is preaching of it in its purity. Every false doctrine and practice is a perversion of the gospel—whether it is done by a Baptist or whoever does it.

The main point in this perverted gospel was the preaching of circumcision as a church observance. In a broader sense it was attempting to add precepts of the Law of Moses to the New Testament order. Surely if we all could see what this means we would try harder to see the New Testament as an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, and we would not attempt to add precepts of the law to make the New Testament over to suit ourselves.

This perversion of the gospel is condemned in terms as strong as Paul could muster. He says if we or an angel from Heaven should

preach any other gospel, let him be anathema, or a curse. If meditation on this curse will not make us stop and consider the seriousness of changing the Word of God to suit ourselves, then surely nothing will do so.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How did Paul receive his apostleship?
2. What did the Father have to do with his apostleship?
3. Who was with Paul, and where was he when he wrote this epistle?
4. What was Galatia?
5. From whom was grace and peace invoked?
6. What had Christ done for them?
7. How and when would Christ deliver from the evil age?
8. What was the will of the Father?
9. How long will the glory of God continue?
10. Who had called the Galatians? Into what were they called?
11. What was the other gospel?

Lesson 2

HOW PAUL RECEIVED THE GOSPEL

Galatians 1:10-24

INTRODUCTION

While the scripture covered in this lesson discusses the manner in which Paul received the gospel he preached, this introduction will survey the religious background of the greatest of the apostles in labors and zeal. This subject is vital to a full understanding of the matters discussed in this epistle. The religious background of Paul was essentially the same as that of the average Jew or of any other group which relies on keeping law to maintain their status of favor with God.

Paul tells us at Acts 23:6 that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. At Philippians 3:5, 6 he tells us he was circumcised the eighth day, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and he was a Pharisee. Concerning the righteousness which was of the law, he was blameless. Concerning zeal, he persecuted and ravaged the church. Surely no one can read such statements as these and still argue that one man's religion is just as good as any other so long as he is sincere in it.

Now with the case of Paul specifically before us let us go back and note briefly the history and background of the Jews in general. The nation Israel had been chosen in Abraham as a special people unto God. From then on, regardless of their existing conditions, they were the chosen people of God, under the unconditional terms of the Abrahamic covenant, which promised them final righteousness and an everlasting inheritance as a nation.

In due time, after they had been under the Abrahamic covenant four hundred and thirty years (Gal. 3:17), God led them out of the Egyptian bondage and He gave them the law by the hand of Moses. It would be inconsistent to suppose God gave Israel a law to save *them* at Sinai when they had already been His people for more than four hundred years. Someone will hasten to say that the law was not given as a way of salvation; however, when pressed on the point, we usually say the law made provision for the Israelite to be saved by faith just as we are. When we say this, which seems to be true, we still have not answered the question as to why the law was given to Israel.

The plain fact of the matter is that the Law of Moses was not given as a plan of personal salvation to the Israelites. Personally, Israelites were saved after the giving of the law exactly the way they were before it was given, which is repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. The Law of Moses was given as a rule of conduct to a people who were already the people of God. By the same token exactly, the New Testament does not come setting forth a new plan

of salvation for sinners, but it comes setting forth a new plan of God's dealings with a special people whom He has taken to Himself in His crucified and risen Son, which is the body of people called the church.

All this is to impress the idea that the Law of Moses miserably failed as a rule of conduct for Israel, and it failed because of the weakness of the flesh. The flesh of the Israelites was no weaker than the flesh of any other group of mankind. Any other group would have failed under like circumstances. It failed because it majored in the purifying of the flesh, which cannot be purified so long as it lives in the present world. Jesus then came upon the scene and gave the church a rule of conduct wherein the works of the flesh are ignored by having spiritual works substituted for them. These spiritual works are no more nor less than doing what the New Testament teaches.

When Jesus came into the world the nation of the Jews was in spiritual darkness. This is not to say there were no saved Jews at the time. There were such saved people as Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary, Simeon, and Anna. Who will say there were not thousands of others? But they were all to a great extent influenced by that spiritual night that had settled upon the nation. It is likely that Paul was not saved until Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. But could he not have been a saved man laboring in spiritual night until the vitality of the kingdom message came to him on the road to Damascus? Will you say there are no saved Protestants today, or will you not rather say a number of them are saved but are dwelling in darkness as to the great body of New Testament truth? This latter is exactly what is suggested as the position of many of the Jews when Jesus came to call them out of the old order of things into the new.

I. SEEKING TO PLEASE GOD

Verses 10—12

Paul raises the question as to whether he was seeking to please God or man. He says if he sought to please men he would not be the bond servant of Christ. It would be interesting for us to honestly analyze our own motives and see just how much of our consideration is directed towards pleasing men rather than God.

The gospel which Paul preached was not according to mankind. This is, it did not originate in human wisdom or human philosophy. No man or group of men ever devised a plan of salvation and godly living like the one initiated by Jesus when He was in the world. Men did not teach Paul the gospel which he preached, but he received it by revelation. This teaches us we should not seek to modify the New Testament by our own ideas, but we should rather seek to learn exactly what it teaches and then follow it in all details to the best of our ability to understand.

Paul received his gospel through the revelation of Jesus Christ. This means more than simply Jesus showing Paul a set of precepts.

It includes the idea of Jesus revealing His own character, the nature of His works, and His working plans for the church. Jesus was the only man who had ever successfully stood against the Devil, and He showed Paul how He devised that the church should also successfully resist the assaults of Satan.

II. ZEALOUS FOR JUDAISM

Verses 13—14

In his former religion of Judaism, Paul had exceeded others in persecuting and ravaging the church of God. And he outstripped many of his equals of his generation in his efforts to keep the traditions of the fathers. No Israelite could keep the law! So, the traditions of the fathers were unauthorized modifications of the law devised to create a standard which the Jews could measure up to. This is how they sought to justify themselves before God in their works and lives; and, it is the same way all men seek to justify themselves before God today who do not walk by faith in the New Testament teachings as the all sufficient rule of faith and practice.

Where verse fourteen says Paul profited in the Jews' religion, the Greek text simply says he exceeded his equals in observing the traditions of the fathers. He had more zeal and enthusiasm than did his fellowmen. Zeal and enthusiasm are not sure indications of the rightness of the cause espoused at all. From what Paul says here, he seems to have had as great a zeal for the errors of Judaism as he later had for the truth of Christ. Many religious groups today seek to cover up the glaring inconsistencies in their practices by a great show of zeal for Christ.

III. PREPARATION TO PREACH

Verses 15—19

In verse fifteen the call of Paul to the apostleship is coupled with his birth. But the call came to him when he confessed the Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:6). This latter call we can understand. If God called Paul in His own mind at his birth or before his birth, it is a matter outside the comprehension of the human mind. We would do more wisely not to talk learnedly about things we cannot possibly understand.

God called Paul to reveal His Son in him to the nations. That is he was to be the great apostle to the nations other than the Jews. Acts 9:15, 16 states that Paul was a chosen vessel to God to bear His name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. He must suffer great things for Christ.

In preparation to preach the gospel Paul went into the Arabian desert, and it is believed he remained there three years. There he underwent two phases of preparation to preach the gospel of the grace of God. First, he must unlearn all the Jewish legalism and

traditionalism which he had gathered all his life; and second, he received revelations from God. There was in addition much study to understand and harmonize the new things given by revelation.

In the meantime he saw only two of the apostles at Jerusalem for short periods of time. They were Peter and James who was a brother of Jesus.

IV. A STRANGER TO THE CHURCHES

Verses 20—24

It seems that after Paul's first visit to Jerusalem following his stay in Arabia he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, which lay to the north and west of Palestine.

The churches in Judea were not personally acquainted with Paul, but they had heard that the man who formerly led in the persecution of the churches now preached the faith, against which he had once so bitterly contended. They glorified God because of the change that God had wrought in him. A really changed life is one of the strongest testimonies to the saving grace of God.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Whom would Paul please and why?
2. How did he receive the gospel which he preached?
3. What does the revelation of Jesus Christ mean?
4. Describe the former religious life of Paul?
5. How did Paul profit in the Jews' religion?
6. For what did he have great zeal?
7. When was Paul called to preach?
8. For what special work did God call him?
9. Where did he go for preparation, and what were the details of this preparation?
10. Where did he go from Jerusalem?
11. Why did the people glorify God in Paul?

Lesson 3

PAUL, THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Galatians 2:1-14

INTRODUCTION

Let us continue our general discussion of the religious conditions among the Jews when Jesus came into the world, using Paul as the example of the Jews, because there are some strange things connected with his experiences.

There is no doubt that Paul came into a personal acquaintance with Jesus on the road to Damascus. This personal introduction may have been unto personal salvation, or it may have been the introduction of a saved Jew, the Messiah of Israel, or it may have been both.

John the Baptist was already a man of God when he became personally acquainted with Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:30, 31). Simeon had been a child of God for years when he became personally acquainted with the infant Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:27—32). There is a world of import in these situations. To see the import of those situations in which many of the Jews believed on Jesus but would not confess Him for fear of the Jews, compare John 7:13 and John 19:38. Who can safely say all these latter were not saved people who did not come into the church?

Getting back to Paul, he came to a personal knowledge of Christ on the road to Damascus. This new Christian rose up from the ground blind, was led into Damascus, and remained in this condition for three days. If we say his blindness was only a physical matter which had no spiritual import, we do not get rid of our troubles by any means. His blindness was typical of the spiritual condition of the Jews in general concerning their Messiah.

Paul was now a saved man, and he had taken the first step towards embracing Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, however, he did not shed the whole background of his life as a Pharisee as one would shed a coat. The entire trend of his religious thinking was yet Pharisaic legalism and traditionalism. This is what is signified by the three days of blindness. He was saved and willing to do the right thing, but one simply does not change the entire fundamental principles of his life over night.

Three days later, as he prayed in Damascus, Ananias came to Paul at the direction of the Lord. According to Acts 9:17—18, Ananias laid hands on Paul, the scales fell from his eyes, and he arose and was baptized. According to Acts 22:12—16, Ananias spoke of the purpose which the Lord had determined concerning Paul as an apostle to the nations. Then he commanded Paul to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins, calling upon the name of the Lord. Regardless of how we view the order of events in this situation, the fact still remains

that Paul was commanded to wash away his sins in baptism. He also received his sight in connection with this same baptism, though sight came before the baptism was performed. His sight came upon his definite committal to baptism and the church relationship. His sins that were washed away were the religious sins that had dominated his past life. In baptism one renounces these and he commits himself to the new manner of life. The result is the spiritual insight of the church order of things begins to appear, and this spiritual insight continues to grow as the individual exercises himself in the church throughout life. Anyone who thinks Paul gained personal salvation in his baptism is as wrong as he can be; on the other hand, anyone who thinks he did not get the sins of his past religious life washed away is equally wrong. More details on this subject will be given in Lesson 3.

I. A DOCTRINAL CONFERENCE

Verses 1—2

In Lesson 2 we learned that Paul sometime during the early part of his ministry went to Jerusalem, where he conferred with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus. Fourteen years later he went again to Jerusalem, at the time of the situation presented in this lesson.

On this second trip to Jerusalem Paul was accompanied by Barnabas and Titus. At Acts 4:36 we learn Barnabas was surnamed Joses, or Joseph. He was one of the apostles, he was a levite and a native of the Island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. Titus was a preacher of Greek origin. He is not mentioned in the historical record of Acts.

Paul related his ministry to a few leading men among the apostles in Jerusalem. Those mentioned by name are James, Cephas, who was Peter, and John. No doubt this private doctrinal conference was held in preference to an open church meeting lest the inexperienced be confused by a doctrinal debate among the apostles. Paul later did report his work to the entire church.

II. A CONTROVERSY OVER CIRCUMCISION

Verses 3—5

All the Jewish leaders in the church had been circumcised in infancy while they were still in the Jewish religion. It was easy therefore for them to add circumcision to the ordinances of the church.

This law of circumcision was brought into the church privately by false brethren. Paul says they would tear down the freedom which they had in Christ and would lead them into bondage. This bondage can be nothing but putting the people back under the precepts of the Law of Moses. If we make legalism of any sort the working principle of our church today we are committing the same error these false

apostles in Jerusalem committed.

Paul says he did not give place to these false brethren for an hour in the order. This seems to mean he did not grant them the admission of a superior knowledge in church affairs. He withstood them on the circumcision issue so that the truth of the gospel should remain to such people as the Galatian brethren. Expediency sometimes dictates that we avoid controversy, but not when to do so involves compromise which will harm the cause in general. Paul was not so eager to stand in the good graces of the great men in Jerusalem that he would not withstand them in matters wherein they were wrong.

III. THE WORK OF PAUL APPROVED

Verses 6—10

Paul says in substance that the apostles who seemed to be great made no difference with him, for God is not a respecter of persons. It was an imposing assemblage of theological minds with whom Paul associated when he went to Jerusalem. The situation would readily have intimidated a less resolute man than Paul. He succeeded in keeping the truth of Christ uppermost in his mind, ignoring what people might think of him or what effect his decisions would have on his position in the religious world.

He says these great men in Jerusalem did not add anything to his knowledge of the gospel. Paul had the advantage because his revelation was fresh in his mind, whereas much Jewish tradition had crept in among the brethren in Jerusalem.

They readily recognized that as Peter was the chief apostle to the Jews, so Paul was the Gentiles. The preeminence of Peter seems to lie in the fact that he explained Pentecost to the assembled Jews. Paul appealed to the Gentiles practically from the beginning of his ministry.

The only thing the apostles sought to add to the ministry of Paul was the admonition that he teach the people to remember the poor. He says he had already done this. So his visit to Jerusalem resulted in nothing but the assurance that he was right in his ministry.

IV. THE HYPOCRISY OF PETER

Verses 11—14

Peter went to Antioch and there ate with the Gentile church members. It is not evident whether this means the Lord's Supper or an ordinary meal. Later some Jews came from James in Jerusalem, and under pressure from them, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles with whom he had formerly eaten. Either he was undecided on the propriety of the matter or he lacked the courage to face opposition. Both of these weaknesses hinder Christ's Churches greatly today.

The other Jews present, and even Barnabas, were deceived by this

hypocritical position taken at Antioch. A man can get a following no matter what position he takes in matters of religion.

Paul withstood Peter to his face and in the presence of the church. His argument was that since Peter had been living like the Gentile church members, and not according to the Jewish rule of circumcision, then it was utterly inconsistent that he require the Gentiles to be circumcised according to the rule he himself had renounced by eating with them. He had taken the liberty of acting like a Gentile; now he was requiring the Gentiles to conform to the Jewish rule. Anyone could see the inconsistency of his position. Also, we need to be careful lest we be inconsistent in our theology today.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. When did Paul go a second time to Jerusalem?
2. To whom did he recount his work, and why?
3. How would false brethren lead them into bondage?
4. What distinction was made between Peter and Paul?
5. What one admonition did the apostles give Paul?
6. What did Peter first practice at Antioch?
7. Why did he change this practice?
8. What argument did Paul make to Peter?

Lesson 4

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Galatians 2:15-21

INTRODUCTION

Let us recall that the position was taken in the introduction of Lesson 3 that the falling of the scales from the eyes of Paul signifies his coming out of the cursed blindness of Pharisaism and his coming into the light of the church. This transaction was essentially tied to his baptism. It is this last statement we shall now attempt to prove further.

Both Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 state that John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance into or unto the taking away of sins. The Greek preposition used here is the famous *eis*, of which we have heard so much in debates on the subject of baptismal salvation. This word, here called into or unto, is used hundreds of times in the New Testament. The predominant usage by far is into and unto, meaning motion into a place or a condition. Does it mean then that the Jews to whom John preached were saved in the personal sense by baptism? Not by a thousand miles. It means they were rescued from apostate Judaism by coming into the church and learning the way of the dispensation of the grace of God. The church is the only place where these things can be learned and practiced.

Fundamentally it is hard to know for sure why God ever gave Israel the law as a rule of conduct as His special people. The Scriptures tell us they were kept under the law until the seed and the faith should come. The law was also a schoolmaster to bring Israel unto Christ. If we study all the covenants from Adam onward we will find a progression in the dealings of God with His special people in the world. The climax of all these covenants is the church covenant, which is the fundamental subject of discussion in the New Testament. Let us say once more that the New Testament is not the discussion of a new way of salvation, but the discussion of a new way of God's dealing with His special people in the world.

Under the law the course of Israel was gradually downward from the beginning. It was later revealed that the law was foredoomed to failure as a rule of conduct for the people of God. Its ordinances were aimed at the purifying of the flesh, but the flesh cannot be purified so long as it is an intimate part of a sin cursed creation. Paul was viewing his flesh from the standpoint of keeping the Mosaic Law when he said that no good dwelt in his flesh. Perhaps God, to show the goodness and justice of all His dealing with mankind, gave the law to Israel to prove that men in the flesh cannot please God.

The spiritual condition of the Jews when Jesus came into the world was the inevitable result of their efforts to keep the Law of Moses

as their rule of conduct as the people of God. The light of prophecy had gone out among them four hundred years before. They had perverted the law, creating utterly false standards to which they could measure up. The supreme proof of their standard was that they crucified their Messiah and accepted a murderer in His stead. John called on the unsaved ones of them to be saved, and he called on the saved ones of them to repent and come out of the system which soon was to crucify the Messiah. I have no objection to anyone's saying the system was predestined to reject Christ, but I do object to the suggestion the individuals who composed the system were so predestinated. The work of John was to bring the Jews out of this system by their personal committal in baptism, and to bring them into that new body which Jesus would later form—His church. This is why he preached a baptism of repentance unto the taking away of their sins (the sins of false religious doctrines and practices) and the taking into a new covenant relationship with God in Christ.

This lesson comes to grips with one of the fundamental questions of discussion in Galatians: What is "the faith" so prominently discussed in this book? The position taken here is that it is not primarily personal faith unto salvation. It is rather the new system of doctrines and practices introduced by Jesus when He came into the world. Not every saved person has and practices this faith; it is confined to those saved people who embrace church teachings and practices. This is equivalent to saying this faith belongs alone to those who accept the New Testament as the all sufficient rule of faith and practice.

I. JEWS BY NATURE

Verse 15

We believe every sinner is saved by repentance towards God and faith in Christ. This plan has been the same since the fall of man, and it will be the same as long as men are born with sinful natures. Then how can a Jew by nature be any different from sinners of the Gentiles? This Jew by nature is simply one who was born under the various covenants that pertained to Israel. He had the advantages named at Romans 3:1—2 and 9:4.

The sinners of the Gentiles were those who were not under the covenants and promises which were given to Israel alone. Why they came to this condition is told at Romans 1:21—14. How God regarded them in their idolatry is told at Acts 17:30. He did not chastise them for their idolatry as He chastised Israel for her idolatry. As individuals, both Israelites and Gentiles were saved by exercising faith in God. No one was winked into salvation, nor was anyone winked out of the opportunity to be saved.

II. MADE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH

Verses 16—17

One is not justified by works of law, but rather through faith of

Christ Jesus. Since the law is not being discussed as a way of personal salvation, but rather as a rule of conduct for those who were already the people of God, the principle of contrast demands that we reckon the justification by faith mentioned here as being justification as to life and conduct, and not justification in the new birth.

Israel knew full well from many centuries of experience what the results were of their keeping or not keeping the law. They had already been the people of God for more than four hundred years before the law was given. When it was given they learned very soon that there was reward for keeping the law and there was chastisement for not keeping it. Thousands of them died for breaking the law and the rest stood in constant fear of death if they committed a serious breach of the law. Certainly, they understood in their better days that the law was not given to bring personal salvation, but that the observance of its precepts would be the salvation of the nation from apostasy and rejection at the hands of God.

When Paul suggests that Christ might appear as minister of sin, he was going back to the action taken by Peter at Antioch. He had abandoned the observance of the law to walk with the Gentiles as the gospel had taught him to do. When the legalistic Jews came from Jerusalem, Peter departed from his Christian walk to return to his Jewish walk. Which implied that the rule taught by Christ was sinful. We do exactly the same thing he did when we deny any teaching of Christ and substitute some other rule for it.

III. APPEARING AS A SINNER

Verses 18—19

Paul says if he builds again what he had torn down, he establishes himself as a transgressor. What he had torn down was the law as his rule of conduct. He did it simply by abandoning it in favor of the new rule of conduct that he had learned in Christ.

Building it again would simply be returning to the law as Peter had done when he withdrew himself and refused to eat with the Gentiles. In such a case he would prove himself a transgressor. If he declared the law bad by abandoning it, and then he declared it good by returning to it, he admitted he had transgressed when he abandoned it in the first place.

He says that through the law he died to the law that he might live to God. Sometime, probably when he personally met Christ, Paul took an honest look at himself as he tried to live under the law. He saw his utter failure, and thus through the law he died to the law because he could not keep it. He then abandoned it as the guiding principle of his religious life.

IV. LIVING IN THE EARTH

Verses 20—21

One is crucified with Christ when he is saved, but he is crucified with him again when he abandons his fleshly walk in worldly wisdom and commits himself to allow Christ to live in him by following the rule which Christ has laid down in the New Testament. The only way in the world we can be sure Christ is living in us is to make sure we are doing the works of Christ and speaking His words.

Paul now lived in the faith of the Son of God. Of course faith was an abstract quality in Jesus, and it is so in us. But Jesus exhibited His faith by doing the will of the Father in every detail. The only way we can be sure we are living by the faith of Christ is to believe and do all the things taught in the New Testament.

In another place Paul tells us the law is righteous and good. It is no good as a rule of conduct for the people of God because they cannot keep it. This is what the apostle means by declaring that righteousness is not by the law.

He did not set at nought the grace of God, as some others were seeking to do, for if he had done so, then Christ would have died in vain. Those who frustrated the grace of God were those who were seeking righteousness by keeping the law.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is a Jew by nature?
2. What is meant by sinners of the Gentiles?
3. Is justification by faith confined to the new birth?
4. In what sense did Israel seek to be justified by the law?
5. How could Christ appear as a minister of sin?
6. What had Paul destroyed?
7. What is meant by building again these things?
8. How would he prove himself a transgressor?
9. How had he died to the law?
10. How did Christ live in Paul?
11. What is the faith of the Son of God?
12. Is there righteousness in keeping the law?
13. In what sense would Christ die in vain?

Lesson 5

FAITH VERSUS LAW

Galatians 3:1-16

INTRODUCTION

The entire third chapter of Galatians is occupied with contrasting the faith that came with the coming of Jesus into the world with the Law of Moses, which had prevailed in Israel up to the personal ministry of Jesus. It would be great if we all could agree as to what this faith is, for a right acceptance of it would free us from many embarrassing situations in the New Testament, one of which will be discussed later in this introduction.

The usual view is that the faith so prominent in this chapter is that personal faith whereby we come to a personal salvation. The position taken in these studies is that the faith of our lesson is the New Testament system of teachings and practices given to the church. If we reject this position we are faced with two serious issues in the present lesson.

The first one is that Israel was under the law until the faith came, and no one was justified by law before God. Therefore no Israelite was saved while they were under the law. This is not a Baptist position.

The second issue is that the Gentile nations were ignored of God entirely with reference to the covenants until Jesus came and established the faith, therefore no Gentiles could be saved before the faith came with the coming of Christ. Will this predicament not incline us to consider that the New Testament is not the discussion of a new plan of salvation, but it is the discussion of a new way of God's dealing with a people who are already His own?

Receiving the Spirit is mentioned a time or two in the lesson. We are usually told this means receiving the Spirit in the new birth. It is suggested it means receiving the Spirit in the way it came on the church on Pentecost. Let us now note some evidence to substantiate this suggestion.

We will agree that a water baptized church membership received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. When the results of this baptism were manifested in their speaking in tongues, a multitude of Jews sojourning in the various nations were present in Jerusalem to observe the feast of Pentecost. Incidentally, it is said these were devout or reverent men. The Greek term used here is applied to Jesus, the prophet Simeon, and Ananias who went to Paul in Damascus, and church saints. It is never used of people who it can be proven are unsaved. However, no issue is made over whether these Jews were saved before Peter preached to them. At Acts 2:37 these Jews asked Peter and his brethren what they must do. They did not ask what they must do to be saved. The whole context

teaches us they wanted to know what they must do to receive what they had seen visited on the church in the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Peter gave them the answer at Acts 2:38. If they were unsaved they must repent unto personal salvation. If they were saved they must repent of the Pharisaism they had practiced all their lives. Then they must be baptized to get into the church, for it was only the church that could receive this particular gift of the Holy Spirit. They were promised that when they did these things they would receive the same thing they had seen working in the church members on that day. How can anyone fail to see the import of this situation?

This situation has been called up to stress the idea that the receiving of the Spirit by the Galatians was not the new birth, but it was the receiving of the Spirit as the guide, comforter, and empowerer of the church in the way it began to be promised at John 7:39, and in the way it first came on the church on Pentecost. Then hearing of faith whereby they received the Spirit was their accepting, believing, and practicing the things taught in the New Testament. In their doing these things they inevitably began to operate as Scriptural churches. No sooner were they constituted as churches that they received the Spirit exactly as all other churches receive it.

I. CHANGING FROM FAITH TO LAW

Verses 1—5

The Galatians received the Spirit as the administrator and guide to the churches just as any other church does when it becomes a church. The Spirit in this office was first manifested on the church at Jerusalem on Pentecost. The argument of Paul is based on the fact that in some way they were made to know about the presence and work of the Spirit in this office when they were constituted as churches.

He says they had begun in the Spirit, but now evidently they were trying to come to completeness in the flesh. "Perfect" means complete in this instance. Walking in the Spirit is not seeing visions, performing miracles, or any such things. It is conscientiously believing and practicing what the New Testament teaches, and doing it by faith. Attempting to come to perfection in the flesh was indicated by their practicing such things as circumcision, observance of holy days, etc.

Paul speaks of the one who administered the Spirit to them and worked miracles among them. Of course, primarily Christ is the one who administers the Spirit to churches. But since it was done by the hearing of faith, it is likely Paul and other preachers who organized and ministered to the churches are the ones who are meant as administering the Spirit to the Galatian churches.

II. CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

Verses 6—9

It will be recalled that sometime in his youth Abraham was visited in his native home of Ur of the Chaldees by God. God led him out to Haran, where Abraham sojourned for a number of years. Then he moved on into Palestine, the land of the covenant. After a number of years in this land, when he was ninety nine years of age, the incident came up concerning which it is said at Genesis 15:6 that he believed the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness. The question is, was Abraham saved when God made the covenant with him in Ur, or was he not saved until many years later when he believed the promise of God about the birth of Isaac? A close study of this situation will seem to yield the conviction that the righteousness imputed to Abraham was a righteousness of life, or walk before God, and not one unto salvation.

The ones of faith are children of Abraham. The child relationship is expressed variously in the New Testament Greek as a born child; a child in training; a child who is also a novice; an heir; and a mature son. It is said that the ones of faith are the mature sons of Abraham. One comes into the position of a mature son when he is united with the church. This statement will be proven later when we get to the situation where it is mentioned. One comes more and more into the actuality of a mature son by growth in grace. This verse does not say all the saved are sons of Abraham; it says those who walk by the New Testament faith are his sons.

The covenant with Abraham was not primarily a covenant of salvation. It was a covenant promising an eternal inheritance. It is called a covenant of promise and it was based on the fact that Abraham believed the promise of God. The covenant with Abraham is set parallel with the church covenant, whereas the law covenant is set as opposite to it. Abraham worked because he believed God; the church does the same thing. Israel under the law worked for fear of the penalty for not working. All nations would be blessed in Abraham in that they could come into the church and walk by faith there; and, along with faithful Abraham, they will become heirs of the world to come in the Millennium.

The church blessings would come primarily through Christ because He is the One who devised the walk by faith in the New Testament Scriptures.

III. THE CURSE OF THE LAW

Verses 10—12

The nation Israel was under the law from Moses until the cross. They were under the curse because the law demanded a perfect keeping of its almost infinite code. The result was that no one was justified in the law, for no one but Christ ever kept all its demands.

Besides this, the righteous, or the justified one, should live by faith. Righteousness and justification are the same in the Greek text. Then Paul goes on to say the law is not of faith.

Since righteousness is by faith, and since the law is not of faith, and since Israel was under the law, their condition appears as a hopeless one. This is one of the main points Paul means to establish in this discussion. It does not mean Israelites could not be saved; it means their religious system was doomed to failure. They ought to have realized this and received Christ and "the faith" of the church with outstretched arms when He came and offered it to them.

Some Israelites died for breaking the law; the nation died in the sense of the dispersion for not keeping it. Of course, the nation as well as individuals of it had the opportunity of rescuing themselves from the penalty of the law when Jesus came to them.

IV. THE PROMISE THROUGH FAITH

Verses 13—16

Christ freed Israel from the law by taking the penalty of broken law upon Himself in His death on the cross.

In some strange way the blessing of Abraham comes to the Gentiles in connection with the freeing of Israel from the curse of the law. Perhaps it only means to say that the same transaction which freed Israel from the curse of the law also opened the way for the Gentiles to come into the faith of the New Testament and receive the Spirit in the church relationship.

It was and is through embracing the New Testament rule of faith and practice that any people receives the promise of the Spirit mentioned here. The Spirit in the relationship of personal salvation was nothing new at the time Jesus was in the world.

The covenant of verse fifteen is the Abrahamic covenant, which is the promise that all nations should be blessed in the seed of Abraham, which seed is Christ.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. In what sense did the Galatians receive the Spirit?
2. How were they trying to become perfect?
3. Who ministered to them the Spirit, and how?
4. When was faith reckoned to Abraham for righteousness?
5. What kind of children are meant in verse seven?
6. How would all nations be blessed in Abraham?
7. Who would be blessed with Abraham, and why?
8. Who was under the works of the law?
9. Were many of them saved, since no one is justified by the law?
10. How did Christ free Israel from the law?
11. Through what faith would the Gentiles and the Jews receive the Spirit?
12. What covenant is meant in verse fifteen?

Lesson 6

CHRIST, THE PROMISED SEED

Galatians 3:17-29

INTRODUCTION

Let us again enumerate some general principles that have been stated heretofore. First, the New Testament is not the discussion of a new way of salvation initiated when Jesus came into the world; it is the discussion of a new plan of God's dealing with His special people in the world. Second, the faith so prominent in New Testament discussion is not that personal faith that leads to salvation, it is the New Testament system of doctrines and practices. Third, the salvation mentioned many times in the New Testament does not refer primarily to going to Heaven; it refers to escaping such religious errors as those into which Israel and other nations have fallen in the past, and in which all false religious bodies are laboring in delusion today.

Let us now offer a translation of verses twenty-six from the Greek and twenty-seven of our scripture lesson. This translation from the Greek is given because the words that denote various child relationships are mishandled in the common version. The translation is: "For all of you are mature sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus: For whosoever of you were baptized into Christ, ye were clothed with Christ."

In the Greek New Testament a born child is **teknon**; a child in training is **pais**; a novice is **neotes**; an heir is **kleronomos**; and a mature son is **huios**.

Of all these words **huios** is the one use in verse twenty-six. If the new birth were what is meant to be expressed, the **teknon** is the word that would fit the situation, for it means a born child--no more no less. But **huios** is used instead, and it means a mature son. A mature son differs from a born child in that he loves and seeks the will of his father. This attitude is expressed in the meaning of the word itself. A born child might be almost entirely indifferent to the will of his father, but such an attitude simply does not fit the character of the **huios**, or mature son, at all. A born child in the religious sense often accepts and practices utterly false and unscriptural things in his religious life. If a **huios** did such things he would disqualify himself as a **huios**. Then cannot we see the weight of verse twenty-six? It simply says we are the mature and obedient children of God in our embracing New Testament doctrines and practices.

When we see the truth of the situation just outlined we are not embarrassed by the suggestion of baptismal regeneration in verse twenty-seven at all. This verse begins with the connecting word "for." It shows some kind of vital relationship between the clauses which it connects. In the present instance it shows some vital

relationship between our being baptized into Christ and the fact that we are the mature sons of God. The fact of the matter is that we cannot be the mature sons of God without being Scripturally baptized. It has already been pointed out that one may be saved and yet be almost entirely disobedient in such matters as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the doctrines and practices of the church in general. But one cannot be the mature son of God who is described in verse twenty-six and walk in disobedience to the New Testament rule and still stand in the child relationship which is meant there. This verse does not talk about the way of salvation, it talks about obedience and the consequent conscious walk we have with God through Christ.

The last statement is really the summary of the whole discussion in the book of Galatians. It is not a matter of whether the Israelites were born again by keeping the Law of Moses, not of whether any other people were born again by keeping any set of laws. It is a question of Israel's attempting to walk before God acceptably by keeping the law and bringing only condemnation upon themselves—this condemnation having to do with their religious position and not with their personal salvation.

Then Jesus came and instituted a plan—which He offered to Israel first — whereby not only Israelites, but those of all nations, can walk acceptably and victoriously before God. This plan is to believe and do New Testament teachings, which is the faith of Galatians.

I. THE COVENANT OF PROMISE

Verses 17—18

The covenant of verse seventeen is the covenant of God with Abraham. This was a covenant of promise to Abraham and his seed. It is revealed elsewhere that it was through the seed of Abraham, which seed is Christ, that this covenant was to be carried out. This covenant of promise is parallel with the church covenant; whereas the law covenant stands in contrast to both.

The law, which came four-hundred-and-thirty years after the covenant with Abraham, could not annul the Abrahamic covenant with its promises. The point is this: the church covenant did annul the law covenant when Jesus had fulfilled the law on the cross. On the other hand, the law was not given to supplant the covenant of promise, but it was only brought in as an expedient until the time appointed of the Father for the fulfillment of the covenant of promise through Christ in the church. Therefore the church is definitely a part of the fulfillment of the covenant of promise to Abraham and his seed.

The covenant of promise to Abraham contained a number of details. For one thing it was promised that he should inherit the world. This promise will be carried out in the Millennium. Another detail was that in the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed. This refers to the carrying the gospel of salvation and of the church to the ends of the earth in the present age. Other

details were added later, one of which was that the Lord would write His laws in the minds and hearts of His people, as opposed to their being written on tables of stone under the Mosaic economy. Yet another was that He would pour out His Spirit upon all manner of flesh, and this in spite of the fact that they could not keep the precepts of the Mosaic code.

Paul argues that the inheritance cannot be both law and by promise. It was given to Abraham by promise; therefore it was not by law. The whole trouble with the Galatian brethren was that they were trying to claim the blessing of the inheritance by going back to the law, which never had promised the inheritance to them. There were some conditions in God's dealings with Abraham, but the promise of the inheritance was without condition.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Verses 19—21

We are told that the law was added because of transgressions until the seed should come. We are told essentially the same thing at Romans 5:20. Stated briefly, the law was simply a rule of conduct for Israel until Christ should come and give a better rule of faith and practice to the special people of God.

Both our present text and Acts 7:53 tell us that it was the law as given to Israel by Moses on Mt. Sinai which was administered by angels. These texts coupled with Hebrews 2:2 lead us to believe angels were the mediators of the law covenant.

The argument in verses twenty and twenty-one seems to be that the law could not be by promise because it was administered by angels. Or perhaps the point is it could not be by promise because it was dependent on Israel's keeping it. It is likely this latter suggestion is right. We are now right down to the fundamental principle of Paul's argument throughout Galatians, and if we miss the point here we are likely to miss the import of the whole book.

If a law could be given which could make alive, then the righteousness would be by law. We are down to bedrock again, and not knowing exactly what to think. This statement makes it appear the righteousness spoken of is the new birth, for it speaks of the law's making alive or giving life. Stated briefly the answer to the whole situation is that one cannot walk in the "spirit of the new covenant without the new birth, and the spirit of the new covenant is in exact harmony with the spirit of the new birth. One cannot walk in the spirit of the new birth unless he walks according to the terms of the new covenant, which is the church covenant—the New Testament.

III. THE LAW SUPPLANTED BY THE FAITH

Verses 22—25

The promise of faith was given first to Abraham. Then the law

covenant of works came in and prevailed until Christ. When He came, this promise of faith was given first to the Jews and later to those who believe of all nations. Israel was shut up and kept under the law until the faith should come. The law, the schoolmaster, brought Israel down to the time of the coming of the faith, which is the church economy of things.

John the Baptist came preaching the kingdom of God. There was included in this message the promise of a rule of conduct to supplant the law in which Israel could walk acceptably before God—a thing they could never do under the law.

IV. SONS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH

Verses 26—29

Under the law Israel stood in the relationship of servants to God. Many Scriptures teach this. The sons of God of verse twenty-six are simply the children of God who no longer stand in the relationship of servants; instead they stand in the position, relationship, and attitude of mature sons, who serve the Father motivated by faith and love, as opposed to Israel's being motivated by fear to serve God.

Verse twenty-seven means exactly what it says--that those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ in the sense of the mature sons described in verse twenty-six. Surely no one who has studied the introduction will think an attempt is being made to teach church salvation here.

Verse twenty-eight speaks of saved people standing in the church relationship. There are no Jews made righteous by circumcision and no Gentiles made sinners because they are not circumcised. They are all one in Christ to the extent that they have believed and done what the New Testament teaches.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What covenant is meant in verse seventeen?
2. What did the law not annul?
3. What inheritance is meant in verse eighteen?
4. On what basis did the inheritance come to Abraham?
5. Explain the purpose of the law.
6. What was administered by angels?
7. How is it proven that the law is not according to promise?
8. In what instance could righteousness be by law?
9. To whom are the promises given?
10. What was the condition of Israel under the Law?
11. What did the schoolmaster do?
12. When and how did Israel come out from under the schoolmaster?
13. Who are the sons of God in verse twenty-six?
14. What does verse twenty-seven mean?
15. Who are described in verse twenty-eight?

Lesson 7

REDEEMED FROM UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 4:1-7

INTRODUCTION

Although the nature of Galatians requires much repetition, we will welcome this as an opportunity to get New Testament teachings more clearly fixed in our mind. The brief book of Galatians is a summary of the whole New Testament.

Since the lesson deals with the bringing of the Jews out from under the law into the position of mature sons of God, and since baptism is the act that brings one into the membership of a church, let us devote this introduction to the subject of baptism. If baptism brings one into the membership of the church, then his fellowship in the church depends on his attitude and conduct as a church member. One can be excluded from church fellowship, but he cannot be excluded from church membership unless he in some way demonstrates his baptism was not Scriptural to begin with. If these things are not true then it would seem logical that we would rebaptize the individual who is restored to fellowship, he having been excluded from the membership.

Now let us turn again to the meaning of baptism as it is brought out in the typical baptism of Israel in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2). Let us understand clearly that this was only a typical baptism. It pictures the New Testament church baptism, but it is not the reality of it as we are told in this same tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. The historical record is given in the fourteenth chapter of Exodus. We shall attempt to outline the essential facts of this transaction.

Israel had already been the chosen people of the Lord for four hundred thirty years when God visited them in Egypt to lead them out of the bondage. This statement is based on the time reckoning of Galatians 3:17 as to the time of the giving of the Abrahamic covenant. We are not concerned primarily with whether the individual Israelite was saved when they were in the Egyptian bondage for the covenant was with the nation as such, just as our covenant is with the church in the institutional sense and its terms apply to us only as we are identified with the church. These things being true we cannot logically regard the deliverance of Israel from Egypt as typical of God's bringing individual alien sinners into personal salvation.

Since Israel had already been the people of God for a long time when he brought them out of Egypt, their deliverance must represent a new and different way of His dealing with them. This is where their typical baptism becomes very significant. Joshua 24:14 says their fathers had served other gods on the other side of the river, which

means Abraham and his fathers before him had served other gods in Egypt. These were the idols which the Egyptians had taught them to serve while Israel sojourned in the midst of the Egyptians.

Therefore, the calling of Israel out of Egypt was the calling of the people of God to a religious separation from the other religions of the world. They were to stop serving the idols of the Egyptians which they had been serving.

Until Israel had crossed the Red Sea they were in danger of being taken back into the Egyptian bondage. This would not typify the loss of salvation by anyone, but it would picture the people of God going right back into the false worship they had been carrying on. God deliberately led them to the Red Sea, and there He deliberately baptized them typically to set them free permanently from their bondage to Egypt, religiously as well as otherwise. Not only did the sea stand as a barrier between them and their returning to Egypt, but also the Pharaoh who would take them back into bondage was dead. It is pretty strong teaching, but the power of the Devil is broken over those who flee for refuge to the church to escape religious deception and error. For Christ has decreed that the church shall preach and practice His truth until the end of the age. This is all parallel with Israel's escape from the bondage of the law when Jesus came and established the church. Another parallel is those of various nations escaping from their mulitform idolatry to serve God in the truth of the New Testament church.

Israel was not personally regenerated in their baptism in the sea, but they were delivered from Egyptian idolatry by it. This ought to enable us to see more clearly what is meant to the Israelite to cease to be a servant under the law and become a mature son under the reign of grace.

I. KEPT UNDER THE LAW

Verses 1—3

The heir of verse one is a theoretical character, but it refers indirectly to the heirs of the last verse of the preceding chapter. This verse refers to the heirs of promise of the new covenant, whose heritage is like that of Abraham.

But the present discussion of the heir goes back to the position of Israel under the law. In the analogy Israel was "lord of all" insomuch as they were the chosen people of God under the Arahamic covenant of promise; but, they stood for the time being in the position of servants under the Mosiac law system, which is the figure of an heir who is an irresponsible child. The irresponsible child stands for Israel under the law.

The time appointed of the Father indicates a previous determination of the time in the Greek text. This does not necessarily mean that God set a day for Christ to come into the world long before that coming. It can just as well mean that God appointed that Christ should come when religious matters had shaped up after a definite

pattern. This latter is according to God's usual manner of dealing with mankind. He responds to man as man responds to Him and He meets arising situations with what the situation demands. The time appointed of God that Christ should come into the world was when Israel had utterly failed under the law.

The children of verse three are literally novices, or inexperienced ones. The elements of the world under which they were in bondage can be nothing but the fleshly ordinances of the law of Moses, for it was a condition that prevailed until Christ came and then it was taken out of the way. It would make no difference if it included the Gentiles in their idolatry, for they along with Israel came out of their existing systems to enter into the church relationship.

II. BROUGHT OUT FROM UNDER THE LAW

Verses 4—5

The fullness of the time is identical with the appointed time of the Father mentioned above. Regardless of the predestination of God, this fullness of the time came some two thousand years ago when Jesus came into the world as the anointed One of Israel and the Saviour of the world.

God sent forth His own Son. He was the Son of God before He came into the world; and He was still the eternal Son of God after His work in the world was finished. This Son became of a woman.

In this transaction He became just as really a human being as any of us and He remains a glorified human being in Heaven today.

Jesus was also made under the law that He might buy out the ones who were under the law. Christ came to save the creation which has no will. He came to save every believer. He also came to buy Israel out from under the bondage of the Mosaic law. Let us recognize this as one of the definite purposes for which Jesus came into the world. This fact is attested by the situation wherein Jesus commanded His disciples not to go to the Gentiles but to go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was attempting to call them out from under the bondage to the law of Moses.

He would give them in place of the law rule the so-called adoption. This adoption is really the setting into the position of mature sons. Romans 8:23 apparently states this setting to sonship comes at the resurrection of the body, but it refers only to the physical part of it, which is the final setting to sonship. The spiritual part of it comes when we are set into the membership of a Scriptural church. Notice that they received the adoption when they came out from under the law.

III. SET INTO THE POSITION OF SONS

Verses 6—7

The sons of verse six are the ones who have received the

adoption, which is really the setting to sonship of verse five. The word for son in verse six is essentially the same as the one for adoption in verse five. These sons are simply those who have come into the church relationship with God through Christ.

Because we are mature sons and not in the position of servants, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, "Abba, Father!" This comes out of the Hebrew language, and it means, "my beloved Father." Motivated by the Holy Spirit in its office to and through the church we cry, "My beloved Father!" and, we serve Him from love whereas Israel served Him from fear.

Specifically, the saved Israelite was changed from the position of a servant to that of a son. This change in relationship and attitude had to do with such Israelites as were already saved, such as Zacharias and the prophet Simeon, as well as those who needed first to be saved and then to be brought into the new covenant relationship with God.

The Israelite was no longer a servant but a son. If he was a son he was also an heir of God through Christ. Christ made His people actually to partake of the spiritual things of God in a way in which they did not partake of them while they were bond servants under the Law of Moses. The same is true of all of us today who partake of the things of the church.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the heir of verse one?
2. When did he stand in the position of a servant?
3. What was the time appointed of the Father?
4. What were the elements of the world?
5. What was the fullness of the time?
6. In what guise did God send forth His Son?
7. What did He give in place of the law?
8. Who is the son of verse six?
9. How do we cry, "Abba, Father," and what does it mean?
10. Who was changed from a servant to a son, and how?
11. What does the heir inherit in verse seven?
12. What did Israel gain by their baptism in the cloud and the sea?

Lesson 8

TURNED AGAIN TO RITUALISTIC FORMS

Galatians 4:8-18

INTRODUCTION

A new and better religious order was established when Jesus came into the world. This new system of faith and practice is carried out in the church; this is the only place and the only way it can be carried out. It is impossible to serve God acceptably outside a real church of Jesus Christ. It seems it would be a good thing for us now to turn to the two questions of what was wrong with the old system that was taken away when Jesus came, and what is the superiority of the new system that has been established in its place. We shall first look at the law as given through Moses as the system that was disannulled when Jesus came and set up the new order of faith and practice for the church.

One scripture statement we have recently observed in the study of Galatians concerning the taking away of the law as a rule of faith and practice for Israel is that it was a schoolmaster, or a child conductor, to bring Israel to Christ. This probably means two things. First, it brought Israel down to the time of the coming of Christ into the world to establish the new covenant. Second, it was calculated to bring Israel to the attitude of accepting Christ and the new covenant when He should come. Generally speaking it failed in this latter purpose.

Another related statement is that Israel was kept under the law until the seed should come, concerning whom the promise was made to Abraham. This seed was Christ, and Israel was to remain under the law until He came and established the covenant wherein the walk of the people of God should be by faith as opposed to the walk by law. From these two related situations we gain the idea that the law was only an expedient to serve for a time.

However, when we look further into the situation we find some strange facts with reference to the giving and the administering of the law. For one thing, when Moses came down from communing with God in his receiving the law he veiled his face so that the children of Israel should not look unto the end of the thing that was to be done away. This teaches us the law was not given as a permanent rule for the people of God in the first place. This makes it appear the law was destined to failure from the start. Why would God give His people a rule of conduct that was doomed to failure? One of two things is evidently true: either He did just this, or there were provisions for the modification of the law which Israel did not claim.

When the law was given and was read to the people, they

answered that they would do all that was written in the law. Soon after this a man was apprehended breaking the Sabbath law (Num. 15:32—36). The decree of God to Moses was that he should be stoned to death. Now the question is, was there any provision in the law for this man to escape this penalty for what we would regard as a relatively light offence? If there was, then what made the law an impossible rule by which to live? If there was not, then why was there evidently an abating of the harshness of the administration later? For it appears that in later times the Israelites died only for such sins as murder, rebellion and idolatry—and not always for these. David escaped death for both adultery and murder. Why should David escape the penalty for murder and the other man be stoned to death for gathering sticks to build a fire on the Sabbath day?

These considerations make it appear that there were modifying conditions in the law that made it possible for the Israelite to escape the harshness of its just decrees. If we admit this suggestion, however, we are only faced with another problem. If Israel by sacrifices, by repentance for their sins, and by looking in faith to God for help, could escape the penalty of the law, why was it not as good a rule of conduct as any that could be devised? Why cast it into the discard if it made sufficient allowance for the weaknesses of the people? We will note more on this subject in Lesson 9.

I. KEEPING FLESHLY ORDINANCES

Verses 8—11

We are faced with the question of just who the membership of the Galatian churches were. If they were Gentiles, it is a bit strange that Paul should go into such a detailed discussion of the Law of Moses with them, often intimating they had formerly been under the law. If they were Jews, what false gods had they formerly worshipped? Preference is given here to the view that these churches were composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The idolatry of the Gentiles had been the worship of the gods of their fathers. The idolatry of the Jews had been that of worshipping the idols of other peoples among whom they lived and the false worship of the true God.

They knew God first in personal salvation, but they also knew Him by having served Him in church capacity. They knew the fundamentals of New Testament truth, and they had experienced the leadership and comforting presence of the Holy Spirit. They were known of God in the same sense the sheep of the tenth chapter of John were known of Jesus: they were known as a peculiar treasure and a separated people unto God. Only church saints meet these criteria.

We have already learned that the Galatians wished to return to the law of circumcision, which was strictly an observance of the Law of Moses. Therefore, the weak and beggarly elements at least included the precepts of the Mosaic law. They may have included paganistic observances as well. We have both in abundance in so-called

churches today.

They wished to go back into the bondage of observing days and seasons, etc. It was for this reason that Paul feared he had labored in vain among them. He says nothing about being afraid they had lost their salvation or that they were not saved in the first place. It was that they had departed from the faith which he had taught them.

II. RECEIVING PAUL IN WEAKNESS

Verses 12—14

From the context it appears that Paul wishes the brethren to be like him in that he had not come to them professing any perfection in the flesh. If anyone were perfect in the flesh, then he would not have any bodily infirmities at all. The point seems to be that since they had been brought to an intimate relationship with God through Paul's preaching the perfect gospel in an infirm body, they should continue in the course of not trusting in the flesh at all, since this was the same course they had begun as Christians. This is a hard teaching on those who proclaim a fleshly righteousness today.

It is likely Paul means the Galatians had not harmed him personally in their turning again to the weak elements of the world. Pointing out the fact that they were harming themselves rather than him would give them a stronger inducement to believe that he was working for their good, and that he not seeking his own advantage in his rebuking them.

They had formerly received him right along with the weaknesses that were manifested in his body. They had been tested in so receiving him and they had not rejected him nor set him at nought, receiving him as though he were an angel, or even as Christ Himself. This should have taught them the gospel was the vital thing, as opposed to the appearance of the man who preached it.

III. LOSING THE BLESSEDNESS

Verses 15—16

It seems they had lost the blessedness of that attitude in which they would have been willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. Their having this attitude was testimony of the abounding of the grace of God among them. Now they were lapsed into a legalistic; ceremonial righteousness, which had no joy nor charity in it.

Their loss of the spirit of charity is demonstrated again in their regarding Paul as their enemy for reminding them of the truth. Are we always willing for others to tell us the truth about ourselves and our religious beliefs and practices?

IV. DECEIVED BY FALSE TEACHERS

Verses 17—18

Evidently it was Jewish preachers from Jerusalem who had brought trouble among the Galatian churches. No one else would have been so strong for circumcision as a necessity for church membership. It seems strange that there should be leaders who would attempt to place the churches back under law so soon after the New Testament teachings had been given. But it is no more strange than that brethren today will brazenly array Scripture against Scripture to accomplish the same result in many other matters.

The false teachers had a zeal for the brethren, but it was not for their good. The seventeenth verse is not clear in the common version. It seems to say these false apostles wished to shut the brethren out from the truth of grace so that they would have a zeal for the false leaders. This is exactly how false leaders gain and hold a following today. They becloud the minds of the people as to the real teachings of the Scriptures. Then they are at liberty to put any interpretation that suits them on the Word of God so long as they make a pretense of proving their point by the Bible. Gaining their own ends is the real goal of anyone who will do such things; the truth of God is not the primary consideration with them.

It was good for the brethren always to be zealous and not just to act that way when Paul was present. This seems to be a hint that they had not fully embraced the reign of grace which he had taught them, for as soon as he was gone they began to drop into the old legalistic ways of former times.

Let it be observed again at the close of this study that ritualism and legalism of one sort and another are threats just as grave to us today as they were to the Galatian churches. Let us be able to prove our teachings and practices definitely by the New Testament.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What gods had the Galatians served?
2. How did they know God, and how were they known of Him?
3. What were the weak and beggarly elements?
4. Why did Paul fear he had labored in vain?
5. How did he want the Galatians to be like him?
6. Why did he say they had not harmed him?
7. How had they formerly demonstrated their charity?
8. Why did Paul now appear as an enemy to them?
9. Who had caused the trouble in the churches?
10. What was the purpose of these false teachers?
11. For what should they be zealous?

Lesson 9

CHRISTIANS, THE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

Galatians 4:19-31

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are faced again with the question of what the fundamental subject of controversy in Galatians is. Some have generally reckoned this issue to be whether salvation is by works or by grace. It has been pointed out already that if this is the issue we are in serious trouble with reference to the condition of Israel when they were under the law. No one can successfully deny the following proposition exists in this epistle.

Christ came and redeemed them from under the law, giving them the New Testament economy in its place. Now the Galatians were wanting to go back to the old order of things, which was to be under the law again. If this new thing, which is called the faith, were a way of personal salvation, then we are forced to conclude that either Israel was not saved when they were under the law, or they were saved by keeping the law, for the faith did not come until the coming of Jesus into the world. This is why the position is taken in this study that the new order, called the faith, does not refer primarily to personal salvation but rather to a new working rule for the people of God.

Now let us take up again the theme we introduced in Lesson 8: the possibility of the law continuing as an acceptable rule of faith and practice for the people of God. So far as the ordinances of "do's" and "don'ts" are concerned, the situation was impossible for Israel; they simply could not keep them. But another possibility was suggested. It was that the law was modified by the sacrifices and by repentance and faith on the part of the Israelites to the extent they might have continued successfully under it as their rule of conduct. Remember that this is only suggested as a possibility. Perhaps we shall be able to arrive at a conclusion on it later. With this in view, let us now turn to some experiences of Israel in connection with their possessing the land of promise after they came out of Egypt.

We are told in the Bible that Israel came to Kadesh Barnea on the Southern border of Canaan only a few months after they left the land of Egypt. Here they were faced with the issue of entering and possessing the land or not doing so. All the physical facts were against them as they sought to arrive at a decision. The enemy was too strong for them. On the other hand, God promised to go before them and make their way to prosper; but, God is a Spirit, and no mighty literal army appeared on the scene to help Israel. This being true, Israel must accept the promise of God by faith and walk by

faith if they were to accept the present, challenge and opportunity. Remember that they were already under the Mosaic code when they encountered this great challenge of faith at Kadesh Barnea. This is one reason why it was suggested as a possibility that the harshness of the law was modified so that Israel could have continued under it as a rule of conduct.

To say that Israel could not at this time have entered the land by faith would be to deny the facts in the case. By faith Caleb and Joshua urged the people to enter the land under the hand of God. Since these men had this faith the others might have had it also. So it looks like a failure on their part that was not predetermined by the nature of the law which they were under.

Another situation gives us some evidence on the other side of the issue. After Israel had entered into the land, God having commanded them not to make any alliances with their heathen neighbors, there came the Gibeonites to make a league with them. These Gibeonites represented themselves to Israel as having come from a far distant land, and they argued that since they were not the near neighbors of Israel they would not come under the command of God concerning making alliances with heathen nations. Israel was honestly deceived in the matter and made the alliance with the Gibeonites. These People remained in the land under the covenant which Israel made with them for many generations seducing the Israelites to idolatry. If Israel had thought it necessary, they could have asked the Lord about the league with the Gibeonites and escaped this snare. They did not think it necessary since they thought they could safely trust their own judgment in the matter. This incident is testimony to the end that Israel could not continue successfully under the Law of Moses, no matter how sincere their efforts might be.

This leaves us with the question that if Israel could walk partly by faith under the law, why could they not go all the way in a faith economy and continue triumphantly as the church is destined to do? We shall look at this issue in Lesson 10.

I. CHRIST NOT YET FORMED IN THEM

Verses 19—20

The travail of Paul for his children was based on a condition mentioned in Lesson 8. They had begun in the New Testament faith. Now they were turning again to a rule of law in their church lives. The travail is the figure of the travail of a woman in birth.

The travail was to continue until Christ should be formed in them. This presents to us the question of just what the real issue is in Galatians. We all know that the new birth is an instantaneous transaction completed once for all in a moment of time. The thing Paul speaks of is a process covering a period of time. Therefore it is not the new birth, or the matter of personal salvation. It is really the firm establishment of the New Testament faith among the brethren for which Paul has travail. Having Christ formed in them is

nothing more nor less than growth in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The desire of Paul was that he might be with the brethren and that he might change his voice, for he was perplexed concerning them. There is no indication that he was questioning whether they had been saved in the first place. He seems definitely to take this for granted. His worry and perplexity had to do with the conduct of the brethren in church capacity. It might be an easier way out of the situation simply to say the Galatians were not saved. To prove such a position however would be a difficult thing to do from the various statements and situations that are presented throughout the book.

II. THE ALLEGORY

Verses 21—23

It is plainly indicated in verse twenty—one that the Galatians wished to be under the law. It is elsewhere stated that they were advocating circumcision, which was a precept of the law and was not brought over into the New Testament rule of conduct. They were also censured for keeping days, seasons, months, years etc. The whole controversy is that Paul had set them free from a rule of law; now they were seeking to return to such a rule of law.

The allegory which we now take up was spoken in connection with their desire to abandon the rule of grace which had been taught them and to return to the law rule which had prevailed in Israel since ancient times.

The historical record of the allegory is that God had promised Abraham a son to carry out the line through which the promised seed should come. After Abraham had waited until Sarah, his legitimate wife, was too old to have a son, he took the Egyptian bondsmaid, Hagar, as his wife. Ishmael was born of this illegitimate marriage. Abraham besought God to accept Ishmael as the son to preserve the seed of Abraham. God refused and He renewed the promise of the legitimate son. Isaac was later born of Sarah in her old age and he was revealed as the son of the promise. Later, Ishmael mocked Isaac at the ceremony of his weaning. God then commanded Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael from the home stating that Ismael should not inherit the promise along with Isaac.

III. APPLICATION OF THE ALLEGORY

Verses 24—27

As Paul makes application of the allegory of Ishmael and Hagar on the one hand and Isaac and Sarah on the other, he plainly indicates that Hagar is the law covenant given on Mt. Sinai by Moses to Israel. Ishmael represents the Israelites who were under this law covenant. He says this law covenant genders to bondage, and the Jerusalem of Paul's day was in bondage with her children simply

because they were under the law covenant. If this means they were not saved and could not be saved, then no Israelite was saved while they were under the law, for they were all under it.

Sarah represents the new covenant which Jesus established with the church. Isaac represents the people who live under the new covenant. Isaac came and received the inheritance by promise, and not by keeping of law on his own part or on the part of his parents. The application is that we receive the New Testament inheritance by promise and not by keeping the law; by receiving New Testament promises by faith.

Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1 where the barren woman is admonished to rejoice. It is strange that she should rejoice when the unmarried woman has many more children than she herself has. The context tells us she should rejoice in her barrenness because her children are to be born later. Sarah late in life rejoiced over the birth of Isaac. The Jews should have rejoiced at the birth of the new covenant which John proclaimed and Jesus established.

IV. CHILDREN OF THE FREE WOMAN

Verses 28—31

Among the Galatians the fleshly son was persecuting the son of the free woman in their desire to forsake the rule of grace to return to the rule of law. The casting out of the bondwoman and her son is simply the abandoning of the law as a rule of faith and practice and the claiming of the inheritance by faith as opposed to law. It surely ought to be evident by now that the children of the freewoman are those who walk in the church rule.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Why did Paul travail for the brethren?
2. What is meant by "Christ formed in them?"
3. What did the Galatians wish to do?
4. Why was the allegory spoken?
5. What covenant does Ishmael represent?
6. Why should the barren woman rejoice?
7. How does the fleshly son persecute the spiritual son?
8. Who are the children of the free woman?

Lesson 10

RIGHTEOUSNESS-- RESULT OF FAITH

Galatians 5:1-15

INTRODUCTION

The introductory discussion in Lesson 9 left us with a question which will be restated: Since the church is to continue successfully to the end of the age under the walk "in faith" why could Israel not continue successfully under the law whose rule was modified by faith?

If anyone is disposed to deny that there was any faith in the walk of Israel under the law, let him turn to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and read there of the many things Israelites accomplished by faith while they were under the Mosiac code. Israel was operating strictly under the law when the walls of Jericho fell down by their actions of faith. It seems we must freely admit there was faith mixed with their walk under the law. This admission only thrusts before us again the fundamental question of why Israel failed under a mixture of law and faith, whereas the church is to succeed under the New Testament faith.

We can save face by simply saying it was the doing away with the law part of Israel's covenant that made it possible for them to succeed under the New Testament economy and dismissing the whole question from our minds. But this would solve no problems. We would miss the point towards which all these introductions have been driving. It is freely admitted that, so far as the writer is concerned, we are treading in rather deep water. However, let us see if we can begin to get out.

It may be necessary to cut a few corners to keep from losing ourselves again, but let us cut them and seek to arrive at the fundamental issue. We are told at Hebrews 9:13 that some of the ceremonies of the law sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. Why should there be a special effort to purify the flesh? The answer is that material promises were made to Israel for their keeping of the law. That is, if they would obey God in all things, they should go in and possess a literally good land flowing with milk and honey. Israel never possessed the land in this sense. Why? Simply because it was dependent on their purifying the flesh, and this they could not accomplish. Let us illustrate the point with a concrete example. When David became king over all Israel and God gave him rest from all his enemies round about, Israel came as near to embracing the land flowing with milk and honey as they ever did in their history. What was the result? When the flesh of David had rest from war it used its freedom to go out and commit adultery and murder. This ought to teach us what Paul meant when he said that no good thing dwelt in his flesh.

The law was aimed at the taming of the flesh so that it might receive and govern a material inheritance. But the flesh cannot be tamed except in death and resurrection. Here is where Romans 8:3 applies when it speaks of what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. The verse tells us that Christ then came and condemned the whole system of Israel or anyone else attempting to attain to a material inheritance in this present world. These things being true, the Pentecostals of today, and some of them wearing the name of Baptist, are simply attempting what the whole experience of Israel under the law proved to be utterly impossible. It is the subduing and purifying of the flesh so that it might be brought into the kingdom of God and receive its predestined inheritance there. The flesh will not come into its inheritance until the resurrection of the body and the subduing of the earth under Christ.

When Jesus was in the world, He exercised a righteous lordship over His own flesh. He was the only man who ever did so. As a result God gave Him lordship over the creation. He used this lordship over the creation in all His miracles. He gave it by measure on the occasion to His disciples when He empowered them to perform miracles. The disciples then came to Jesus angrily wanting Him to allow them to call down fire from heaven and burn up the Samaritans who had rejected the gospel when Jesus preached it to them. This ought to answer the question of why the law failed. It attempted the noble experiment of purifying the flesh of Israel so they could claim and rule a good inheritance in the present sin-cursed world. They proved it cannot be done.

We have spoken of the law rule in Israel as a noble experiment. It is not necessary that we should believe God thought the law rule would work nor that He was surprised that the law dispensation failed. But it is suggested that His justice demanded that He prove the point to the intelligent beings of the universe.

I. FALLEN FROM GRACE

Verses 1—4

The brethren are reminded that they have been made free. They are then admonished to stand in this freedom and not to be again entangled with a yoke of bondage. This yoke was the law under which they had formerly lived their religious lives.

He states that Christ would not profit a man who was circumcised. He proves the point by saying the circumcised man had bound himself under all the law. Christ had come to free Israel from the law. Now if a man bound himself again under the law by circumcision, Christ could not logically profit him at all.

It is necessary only to read the whole argument to know what is meant by "fallen from grace" in verse four. It is an abominable thing to take an expression like this out of its setting and interpret it to mean the loss of personal salvation. What he actually says is

that if they are justified by law, they have missed the plan of grace entirely. It does not apply to personal salvation in the first place, but rather to justification of the people of God as to their own works.

II. THE WORKING OF FAITH

Verses 5—6

The law was aimed at making the flesh righteous. This plan having failed and the grace plan having supplanted it, under the plan of grace we hope for righteousness of the flesh to come later. In this condition we are instigated by the Spirit and sustained by faith.

Circumcision was given to Abraham as the sign of the covenant. It perhaps signified that the flesh of Israel must be purified before they could come into their own full inheritance. To Israel under the law, circumcision expressed the goal of the law the purifying of the flesh so that it could come into the inheritance. The difference between circumcision and baptism is that circumcision typically purified the flesh; baptism typically puts it to death in the sense of ignoring and denying it.

III. THE INCONSISTENCY OF CIRCUMCISION

Verses 7—12

The apostles had called the Galatians through the New Testament gospel. They had also been called by the Holy Spirit. Probably the reference is to whatever preacher had taught them the gospel at first. They had been called into this new order wherein they walked by faith motivated by love.

Leaven is yeast placed in dough to make bread rise. If the dough is left with the leaven in it, the leaven grows and multiplies very rapidly. The warning is that false doctrine and practice does the same thing in the church. Perhaps having a few members believing in circumcision was a small thing within itself, but such errors always grow and multiply when once admitted into the church.

The one who was troubling the Galatians with the circumcision doctrine would bear the judgment thereof. He was a church wrecker and perverter. He laid the foundation for error in all future generations. In this he became indirectly responsible for the deception of people in all succeeding generations. This man will see the terrible fruits of his works when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ.

Verse eleven seems to present a theoretical case. If Paul preaches circumcision, then he would not be persecuted for advocating circumcision. In such an instance he would not suffer reproach because of the cross. It seems the faithful always have suffered reproach for preaching the cross, and that such reproach is inevitable to a faithful ministry of the gospel. It seems we are predetermined to reproach if we stand true to the cross.

IV. THE NATURE OF OUR FREEDOM

Verses 13—15

The brethren had been called to freedom, but not that kind of freedom that gives an occasion to the flesh. That is, our freedom does not make way for us to indulge the sins of the flesh. Elsewhere Paul says that in his deliverance from the Law of Moses he did not become an outlaw, but he became in law to Christ. Here he says that in this freedom, through love, we serve one another.

All law is fulfilled in the one proposition: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This means that real Christian love compensates for our failure to keep the multitude of precepts of the Mosaic code, or any other code of laws. However, this love impels us to do by faith the things taught in the New Testament, just as Paul was trying mightily to induce the Galatians to do. In other words, it is Baptist love that fulfils every law.

The result of abandoning love is that the brethren will be devoured by one another. Any time we abandon the forbearing of one another in love and begin to apply a standard of law to our brethren we are headed for spiritual destruction, for this is a rule our brethren can and will turn back on us. The accusations are endless that we can bring against one another if we set up a standard of fleshly perfection among ourselves. Israel failed in a system like this and we are no better than they as to the contents of our flesh.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. From what yoke of bondage had the brethren been freed?
2. Why could Christ not profit a circumcised man?
3. What does "fallen from grace" mean?
4. What righteousness is meant in verse five?
5. What did circumcision mean to Abraham, and to Israel?
6. What rule works today in the place of circumcision?
7. What does the parable of the leaven mean?
8. What judgment would the troubler bear?
9. How would preaching of circumcision destroy the offence of the cross?
10. To what kind of freedom were they called?
11. In what one word is all the law fulfilled?
12. What is the result of abandoning love?

Lesson 11

THE TWO NATURES CONTRASTED

Galatians 5:16-26

INTRODUCTION

The law failed in its attempt to purify the flesh of Israel, to make them worthy and capable of claiming and administering a good material inheritance, because the flesh of man is in the kingdom of the Devil along with the earth and all of its inhabitants. It must remain so until it is released by death or until Christ comes to take over the lordship of the earth and the flesh of man. There is considerable evidence that Jesus offered to do this, in some measure at least, at His first coming into the world; but, Israel refused the terms of His offer to them and things did not turn out in this way. So let us not go further into the matter at present.

Our task for this lesson is to show the fundamental reason why the new covenant is better than the law covenant as is stated at Hebrews 11:40. Let us once again point out that the Law of Moses attempted to purify the flesh of Israel and that since our own flesh is exactly like the flesh of Israel it can no more be purified by keeping of a law than could the flesh of Israel. This latter suggestion is what many do not seem willing to freely admit. What, then is New Testament righteousness? This is the question answered by this lesson.

Some insist, in the face of the evidence to the contrary, that New Testament righteousness consists at least partly in a strict disciplining of the flesh. We hear spectacular sermons on the sins of gum chewing, Coca Cola drinking, and smoking with the implication that we are falling far short of the glory of God when we allow such things in our lives. Such would have been fine sermons to preach to Israel under the law, but do they fit the New Testament situation? We shall attempt to show why they do not.

Since there is no good in the flesh and its work, Jesus came and instituted a system wherein the flesh is to be ignored. This statement means exactly what it says: there is no present way to cope successfully with the flesh but to ignore it with its lusts. The idea of holding Adam down with our heel on his neck is just as fleshly as not attempting to subdue him. For our effort to subdue him as a positive thing is in the realm of the flesh too. If we think we have subdued Adam we will boast of it in a fleshly way. Related to this is the idea that by a superior righteousness attained through the disciplining of the flesh we will attain to a superior knowledge of the Scriptures. Why seek a goal like this? Simply to give us a superiority over our fellows so that we may glory in our attainments in a fleshly way. Christians who are following this route are doing nothing at all but walking in the footsteps of the ascetics of the middle ages.

We seem to be having trouble getting off the subject of what New Testament righteousness is not and getting around to the subject of what it is. It is briefly stated when we do get to it. New Testament righteousness is nothing in the world but believing and doing what the New Testament teaches. There are infinite details that can be added to this proposition, but the proposition will stand unshakeable when all the details have been added. This righteousness has very little of the mysticism about it which many people try to read into the situation. It is not seeing visions, conversing with angels, performing miracles, etc.

Reduced to practical terms, New Testament righteousness is accepting the Bible as the Word of God, believing and teaching salvation by grace, the security of the saved, the reality and continuity of the church, the millennial coming of Christ, Heaven and hell, the New Testament as the all sufficient rule of faith and practice, and related to this later, attempting to find the harmony of Scripture teachings as opposed to twisting the Scriptures to bolster preconceived theories. There are many details which could be added to this list, of course. This is a general statement of the positive side of New Testament righteousness.

The negative side of it is this: If a preacher is telling the truth of God, he is not lying about the size of the fish he caught. If a Christian spends his available money to forward the cause of Christ, he does not have any left to buy liquor. If he is boasting of the virtues and works of Christ, he is diverted from boasting of his own Pharisaic righteousness. If his heart is set on carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth, he does not think of bragging about the size of the church house he has built. If the minister is busy illustrating the love of God in the hearts of his membership, he is not occupied with suggesting sins to commit by preaching "muck raking" sermons.

I. THE CONFLICT OF THE TWO NATURES

Verses 16—18

We have the promise that if we will walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. As a practical rule, walking in the Spirit is nothing but believing and doing the things the Spirit has revealed in the Scriptures. Seeking superior light and new revelations by a disciplining of the flesh is within itself as fleshly as a thing could possibly be. Colossians 2:18 says the person who does these things "is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."

The flesh and the Spirit lust, strive, against each other. Each one seeks to control the mind, where decisions are made. If the mind gives heed to spiritual things, fleshly things are ignored. This is the only way the deeds of the flesh can be mortified. Verse seventeen says in substance that the Spirit and flesh are dead set against one another. There is no agreement nor compromise between them. Therefore no good can be made of the flesh.

We can be freed from law by being led by the Spirit.

II. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

Verse 19—21

Fifteen works of the flesh are named in the text. They are all bad. Some of them are of a religious nature and some of them of a moral nature. This reminds us again that the Bible teaches that moral decay comes as the result of religious apostasy; religious apostasy does not come as the result of moral decay.

No other kind of works are possible to the flesh because the flesh of man is as much in the kingdom of the Devil as is the cursed earth and its other inhabitants. Here it is simply a matter of whether we will admit the Devil is the god of the world or not. Christ rescues the spirit of man from the realm of the Devil in the new birth; the body, with its fleshly nature, will not be delivered until death, or more properly the resurrection, or the coming of Christ.

According to Romans 14:17, the kingdom of God is not food and drink or any other material thing, but it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Only those who walk in the Spirit receive these blessings. There is no hint of falling from grace in this situation.

III. THE TRUTH OF THE SPIRIT

Verses 22—13

Paul gives a list of the fruits of the Spirit, not the works of the Spirit. The works of the Spirit are such things as Scriptural baptism, preaching the gospel to the lost, and upholding all of Scripture truth. The fruits of such works are the nine listed in the text. These fruits come automatically from the doing of the works of the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are not attained by working ourselves into a fleshly frenzy as the Pentecostals do.

Why there is no law against the fruits of the Spirit may be answered by saying they come from God and are not worked up by man. Perhaps we shall go more into this subject in the next lesson.

IV. THE FLESH CRUCIFIED

Verses 24—26

Of course the New Testament speaks about crucifying and mortifying the flesh and its works. However, a close scrutiny of the Scriptures where such is mentioned will not reveal that this crucifying of the flesh is a positive, aggressive work on the part of the individual. Verse twenty-four of our lesson either means sinless perfection, or near sinless perfection, or it does not. The great commentary on it is Romans 6:6, where the crucifying of the old man, the fleshly man, is intimately connected with baptism. It intimates that this crucifying is not a thing in progress, but rather a

fact already accomplished. It was crucified by the declaration made and pictured in baptism and in the position and relationship into which baptism brought the Romans. They had crucified the old man simply by leaving their old manner of life and coming into the church where spiritual works are done, and the flesh is crucified by being ignored.

If we live scripturally in the church we automatically live in the Spirit, for the church is the body which the Spirit has prepared as the place, and the only place, of spiritual living. If we are in this realm and atmosphere it is only logical and fitting that we should walk or conduct ourselves in accordance with it.

The Greek text of verse twenty-six says we are not to be vain-gloriers, accusing one another and envying one another. This reveals to us what vain-glorying is. Those who accuse and envy others do so in the effort to build up themselves in their own estimation and the estimation of others. There is no place in the New Testament order for self-righteousness, which is always a fleshly righteousness.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How can we escape fulfilling the lusts of the flesh?
2. What is the lusting of the flesh and the Spirit against each other?
3. How can we be freed from the law?
4. Name the works of the flesh listed in the text?
5. Is any other kind of works possible in the flesh?
6. What is meant by inheriting the kingdom of God?
7. Why does Paul say fruits of the Spirit instead of works of the Spirit?
8. What are the fruits of the Spirit listed?
9. Why is there no law against these?
10. How do the ones of Christ crucify the flesh?
11. What is meant by walking in the Spirit?
12. What is vain-glorying?

Lesson 12

SUNDRY DUTIES AND WARNINGS

Galatians 6:1-9

INTRODUCTION

In continuation of our discussion of spiritual works, let us again point out that spirituality is not making a positive resolution to defeat our besetting sin as a positive project. Two very deceptive evils are sure to come from this course. One is that while we are carefully guarding our besetting sin, lust will simply break out in us from some other unguarded point. The other is that we will take fleshly pride in our victory over the flesh in stamping out our besetting sin if we really do stamp it out. There is usually a great amount of hypocrisy foisted off on ourselves and on others at this point. We will proclaim that we have won a victory over the flesh when really we have not. This is glorying in the flesh.

It has been asserted previously that doing spiritual works is doing what the New Testament teaches. Fundamentally, it is no more and no less than this. But of course this is a very general and indefinite statement. Let us attempt to get down to details, using baptism as a convenient illustration. Circumcision was the sign and the seal of the covenant with Israel. It appears beyond a doubt that baptism is correspondingly the sign and the seal of the new covenant. The question then comes up: why and how is circumcision a fleshly ordinance, whereas baptism is a spiritual work? As to the rites and ceremonies no essential difference can be pointed out between them.

Why then should we be so careful to observe Scriptural baptism and ignore circumcision? One answer is because Christ through the New Testament commands it. Perhaps this is as near as we shall get to the answer to the fundamental principle involved in this question. It does not completely cover the ground, however.

Let us make our appeal to I Peter 3:18—21 and see if we can get any help on the fundamental subject of baptism. First, Christ died concerning sins, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit. Romans 6:10 says that He died unto sin once, but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Both passages connect this experience of Christ with the baptism of the believer. The implication then is that it is the baptized believer, and he alone, who has entered into the experience of Christ in death and resurrection.

Second, Peter goes on to speak of Noah's being saved through water. In a sense, the ark saved Noah all the way through the water of the flood. But more likely a different thing is meant. Through the destroying agency of the flood waters, all the ungodly flesh about Noah was destroyed so that these fleshly people would not be present to seduce Noah and his family to idolatry and the other sins

of the flesh. This is how Noah was saved through the flood waters. He was not saved by water in the sense of the new birth, but he was saved in the sense of a separated life to God.

Peter goes on from this point to say the like figure where-unto baptism doth also now save us. Most Baptists believe that Noah and the flood are the realities in this situation and that baptism is the type or picture. The writer believes Noah and the flood constitute the figure according to the tenth chapter of I Corinthians, and baptism is the reality.

Baptism does not save by literally washing dirt from the body. Nor does it save by the ceremonial cleansing of the flesh as circumcision did in Israel. This latter is what Peter means when he says, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh."

He goes on to say it saves by the answering of Jesus Christ. We can readily see how doing what the New Testament teaches would give us a good conscience towards God in the matter of baptism. However, Hebrews 9:9 tells us in substance that the Old Testament ordinances of Israel such as circumcision could not make them perfect as the conscience. Therefore they did not have the good conscience Peter speaks of in connection with baptism.

Then, when we put together Hebrews 9:14; I Peter 3:21—22 and John 16:7 we get the idea that when Jesus ascended into heaven, He then sent the Holy Spirit into the world to be the Comforter of the church. When one is baptized and comes into the church, where this Comforter operates, then the Comforter gives him the good conscience because he has done what the Word teaches. Israel did not have this Comforter, and this is why baptism gives a good conscience which circumcision could not give.

I. THE LAW OF CHRIST

Verses 1—2

Lesson 11 ended with the observation that if we live in the Spirit we should also walk in the Spirit. There is then the intimation that some of the Galatian brethren were using their Christian freedom for vain-glorying and accusing and envying their brethren. The New Testament everywhere teaches that such is not to be the case as it is utterly out of harmony with the spirit of the new covenant.

If any brother is overtaken or apprehended in any fault or falling away from the truth, those who are spiritual are to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. It is never right for a church to assume an attitude of self righteousness or of vengeance towards an erring brother. A wrong in the church can never be righted in this spirit. The New Testament generally teaches that the church is to repent for the sin that is brought into the church by an individual member almost as though every member had committed the sin. When the church does this it can deal with the member who is at fault in the spirit of meekness; otherwise it cannot do so.

In dealing with the weakness of others we should look to ourselves lest we also come into temptation. Jesus said, "Judge not that ye be

not judged. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured again to you." This indicated that if we assume a superior attitude towards those who fall into sin, we ourselves will be subjected to greater temptation than the Lord would otherwise allow to come on us.

We should bear one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ. Paul says in another place that though Christ was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. If Christ bore all things for us, then surely we can bear a few things for the sake of the brotherhood.

II. PROVING OUR WORKS

Verses 3—5

If anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing he deceives himself. No doubt this refers to those who hold themselves in a superior righteousness. Surely they deceive themselves, for they cover up their own faults and magnify those of others. This is the only way anyone can arrive at a conclusion of righteousness in self.

Let every one test his own work with the idea of either approving or disapproving it. The test to which our works is to be subjected is the New Testament teachings. These are arrived at by an honest and earnest searching to see what the Scriptures teach and not by bending them to make them teach what we want to believe. When a man's works are approved by the Scriptures, he does not need to throw down some other man so that he may stand higher than him.

Verse five says every man shall bear his own burden; verse three says we are to bear one another's burdens. There is no contradiction. We are to be willing to bear our own burden unless it becomes too heavy for us at some point. In this case, our brethren are most assuredly to help us bear it. Verse five is directed at those who are inclined to prey as parasites on the charity of the brethren. It is one thing to help a sick brother; it is something else to help one who is too lazy to work.

III. REAPING WHAT WE SOW

Verses 6—9

The one being instructed in the Word is to share with the one instructing in all good things. This means no more and no less than that we should pay the one who preaches the Word of the Lord to us. If he is fully devoted to the ministry he has a full time job. He can no more minister properly in spiritual things while earning a living at secular work than could the priests in Israel when the people refused to bring the tithes for their support.

There seems to be practically no limit to the application of the rule that whatever a man sows that shall he also reap. The principle here seems to be applied especially to the kind of harvest reaped rather

than to the quantity of it. In another place, however, Paul says he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully, and he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly.

Sowing to the flesh results in reaping corruption, which means destruction or destructible things. If a saved man sows to lay up treasures in the world, all his treasures will be destroyed in the judgement of the world in the last days. If the sinner sows to unbelief he will reap eternity in Hell.

Sowing to the Spirit results in reaping everlasting life. This applies first to believing unto salvation. But everlasting life already exists for believers in the present world. Sowing to the Spirit contributes to the assurance and joy of this salvation.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What condition did Paul condemn in Lesson XI?
2. How is an erring brother to be dwelt with?
3. Whose burdens should we bear?
4. How is the law of Christ fulfilled?
5. How are we likely to deceive ourselves?
6. With whom should we share our good things?
7. How far can we apply the rule of sowing and reaping.

Lesson 13

GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Galatians 6:10-18

INTRODUCTION

Let us devote this final introductory discussion to an effort to sum up again the philosophical and psychological principles on which these studies have been based.

As soon as man fell under the complete ruin of sin God began to promise redemption in the seed of the woman. Every Old Testament character who believed this promise from the heart was saved when he so believed. This is to say he was saved on the basis of what Christ was going to do in the future. If we say Abraham was not actually saved until Christ came, we would have God dealing with a sinner in all His dealings with Abraham. Such a position is ridiculous. Men have always been saved in exactly the same way.

There are some of God's dealings with mankind which were not revealed or put into operation until the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus were actually accomplished. This is what makes the new covenant, which is the church covenant, radically different from the various covenants of the Old Testament era. It has been pointed out that the new covenant is set especially in contrast with the law covenant to Israel. The law covenant was based largely on works of the flesh. The new covenant is not based on any works of the flesh at all, for there is not good in the flesh. If the new covenant then were based in any measure on the works of the flesh, it must fail just as the law covenant failed. Jesus has promised that the church covenant will not fail to the end of the age. The thing we are getting to is the basis on which this unfailing church covenant is founded.

Let us now note the philosophy of some steps already mentioned which make the church covenant sure and steadfast—and also different.

God set the lordship of the earth in mankind in Adam. Both man and the earth were completely bound under the sin in the fall of Adam. If man and the earth are to be rescued from this bondage to sin, God must join himself to mankind as the only one able to break the bondage. Thus the virgin birth was a necessity of the situation, and it was accomplished in the birth of Jesus of the virgin Mary.

A sinless life was demanded of anyone who would become a substitute for the sins of man. Jesus accomplished this sinless life in the sight of the intelligences of the universe making Himself worthy as the sacrifice for sin.

He who was both God and a perfect man then went willingly to the cross. Having done all works of man that were well pleasing to the Father, He now fulfilled the last demand of the law of God in

His death.

Because He was perfectly righteous in all His works and character, it was not right that He should be held in death. Therefore, the Holy Spirit made Him alive from the dead to live for evermore.

Having given a sure testimony of His resurrection to His disciples, He then ascended into Heaven as the glorified Son of man. He was perfectly worthy to ascend in triumph and to sit at the right hand of the Most High God.

Because of all these victories that had been accomplished by Him and in Him, the Father gave it unto His hands to deal with His church of saved people, separate it from the world through their declaration in baptism, and govern it on spiritual principles as opposed to the fleshly ordinances that governed Israel. He being the Head and Lawgiver of the church, it has a perfect Head and perfect laws. The members have the same no-good flesh that man has had since the fall, but in church capacity they work under a perfect rule. Therefore, the Holy Spirit can come to abide in the church and comfort and instruct it. The flesh is ignored and the church observes the rules of Christ because they believe His rules are good, this belief ever being helped by the guiding Spirit.

If the student sees these things he will have a strong inducement to stop trying to change the Scriptures. Instead, he will have a stronger incentive to seek to know what they teach and to believe and do them. If he does not see these things, then he will more likely go on trying to put himself and others under a code of fleshly ordinance, as some teachers among the Galatians were attempting to do. No one who really sees the working principles of the New Testament church will attempt to place the church under a circumcision law, a tithing law, a sabbath law, or anything else that the New Testament brands as a fleshly ordinance.

I. DOING GOOD TO ALL

Verses 10—11

The admonition to do good to all is connected with the teaching on sowing and reaping. We are told that in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As the result of this principle, we are told to do good in all. The implication then is that we shall reap the suitable harvest from doing good to all. This is also taught to be sowing to the Spirit.

Especially are we to do good to those that are of the household of faith. The Greek calls it "the faith," indicating it is church saints who are called the household of faith. We should do good to them because they are engaged in the same cause with ourselves. Furthermore, they are a special people to God above anyone else on earth. Thus, they are worthy of special favor on our part.

Paul calls on the brethren to behold with what great letters he has written to them with his own hand. It has been said that he was almost blind and that he wrote in large letters because of his poor eyesight. This seems to be the logical conclusion concerning the

matter. Usually someone else did Paul's writing for him. In the Greek text most of the epistles of Paul end with a superscription which tells who actually did the writing, such as Timothy, Luke, and Tychicus. A number of them state that the superscription, or closing, of the letter is in the hand of Paul himself.

II. THE MOTIVE FOR CIRCUMCISION

Verses 12—13

It is stated that all those who wished to make a good show in the flesh required circumcision. This can be nothing but the attempt to set up a standard of legal righteousness in the church.

Paul says they set up this rule of circumcision so that they should not be persecuted for the sake of the cross of Christ. However, the word used here for persecuted primarily means to pursue, and it seems more likely what Paul means to say is they follow circumcision so they will not be obliged to follow the rule of the cross of Christ. It is the same old story of wanting to walk by law rather than by the rule of faith.

Those who observed the law of circumcision did not keep the entire law. In another place Paul says the one who is circumcised is obligated to keep all the law. There is no such thing as a partial keeping of law and being accepted of God on this half-way basis. It is either keep it or fail entirely. If those who believe in saving themselves and keeping themselves saved by works could see this truth they would not have much confidence in their plan of salvation.

Glorying and boasting are the same in the original text. Therefore, the circumcisers simply wanted to boast of their own "good work" in forcing other people to observe circumcision. It is just like boasting of how much money our church has raised or how many members have been taken in regardless of how these goals were accomplished.

III. THE GOAL OF PAUL

Verses 14—15

Paul would not glory or boast in anything except the cross of Christ. Whether or not we can understand the details the whole New Testament is built on the foundation of the cross. This is equivalent to saying the church is built on the principle of the cross as opposed to Israel's religious economy being built on the Law of Moses. Paul would glory in the whole new system, which gives the people of God a successful working plan.

Paul had the world crucified to himself in that he gave up the ways of the world—especially in a religious sense. That is, he did not want any more of a worldly religion, which was what he had when he was under the Law of Moses. In his being crucified to the world, he was set in direct opposition to the world in his religious philosophy, being the New Testament church philosophy.

The new creature, or new creation, is simply that man who has

risen to walk in newness of life in baptism (Romans 6:4). This newness of life does not refer to the new birth, but to the new rule of life in the church.

IV. THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Verses 16–17

The rule mentioned in verse sixteen is the same as that in verse fifteen. Those who walk by this rule have peace and mercy unknown to worldly religions based on self-righteous legalisms.

The Israel of God is spiritual Israel. It is not all the saved; it is the church of Jesus Christ, using church in the institutional sense.

Paul bore the marks of Jesus in his body. Perhaps these were scars he had received in his fight for a rule of grace as opposed to one of law. Will anyone deny this was the cause of most of his scars? It could be that he means his life was conformed to the rule of Jesus.

There is a rare usage of the word “spirit” in verse eighteen. There is one spirit possessed by a number of people. This can be nothing but the spirit that pervades a true church as such. A church has a personality the same as an individual does. It is not difficult to distinguish between a Baptist church and false church. The true church has the very personality of Christ. The grace of Christ will be with the spirit, or the very personality, of the church.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Why should we do good to all?
2. How did Paul write this letter?
3. Why did some require circumcision?
4. What was their attitude towards the cross?
5. Did the circumcised keep the law?
6. What is glorying in the flesh?
7. What is glorying in the cross?
8. What is meant by the world being crucified to Paul and he to the World?
9. What is the new creature, as opposed to circumcision?
10. What marks did Paul bear in his body?
11. What spirit is meant in verse eighteen?

Lesson 14

BLOOD REDEMPTION

Ephesians 1:1-14

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ephesians is another of the church epistles. It was written by Paul, supposedly while he was imprisoned at Rome in the year 64 A. D.

Although it immediately follows Galatians in the New Testament and both are church epistles, Ephesians is entirely different from Galatians in its approach to the subject of the church. The Galatian letter is written to specific congregations of baptized believers concerning specific matters that have to do with local churches, but Ephesians is written to the church from the institutional standpoint. It is addressed to the saints in Ephesus, but aside from that fact there is scarcely anything in the book that applies in a specific, personal way to any given church. The discussion is all of a general nature.

Because of this, many unwary people have been snared into the universal church heresy on the basis of what is said of the church in Ephesians. The great universal, invisible, spiritual church so commonly taught by the Protestant world today cannot be legitimately established from Ephesians or anywhere else in the Bible, for no such thing is taught in the Bible.

The question comes up as to the difference between the church from the institutional viewpoint and the universal invisible church. The church from the institutional viewpoint embraces any and all churches that measure up to the New Testament pattern for the local church. This pattern is so specific and clear-cut that no group need be in error as to church teachings and practices. All churches which measure up to this standard constitute the church institutionally speaking.

The invisible church is entirely a different situation. Its proponents say that all saved people automatically come into a great invisible spiritual body when they are saved and that this body constitutes the true church. The first error in this reasoning is that the New Testament simply does not teach it. The second error is that it denies all specific New Testament church teachings and says that any group has the right to believe and practice anything that is pleasing to them, even with reference to the way of salvation itself. Yet all such are accepted of God on an equal basis in this great monstrosity of a universal church. The aim of the Devil in this whole Babel of confusion is to obscure the churches that are true in doctrine and practice and to cause them to lose their identity in the Protestant world.

In Ephesians the subject of election and predestination comes to the student, so several lesson introductions will be devoted to this

subject in the hope of clarifying Bible teachings about the matter. There are several schools of thought among Baptist people ranging all the way from pure fatalism, to the idea of the free choice of salvation on the part of man.

Although it appears that many people adopt a middle of the road stand on the issue, most of them would side with fatalism if they were to take a specific stand on the issue. Regardless of this fact, an effort will be made to set forth in outline a philosophy that will enable anyone to see the way out of fatalism. The matter will be discussed in the next lesson introduction.

I. THE SALUTATION

Verses 1—2

Paul became an apostle by, or through, the will of God. This teaches us the Divine call to the ministry. This is a point which Paul sets forth a number of times in his writings. He did not choose the gospel ministry as men choose ordinary vocations in life. Neither should any man, for the ministry is of such a nature that it cannot be performed successfully without Divine aid. Therefore a man should be sure it is the will of God before he undertakes to preach.

This epistle is addressed to the saints, or holy ones, in Ephesus and the faithful ones in Christ Jesus. This limits the subjects of Paul's address to faithful church saints. In a case like this we as Baptists should be more conservative about ascribing all the promises to all the saved. We cannot say any of the promises of Ephesians are to saved people outside the church unless such are definitely specified in some way.

He invokes grace and upon the church. These are to come from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be observed that all the blessings of God come to us through Christ. God has no other way of access to mankind. Of course, the Holy Spirit also comes from God through Christ to bless man.

II. CHOSEN IN CHRIST

VERSES 3—6

We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. We are now blessed with all the spiritual blessings of the heavenly regions in Christ. The material blessings of the heavens chiefly await our resurrection from the dead.

God elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is believed the Greek text says he elected us in Christ before the world order was cast down in sin. This technical point makes no essential difference in the present instance. The position will be defended in the following introductions that the election and predestination mentioned in this lesson are not with reference to personal salvation,

but rather the church as such is elected and predestinated to glory, and our part in these things is dependent on our accepting Christ in salvation and then entering into the church relationship.

We are to be holy and blameless before Him in love. This does not mean sinless perfection in the flesh at all. It means that if we seek to know and do the will of God in religious matters, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. This love drives us on to seek more of the Word and will of God, and all we do in this respect is acceptable and well pleasing to God. Thus, we can be holy and blameless before Him.

God predestinated us to the setting to the position of sonship. This is what the so-called "adoption" is in the Greek text. Galatians 4:5 tells us this setting to sonship came when the Law of Moses was taken out of the way and the people of God began to operate in church capacity.

God predestinated us to this position because of His sovereign will, but He also did it to show forth the glory of His grace which He extended to us in His beloved Son. The exhibition of this grace is in the fact that the church is still standing just as steadfastly for the truth as it did at its beginning nineteen-hundred years ago.

III. THE WAY OF REDEMPTION

Verses 7—10

We have redemption or releasing from sin in the blood of Christ. There is no other way of escape from the bondage and curse of sin except the fact that Christ has fully paid for all these sins on the cross. Babies who die are saved unconditionally by the blood of Christ. Responsible people are saved by repentance and faith.

The riches of His grace are made to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding. This seems to mean that we come to understand His grace as we come to understand the way of salvation and the way of God's dealing with His people in the church. True Baptists are the only people who fully admit that salvation is entirely by grace and thus are the only people who receive all the joy to which the saved are entitled. Thus His grace abounds to them in the understanding of spiritual and Scriptural things.

The common version makes it to say, "God set the pleasure of His will in Himself." It seems more likely He set the pleasure of His will in Christ. It says He set the pleasure of His will in Him--- not Himself.

Redemption was set in Christ from the beginning. All things began to be headed up in Him when He established the church in the world. He is head over all things to the church. His full headship will be manifested at the end of the Millennium.

IV. THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS

Verses 11-14

We are made heirs through the counsel of the will of God. But our inheritance is conditioned on our hearing and believing the Word of truth. Now there it is stated in plain language that our inheritance is conditioned on our own choice and not on the counsel of the will of God.

The Greek text plainly says that, "Having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise." Again our sealing is conditioned on our believing, and not on the sovereign decree of God concerning us personally. Hardshellism is not true, and we shall prove it to those who are willing to see the truth.

The redemption of the possession probably refers to that releasing that will come in the resurrection from the dead when Christ will become the king of the earth and rule it in righteousness.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How did Paul become an apostle?
2. To whom is this letter addressed?
3. From whom did grace and peace come?
4. With what are we blessed?
5. When were we chosen in Christ?
6. How are we to be holy and blameless before Him?
7. To what did God predestinate us?
8. Why did God so predestinate us?
9. In what do we have redemption?
10. How are the riches of His grace made to abound to us?
11. In whom did God set the pleasure of His will?
12. When are all things headed up in Christ?
13. Through what counsel are we made heirs?
14. What is the condition of our being made heirs?
15. What is the condition of our being sealed?
16. What is the redemption of the possession?

Lesson 15

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Ephesians 1:15-23

INTRODUCTION

The blessings of Ephesians are church blessings as opposed to blessings that come to all the saved. The church is elected and predestinated to a glory greater than any other group which has ever been in the world. This book talks far more of present benefits from church membership than it does of the future heavenly blessings that are to come of it.

In our effort to show how and why the election and predestination mentioned in the last lesson are set in the church, applying to individuals only as they embrace church membership and claim its rights, privileges, and blessings of their own free will and choice, let us use this illustration: An airplane is scheduled, or predestinated, to fly from New York to San Francisco, the passenger being likened to the church member in our illustration does not schedule the flight, nor does he pilot the plane, but he purchases his ticket, gets on the plane, and remains aboard until the destination is reached. The church is the institution which is predestinated, and the individual chooses or rejects membership in it of his own free will.

In subsequent introductions we will discuss the sovereignty of God and man's freedom of will and how the two work together. One point in the eternal purpose of God is that He would make a creation and bring it into harmony with Himself through the works and virtues of His eternal Son. Colossians 1:19 says that it pleased God that all fullness should dwell in Christ. This has been the purpose of God from the ageless reaches of eternity, and surely no one will deny it.

When we admit this, the next truth which becomes apparent is that nothing was created in its final, glorified, eternal state. All things were made to partake of whatever virtue of the eternal Son they might need to seal them forever in a state of glorification. The proof that nothing was created in its final state is the fact that angels, men, and the material creation all fell from their original state into the curse of sin.

The fact that some angels once sinned and that the angels of God are now ultimately holy proves to us that the holy angels have received an eternal sealing virtue from the Son of God. They were not sealed by shed blood, for shed blood is for sinning souls, and "soul" as used here does not include angels. It is not known what virtue of Christ angels received to seal them in ultimate holiness to God, but the facts mentioned above that some angels fell and the holy angels now do the will of God in every detail prove that these

holy angels have received a virtue of Christ that has forever placed them in perfect harmony with God.

The next great fact which will be further discussed later is that we know that wherever there is ability to think there is ability to will, or to choose and to decide for oneself. The whole explanation of God's dealings with angels and men rests on this fundamental fact. God made them with the will faculty, and He has given them the opportunity to exercise this will faculty in choosing their eternal destiny regardless of what the developments may be. This choice has always been given in Christ and it always will be so.

I. THANKSGIVING FOR THE SAINTS

Verses 15-16

The thanksgiving of Paul is based on the fact that the church is sound and founded in the faith. At the close of Lesson 14 he pointed out some of the glorious blessings that come from participation in the church, which is elected and predestinated to glory. His joy is in the fact that the Ephesian assembly has set herself in line to enter into the glorious destiny of the church.

He had heard of the faith and the love of the brethren towards all the saints. The New Testament everywhere sets forth faith and love as the motivating and working principles of the church. These motives stand in contrast with the fear that moved Israel to serve God under the Law of Moses. Faith in the New Testament as the all sufficient rule of faith and practice and love towards God, the Word, and the brotherhood are the worthy motives that prompt Christians to labor in the cause and serve God.

Paul says that he does not cease to give thanks for this church, making mention of them in his prayers. There was abundance of religious error in the world in those days, exactly as there is today. Therefore, when Paul found a group operating in both the letter and the spirit of the New Testament, truly it was a thing to invoke his constant interest and prayers. Today, after we see some churches and some church members operating in a legalistic, formal way, then others who really understand the Scriptural way become a very refreshing experience. These refreshing churches remain in our memory and our prayers are for their continued success.

II. PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

Verses 17-19

Paul made his prayer to the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. Here Christ is conceived of as the founder of the

glorious church. The Father granted Him the privilege of placing the plan into operation because of His successful fight against the Devil as the Son of man in the world. The glory of God is shown forth in the church of Jesus Christ in a far greater way than it has ever been shown in any other working system in the world. This is why Paul addresses his prayer to God as he does.

He prays that the brethren may receive the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of God. Two situations in the Bible are so different from the wisdom of the world as to be utterly foreign to its wisdom. One of these is the plan of salvation by grace, apart from any works or merits on the part of men. The other is the working plan of the church. Under this plan men are able to do works that are acceptable to God despite the sins of the flesh that are ever present with us. In the flesh we cannot please God, but we can please Him when we believe and practice New Testament teachings.

Paul prays that the eyes of the hearts may be enlightened. This simply means that they might have spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding is no more nor less than an understanding of the working principles of the New Testament. The one who understands and accepts the Scriptures is spiritual; the one who misunderstands or perverts them cannot be spiritual. This is still true regardless how much of a display of fleshly emotionalism he makes.

Paul wished the brethren to understand what is the hope of the calling of Christ. He called Israel from bond service under the Law to become free men under the church covenant. He also wished them to understand what is the glory of His inheritance in the saints. A part of this inheritance is that these saints have faithfully proclaimed the Word for nineteen hundred years despite the efforts of the Devil to pervert their testimony. This has been accomplished by his power in those who believe.

III. CHRIST ENTHRONED

Verses 20-21

God worked out His mighty power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. It is no wonder that God would have the power to raise Christ from the dead, but the wonder lies in the fact that the virtuous works of Christ should make it a necessity of justice that the dead should be raised up.

Jesus was exalted to the utmost heights of the universe in His ascension to heaven. He had won a name and a place above every name and place. Today, the Son of Man, who is our brother, is exalted to the right hand of the Most High and Most Holy God.

IV. CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Verses 22-23

As a result of the perfect works of Christ in the world, God has placed all things under His feet and all judgment in His hands. He knows that Christ will act righteously in every detail.

He gave Him full authority to originate and administer the church. Though the church was formed before the end of the life of Jesus, it is the reflection of His perfect works in the world. And, it is a special reward to Jesus for having done these perfect works.

The church is not only the body of Christ, it is the fullness of Him also. This can only mean that the church is a fair and full representative of Christ in the world. This means the church has told the truth of Christ these many centuries despite the sins of the flesh and the hindrances of the world. Though we are imperfect in the flesh, we have preached the same gospel Jesus would preach if He were bodily in the world.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What working principle is behind the thanksgiving of Paul?
2. What did he hear of the Ephesians to cause thanksgiving?
3. Did he pray much for the brethren?
4. To whom did he pray?
5. What spirit did he pray the brethren should receive?
6. What are the eyes of their heart?
7. What did God work in Christ?
8. What relationship does the church have to Christ?

Lesson 16

SALVATION BY GRACE

Ephesians 2:1-10

INTRODUCTION

In our discussion of why the doctrine of fatalism denies the fundamental principles of the Bible, we noted that in the work of creation God made angels and men creatures of intelligence and that wherever there is ability to reason there is also ability to choose and decide for oneself.

Intelligent beings were created because the qualities of God are of such an infinitely noble nature that they need to be seen and appreciated. When intelligent beings give intelligent and willing praise to God it is the highest praise that is possible. This is why God gave the intelligent beings He created the will to choose and decide for themselves. By their willing acceptance of God as their Sovereign, He could receive the highest praise and allegiance possible in the realm of the universe.

In this principle, however, lies the possibility of sin's entrance in to the universe. For any time an intelligent being can choose to obey God, he can by the same token choose to disobey Him. Some angels, and latter mankind in Adam, chose to do just this. Instead of choosing God and receiving a sealing virtue of Christ to secure them in holiness to God perpetually, some of them chose to rebel against Him and attempt to set up a rival sovereignty with Lucifer as the chief. This will to rebel did not originate in God, nor did He place a rebellious spirit in the angels whom He created, but He did give them the ability and the privilege of choosing and deciding for themselves. Sin originated in their exercising of the faculty which God had given them--the ability to choose and decide for themselves. Thus God made it possible for angels to sin because it is the only way to gain the highest praise and glory for Himself.

God could never be adequately honored without His being willingly glorified by intelligent beings. This seems to be the only explanation for the origin of sin without making it eternal in existence with God or making Him the creator of it. Either of these possibilities casts strong reflections on God Himself. Therefore, it seems we must accept the explanation just offered.

Man later came on the scene with the same ability to choose and decide for himself, and God has always provided him the opportunity to choose. Those who claim God unconditionally elects some to salvation discredit Him in that they say in effect that He does not allow His intelligent creatures to exercise the faculty of will He gave them in creation.

The picture of Eden is that God placed Adam in a good environment. He then instructed him as to what was good for him and what was bad. But in order to allow man to choose for himself,

God did not force man to accept His counsels. On the contrary, God allowed the Devil to come into the Garden in the person of the serpent and make his plea to Adam. When this was done, it was then left up to man to make his choice for himself. Any denial of this working principle will thrust us into a philosophy of fatalism so ultimate that there is no escape from it.

Adam was so constituted as the federal head of the human race that his choice not only affected himself, but also all of his descendants to remote generations. This is probably why God did not allow Adam to remain without help or salvation in the condition which he sold himself. If fatalism were true, God would have abandoned Adam and his race in sin. But the unborn children had not chosen eternal destruction for themselves, therefore God goes about making a way of deliverance for them. Always, Christ has been on the scene to supply whatever virtue or work the arising situation demands. From eternity, Christ, the eternal Son, has stood by to meet all arising situations with whatever virtue they need to set them in a position of holiness before God. These things will be discussed further in our next lesson.

I. CHILDREN OR WRATH

Verses 1-3

Chapter one ends with the statement that the church is the body and fullness of Christ--a position that is glorious beyond expression! The second chapter begins with a dismal statement that we by nature are dead in trespasses and sins. A trespass is a falling aside from the right or straight path. Sin as used here is missing the mark. It is a sad picture of failing miserably to measure up to the standards which a holy God demands. In the fall, man lost the ability to meet the demands of God for righteousness. To attempt to please God by his own efforts is a completely vain thing.

Paul says that in our unsaved state we walked in our trespasses and sins. These trespasses and sins are also according to the course of the present age. That is, it is only natural that we should sin when we walk according to the course of the age, for the age itself is under the curse and dominion of sin.

The Devil is called in the Greek text "the chief one of the authority of the air." This makes his dominion to extend to all the environment of the earth wherein man must live. Therefore, there is no place where man may go and escape this power and influence. We are told further that this spirit of unpersuasion, or disobedience, now works in those who are unsaved.

The result is that we are all by nature the children of wrath. This wrath may be viewed from two different angles, both of which promise terrible things to these children. In the first place, sinners

are the children of the wrath of the Devil. His ultimate desire for them is eternal torment in Hell. Just as God wills all good for His children, the Devil wills all evil for his. In the second place, sinners are the children of the wrath of God. This wrath comes because God has provided a way of escape for man and he has willfully rejected the free salvation offered in Christ.

Once again, we should note that we are by nature unfit for the kingdom of God. It is not necessary to wait until we have committed some great sin to come under His condemnation. He that believeth not is condemned already. There are none good enough to go to heaven without the new birth.

II. THE MERCY OF GOD

Verses 4—5

We are told that God is rich in mercy. Some would have us to believe the mercy of God is so rich that it will save all men despite their rejection of salvation in Christ. God is rich in mercy, but He is equally rich in justice, and His justice demands that He deal with men on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of Christ. So, justice and mercy must modify one another in the dealing of God. However, His mercy is so rich that He gave His only begotten Son as the sacrifice for our sins that we might be saved.

The mercy of God is extended richly to us because of the great love wherewith He has loved us. About the only explanations we may offer for the great love of God for man is that he is the highest and noblest of the creation of God. Also, he was created in the image and likeness of God Himself. John 3:16 tells us that God loved us to the extent He gave His own Son to save us. Mercy could scarcely be expressed in more forceful terms than this.

God loved us while we were yet dead in trespasses and sins. It is easy to see how God would love a righteous man, but to see how He would love an utterly lost and ruined sinner is almost beyond our power of imagination.

The Greek text says, rather, that "God has raised us up together with Christ." We are raised from spiritual death through Christ in the new birth, but we are raised with Him to walk in newness of life when we enter the church relationship; see Romans 6:4.

III. RAISED UP WITH CHRIST

Verses 6—9

We are saved by grace. This is a hard word to define accurately. From the standpoint of language, it is closely akin to joy. Thus, grace is God joyfully doing things for us which we in no way deserve. He joyfully does these things because of what Christ has done on our behalf.

God has raised us up and has made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. The sitting together in heavenly places refers to the joyous experiences of saved people who are obedient to the Word of God.

God will show in the coming ages the super abundant riches of His grace in the profitable work He has done upon us in Christ Jesus. Though we are poor in understanding now, we shall understand the mysteries of the grace of God in the ages that come after our glorification.

Once again, in verse eight we are told that we are saved by grace and through faith. The grace of God is the ultimate source of our salvation, and our faith is the means of our attaining it.

CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS

Verses 9—10

Salvation is not by works. If it were, we would have whereof to boast, but it comes instead as a free gift from God in Christ.

We are not of our own works or making. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

We are told the place of good works so plainly in this lesson that no one need err who is willing to accept the Scripture teachings. We are created in the new birth unto good works. That is, the new birth puts us into the condition in which we may do good works. Good works are impossible without their being preceded by the new birth. Good works come as the results of salvation, and not in order to achieve it. God has previously ordained that we shall walk in good works as His children. Therefore, we should not devote our lives to working for the Devil when we are children of God.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. In what were we dead?
2. How did we once walk?
3. Who is the prince of the power of the air?
4. What are we by nature?
5. In what is God rich?
6. Why is He rich in mercy?
7. When did He love us?
8. With whom are we raised up?
9. What is grace?
10. What does it mean to sit together in heavenly places?
12. On what basis does salvation come?
13. Whose workmanship are we?
14. What is the place of good works in Christianity?

Lesson 17

ONE IN CHRIST

Ephesians 2:11-22

INTRODUCTION

In our discussion of the principles which show that fatalism is unbiblical when made to apply to personal salvation, we have shown that one item in the eternal purpose of God is to bring a creation into full and eternal harmony with Himself through the works and virtues of His eternal Son. Christ has been on the scene from the beginning of the creation to meet every arising situation with whatever it needs to bring it into full and eternal harmony with God. These principles need some illustration so that they might not only be accepted in abstract form, but also when applied to actual situations.

The Scriptures tell us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It seems we are not told just when the angels were created. Some think the hosts mentioned at Genesis 2:1 refers to the angels. This may or not be true. Either way we look at it, we still do not know whether the angels were created before or after the creation of the physical heavens and the earth. Regardless of when angels were created, evidently they were created before man was, and their creation is intimately related to the creation of the heavens and the earth.

There is much evidence that three orders of angels were created, and that the three orders were given dominion under God over the three realms of the created universe. These realms are the material, the intellectual, and the spiritual. The chief angels in these three realms of authority respectively were Lucifer, Gabriel, and Michael. If one will study these angels as they are presented in the Bible, he will find them without exception associated with the three realms mentioned above. If we accept these things as Bible facts, we have admitted that angels once ruled the earth with a rulership similar to that which was later given to Adam at his creation. This is exactly what the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah and the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel seem to teach.

If an order of angels once ruled the earth, why was this rulership taken from them and given to man? The answer is that they did not remain true to the trust that was placed in them. They rebelled against God and attempted to set up for themselves a sovereignty that would rival God Himself. They were cast out of Heaven into the earth, and they thoroughly wrecked the original creation of the earth over which they had been given rulership. God denied their right to rule the earth any longer because of their wreckage of the earth in their fall. They still claimed the right to do as they pleased with the earth. Instead of arbitrarily denying their claim, God instead set the destiny of the earth in the hands of man, whom He made of dust as a kinsman to the earth. This situation explains the conflict of the

ages between God and the Devil.

This raises the question of how and why angels, who were created by a Holy God could sin in the first place. The answer to this has been explained thusly: Angels were created as intelligent beings, and all intelligent beings have a will. It was the purpose of God that these angels, who were created without any sin, should willingly accept whatever virtue of Christ they needed to seal them forever in holiness to God. Some of them accepted this virtue of the eternal Son of God and they are the eternally holy angels today. Others rejected the virtue of the eternal Son of God and they are the Devil and his angels, who have infested the created universe, not from eternity, but from the time of the rebellion and fall of angels. Remember that God made them in a way that it would be possible for them to reject Him in order to gain to Himself willing glory from intelligent beings.

At this point in the unfolding of things, the rulership of the earth is in controversy between God and the fallen angels. This fact lays the foundation for our philosophy of the creation of man and his relationship to the earth.

I. CONDITION OF THE GENTILES

Verses 11—12

It is pointed out to the Ephesian brethren that they were Gentiles. "Gentile" is somewhat of a deceptive term. In the Greek text it is simply "the nations." The same word often designates Israel as a nation. The word came to be used to distinguish between Israel, who were the chosen people of God, and the other nations, who were outside of the covenants of God. Thus, this name is partly misleading, but it also expresses a situation which actually existed.

The Gentiles were called the "Uncircumcision" by the Jews as a term of scorn and reproach. Circumcision was given to Israel as the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. It was incorporated in the Law of Moses, where it signified the purifying of the flesh of Israel to make them worthy to inhabit the good land flowing with milk and honey. The Jews despised the uncircumcised nations because they did not come under the covenants of God with Israel.

A peculiar statement is found in verse twelve in that the Gentiles were said to be without Christ, evidently referring to the time before Christ came into the world. This would seem to imply that the Jews knew Christ in the sense of being personally saved, but they did not know Him in the sense of His being the Head of the church. The second thought suggests that the then present condition of the Ephesians is contrasted with the time when they did not know Christ. They now know Him in a sense in which they had not known Him a generation or so before.

The Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. The covenants and the

promises were given to a people who were already the people of God, therefore they do not pertain to personal salvation. The Gentiles were without hope in the sense explained in the first chapter of Romans, which is, that as nations they were abandoned of God to idolatry. They were no more hopeless in the matter of attaining personal salvation than the Jews were. Job was in the same condition as these Gentiles so far as the covenants with Israel were concerned.

II. THE TWO UNITED IN CHRIST

Verses 13—16

The Gentiles were made near in Christ in the sense that Christ came and established the church covenant. Under this covenant the Gentiles could come into the special favor of God on exactly the same terms as the Jews, and they could stand on exactly the same grounds with the Jews in the church. It is of this change that Paul speaks at Acts 17 :31, when he says, "the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

Jew and Gentile were made one in the church in that each enters on the same terms, and they stand on a footing of equality in the church with the Jew having no precedence because of the fact he is a Jew.

We are told that the enmity between Jew and Gentile was the law of commandments, which of course was given to the Jews. It seems that their having the Law gave the Jews a sense of superiority over the other nations, thus causing enmity between them.

The one body in which the two are united is not the body of the saved, but it is the church. To say it is the saved would be to say that none of the Gentiles were saved until Christ came into the world.

III. ACCESS TO GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT

Verses 17—18

Jesus came and preached peace to the Jews, who were near. The only essential difference between the two was that the one group did not have the oracles of God and the other group did have them.

All have access to God through the Holy Spirit. There never was a time when all did not have access to God through the Spirit for personal salvation. Therefore, the new relationship here refers to our going through the Spirit in the office the Spirit assumed when it came upon the church on Pentecost.

IV. FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS

Verses 19—22

The Gentiles are now fellow citizens with the saints, and they are of the household of God. The citizenship, or fellowship, is in the church and the household of God is the church. If anyone denies it, he will be forced into the position that the Gentiles could not be saved before the coming of Christ into the world.

It is not evident whether the apostles and prophets were a foundation or whether they had a foundation. Christ, the Author and Finisher of faith, is the foundation of the church (Matthew 16:18), and those who receive the New Testament faith, or system of teaching, are the ones who are built upon this foundation.

The holy temple which is built in the Lord is the church. The Ephesian brethren are built into this temple. Both the local church and the church as an institution is such a temple. The church is the dwelling place of God in the world through the Holy Spirit. It is strange that Baptists will argue that this is a description of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in all the saved when we have the demonstration of Pentecost and many other like situations to teach us differently.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Who are the Gentiles?
2. Why were they called the uncircumcision?
3. In what sense were they without Christ?
4. How were they without hope?
5. How were the Gentiles made near?
6. In what sense were the two made one?
7. What was the source of the enmity?
8. What is the body in which the two are united?
9. To whom was peace preached?
10. What is the household of God?
11. What is the foundation of the apostles and the prophets?

Lesson 18

THE CHURCH, A HIDDEN MYSTERY

Ephesians 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION

As we continue our effort to show why there is no place in the Bible philosophy for any implication of fatalism concerning the personal destiny of men, let us note that Ephesians 3:11 speaks of the eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. From the Greek text there can be no essential difference between the purpose and the predestination of God. The one is the predetermination of a thing in the mind of God; the other is the prefixing of boundaries in the mind of God. So it is readily seen that the net results are the same in both instances. The predestination in verse 11 is that the manifold wisdom of God is to be exhibited to the intelligences of the universe in and through the operation of the church. It is the church which is predestinated and not the individuals who compose the church. When individuals come into the church and partake of what it has to offer, they partake of its predestination. Otherwise, saved people do not partake of the predestination which God has previously determined for the church. It is exactly the same principle as that of the Great Commission being given to the church as an institution. Jesus guarantees that the church will continue to preach the gospel to the end of the age, but He does not guarantee that any individual will be faithful in carrying out the commission, nor does He force any individual to carry it out. If some individuals and churches refuse, He simply seeks and finds others who will willingly do His work.

The introduction of Lesson 17 showed that angels had been unfaithful as stewards of the earth. God had denied their right to claim and perpetually banishing them from the earth, He made a kinsman redeemer for the earth in mankind. Man was kin to both God and the Devil in that he was an intelligent spirit capacitated being. Thus both God and the Devil could communicate with him. He was also akin to the earth in that his body was of the same substance as the earth. God gave him the kingship of the earth. Thus, Adam was in a position to settle the destiny of the earth right along with his own destiny in the choice he should make between God and Devil. This is exactly why God made him akin both to God and lifeless earth, so that the earth might have a brother spokesman to decide its fate. In Adam the material creation was to speak its decision between God and the Devil as its ultimate sovereign. There has never been a time since the creation of Adam that the fate of the earth was not bound up in and with the fate of mankind. The two rise or fall together. This is why the earth was cursed when Adam had brought the curse upon himself.

Before the fall of man the implications are that Adam had access to the tree of life. In this tree of life was the virtue of Christ which Adam then needed to seal him eternally in holiness to God. If Adam had eaten of this tree it is virtually certain he would have come into a condition like that of the saved in the resurrection. This is as far as we can safely speculate on this matter. We cannot tell whether he would have gotten begotten children before his ultimate glorification, nor can we tell whether his choice would have predestinated his children to the same choice.

The vital point is that God offered Adam glorification in the fruit of the tree of life. He rejected this offer, and being the lord of the earth he cast himself and the earth down under the bondage of sin. Regardless of whether Christ was predestinated as the slain Lamb or not, He was not presented to man as the slain Lamb until man became a sinning soul.

Upon man's finding himself in a hopeless condition, God presented the slain Lamb to him in the animals which were slain to provide coverings for Adam and Eve. God so respects the ability of man to choose his destiny that He rushed upon the scene to provide him the opportunity of choice again when man had forfeited his own privilege of choice in choosing the Devil for his god. Giving Adam a second choice after he had sold out to the Devil hinges on the fact that he did not understand about good and evil when he made the first choice.

The slain Lamb was also given for the sake of the unborn generations whom Adam had sold out to the Devil. Without this slain Lamb they would have been born, probably, with the ability to choose, but they would have had no opportunity to choose between salvation and damnation. We shall continue this essay in the next lesson.

I. A STEWARD OF THE MYSTERY

Verses 1—3

In this lesson, Paul introduces himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. It is said that Ephesians was the first of the prison epistles written by him. The fact of his literally being in prison furnishes the occasion for his expression of his relationship to Christ. That is, he had no choice but to be fully obedient to Christ if he would be acceptable with Him. We are not to understand that he was forced to do the will of Christ.

He was a prisoner of Christ on behalf of the Gentiles. He has been called as an apostle to preach the gospel to those nations who were not Jews and to further the cause of the church among them.

The word, "dispensation" used here actually means the commitment of the management of a household to Paul. He was given a special charge to preach the gospel to the non-Jewish nations and to bring them into the church.

Paul tells us the mystery of our lesson was made known to him by

revelation. When we remember that he was the most zealous of the haughty Pharisees, we can readily see that a revelation from God would be the only thing that would induce him to devote his life to bringing the Gentiles into the kingdom of God.

II. THE MYSTERY OF THE GENTILE INHERITANCE

Verses 4—6

Paul tells the Ephesians that they are able to understand the mystery by reading what he wrote to them about it. People will instructions pertaining to their business affairs until they understand them, though these instructions may be very complicated; yet, if they cannot understand what the Bible says from a hasty scanning of its pages, they will cast it aside in vexation and content themselves with a slipshod erroneous idea of its teachings.

This mystery was not made known to other generations. It was not known to any of the Old Testament saints. Yet, some Baptists will tell us the mystery is salvation in Christ, or salvation to the Gentiles. Salvation was known to thousands of people in Old Testament times, including many whom we call Gentiles. This mystery can be nothing but the church, which came as a new thing with the coming of Christ into the world.

This mystery is now made known to the apostles and prophets. These are the preachers in the apostolic age and those to whom the New Testament Scriptures were revealed. They are not the Old Testament prophets, for they did not understand the mystery of the church.

The Gentiles are to be fellow-heirs and of the same body with the Jews. To say this is the body of the saved would be to say the Gentile nations were shut out from salvation throughout the time of God's dealings that millions of them lived and died without an opportunity to be saved. This body is the church from the institutional standpoint.

III. A MINISTER TO THE GENTILES

Verses 7—9

Paul became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, which was given to him. He did not choose himself to become a minister, nor did he invent the gospel he was to preach. Both were given him by the grace of God. We need far more of this view of the gospel ministry today and we would have less of the proclaiming of the gospels of men's invention.

A special grace was given to Paul in that he offered the Gentiles an equal place in the kingdom of God with the Jews. The Gentiles had not had such an offer previously.

Until the apostolic age, the mystery of our lesson had been hidden

away in God. The angels and the Old Testament prophets did not understand it (I Peter 1:10—12). Therefore, we are on uncertain grounds when we presume to point out clear prophecies of the church in the Old Testament Scriptures.

IV. THE MYSTERY NOW REVEALED

Verses 10—12

The Greek says the manifold wisdom of God is now made known to the chieftainships and authorities in the heavenly places in the church. This means the church was not understood by the angels until its revelation in the world.

Let us understand that the new thing so abundantly discussed in the New Testament is the church. No new plan of salvation way established with the coming of Jesus, but a new way of God's dealing with His special people was established in the church.

We cannot safely say the church was in the eternal purpose of God, but we can safely say eternal glory to God through Christ was to be worked out in some such body as the church. An effort was made to get glory to God in Israel before the church came into existence. This observation is based on the fact that when one plan of God's dealings with man has failed, He discards it and institutes another. This principle runs clear back to Adam before the fall. Six covenants with man were given and discarded before the church covenant was given.

We have boldness and access to God because we do not stand on a covenant of works, but we have a covenant of doing what Christ has commanded in matters of religion because we believe Him. We can measure up to this standard.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. In what sense was Paul a prisoner?
2. For whom was he a prisoner of Christ?
3. What is the dispensation of the grace of God?
4. How was the mystery made known to Paul?
5. Was this mystery made known to Old Testament saints?
6. On what principle did Paul become a minister?
7. What grace was given to him?
8. In whom is the mystery now revealed?
9. Through what body is the mystery revealed?
10. Is the church according to the eternal purpose of God?
11. How does the Christian have boldness and access to God?

Lesson 19

ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY

Ephesians 3:13-21

INTRODUCTION

As we continue our discussion of the subject of fatalism versus the freedom-of-choice of mankind, we see there are three principles to be kept in mind. First, there is the ultimate eternal sovereignty of God. The Bible teaches this principle throughout. The rebellious angel attempted to invade this realm of the absolute sovereignty of God, but without success; see the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah.

Second, there is the eternal purpose of God to make a creation and bring it into eternal glory and harmony with Himself through the works and virtues of His eternal Son. There never has been a principality or order of things created in ultimate holiness. All things and intelligences have been meant to receive a sealing virtue from Christ to bring them into eternal holiness. There never will be an order of things brought into eternal holiness apart from Christ. This embraces angels, men, and all orders of the created universe.

Third, man, who is created in the image and likeness of God, is a sovereign being under God. He has the ability to think and choose. The God who created him such a sovereign being has always furnished him the opportunity to choose. This choice has always been in Christ and it always will be so. But man has been given the privilege of choice nevertheless.

A fourth principle which is related to the above three and explains many things, is that man was made the lord of the earth in his creation, and this lordship is unconditional and unchanging. It is meant that the lordship of the earth has never been taken out of the hands of man, though Adam sold out himself and the earth to the Devil. Adam did not mean to surrender his own sub-rulership of the earth when he made himself subject to the Devil. He meant to make the Devil his ultimate sovereign instead of God. Adam may not have been conscious of this fact, but it is what it would have ultimately amounted to if the Devil had succeeded in defeating Christ in the battle for final supremacy.

When Adam, of his own free will, forfeited his lordship, God immediately presented His own eternal Son as the Son of Man, and He revealed that in the Seed of the woman the head of the serpent should be bruised. This Seed of the woman is Christ (Genesis 3:15). The bruising of the serpent's head embraces two things. First, the Seed of the woman will ultimately destroy anything in the way of a legitimate claim that the Devil originally had to the rulership of the earth, with reference to that original rulership of it that was given to him. Second, the Son of Man will regain to God and man all that Adam sold out to the Devil in the transgression of mankind.

It has been pointed out that God from eternity has had ultimate and supreme power, but God never wields this power apart from the principle of perfect fairness and justice to all concerned. The idea that God moves at whim or pleasure, overriding the claims of angels and man, is an insult to the supremely Holy God. The weary conflict of the ages and the ultimate humiliation of the Son of God have taken place, not as a fancy of the Supreme God, but because these things became necessities of the arising situations.

Let us note briefly in concluding this introduction that Adam was made a kinsman redeemer under Christ and under God in his creation. When man utterly failed in the work that was assigned him, instead of God's wresting his office and sovereignty from him, He placed His own Son in the office of the kinsman redeemer. Thus we see the eternal Son of God divesting Himself of His heavenly glory, fully identifying Himself with mankind, taking on Himself not only the office of mankind but also all the faults and failures of man, and bearing the infinite penalty of them on the cross and in the realm of death. One purpose of Christ in all this is to vindicate God in His placing the lordship of the earth in the hands of mankind. Another is to give man that eternal lordship which God decreed that man should have.

I. STRIVING FOR INWARD MIGHT

Verses 13—16

Lesson 18 discussed a mystery that was revealed to Paul. This mystery was that the Gentiles were to be made members of the same body with Jews. This is not the body of the saved, but it is the church. The Gentiles had always had the opportunity to be saved, but they were excluded from the body of the special people of God, which was the nation Israel. The lesson this time goes on to discuss the working principles of the church.

Paul had affection for the brethren that they might come into a fuller knowledge of God's dealings with them in the church relationship. This was not an agonizing over lost souls, but it was a striving for a better understanding of Christian working principles on the part of those who were already saved—and who were already church members so far as this is concerned.

His affliction, or his striving, on their behalf would result in greater glory to them in their being able to serve God more efficiently in truth. Let us remember that certain teachers were attempting to bring the Galatian brethren back under the Law of Moses as a rule of faith and practice. Paul desired that the Ephesians should escape such a bondage to law and that they should walk freely under the grace reign.

As Paul contemplated the glory of the operation of the church, he

bowed his knees to God the Father, of whom every family in Heaven and earth is named. These families refer to the various systems of God's dealings with His creatures. They include the angels, but the family under present consideration is the church.

The brethren would be made strong in the inner man through the working of the Holy Spirit. This strength would come from believing and doing the things taught in the New Testament. The Law of Moses sought to make men strong in the flesh.

II. KNOWING THE MEASURE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Verses 17—19

Christ would dwell in their hearts through the faith, according to the statement of the Greek text. This is not Christ dwelling in all the saved through the new birth; it is Christ dwelling in them through the New Testament system of faith and practice which they had embraced when they united themselves with the church.

They were to be rooted and founded in love. This is not a "mushy" love for everything that professes itself to be religious. It is a genuine love for Christ that comes from an understanding of His works and virtues. It is also a love for His words of instruction and for the brethren who stand with us for the preservation of His truth.

It was the desire of Paul that they might be given the strength, or might, to apprehend the full bounds of the love of Christ. This might was to come through knowledge, and the knowledge was to come through study of the principles taught by Paul and the other apostles.

The word "saint" means holy one. He is made a saint by sanctification. This is a dedication of the life to the service of Christ. This dedication is made in entering into church membership. It is not believed anything else can be proven from the New Testament. Of course, the Old Testament saints were those who were dedicated to the service of God under the Law of Moses.

When the saints came to know the abundant love of Christ, they would be filled with all the fullness of God. Of course, this is a relative matter, and we will not fully understand this love until the resurrection. There is plenty of room for us to learn, though, and our learning comes chiefly from the New Testament.

III. GLORY IN THE CHURCH

Verses 20—21

God has more power toward us than we think or ask. This power works for us in the church. God gave the church to Christ as the result of His completed works of redemption. Then Christ gave the New Testament as a perfect working rule to the church, and He

gave the Holy Spirit as an infallible guide to this same church. He also gave the promise that the church would continue until the end of the age. This is as absolute a predestination of the church as could possibly be. In a manner of speaking, an individual predestinates himself to the glory of the church when he goes along fully with it.

God, who works in mighty power, is to get glory in the church and in Christ. There is little distinction to be made for men because the church is originated, instructed, and empowered by Christ. The glory of the church is only in and through Christ. Of ourselves we could do no better than Israel did under the Law, which was to make a complete failure. Can we not see that the church, still preaching the truth of the gospel after nineteen-hundred years of assault by the Devil, is the most glorious work God has ever accomplished through mankind?

The Greek text says of the duration of the glory of God in the church the following: Unto all the generations of the age of the ages." This is the most forceful way this language is able to express eternity. It seems the triumph of Jesus over the Devil in the church is a testimonial that shall remain in the endless reaches of the Heaven ages. When Christ works out a plan whereby men, who are liars by nature, will tell the truth of the gospel one generation after another for nearly two-thousand years, it will be something to make angels marvel for a long time in the Heaven ages.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is the connection with this lesson and Lesson 18?
2. Why did Paul have affliction for the brethren?
3. What would his affliction gain for them?
4. To whom did Paul bow his knees, and why?
5. How would the brethren be made strong?
6. How would Christ dwell in them?
7. Who are the saints?
8. What would be the result of knowing the love of God?
9. How much power does God have toward us?
10. How does this power work toward us?
11. In what does the mighty God get glory?
12. How long is this glory to continue?
13. Why was it necessary for Christ to become the seed of the woman?

Lesson 20

UNITY IN THE FAITH

Ephesians 4:1-16

INTRODUCTION

In the Bible, God is called by a number of different names and descriptive titles. These are used to indicate the different aspects of the character and qualities of God and the nature of His works. For instance, the Most High God refers to that character of the ultimate holiness of God as He dwells apart from and infinitely above the universe. In sharp contrast with this picture is God as the Son of Man in Christ, who came into the world and tasted the most sordid death possible for the sins of the world. It is all the same God, but He is manifested in different offices in His manifold activities.

To get the matters of election, predestination, etc. fixed correctly in our minds, we must observe God from two viewpoints. One of these has to do with the eternal God who changes not. He views the future even as the past. The trouble at this point is that the human mind is not capable of coping with such situations without arriving at absurd and unscriptural conclusions. But let us now note the other extreme in the case.

This extreme presentation of God is in Christ as He came into the world as the Son of Man. Though He had been promised since the fall of man, He did not come until at least four-thousand years later. Furthermore, He came and offered Himself to the Jewish nation as their Messiah. Instead of accepting Him as such, because they willed to do so, they crucified Him. It makes no difference what God had foreseen and planned concerning Jesus, these Jews rejected and crucified Him as an act of their own free will. They did these things because they chose to do so and not because God had predestinated them to do so.

Man is limited by the bounds of time and space. He can no more think in the terms of an infinite God than he can fly to a distant galaxy or see tomorrow in the same light in which he sees yesterday. It is not certain how closely man was bound by these limitations before his fall into sin, but he is almost completely so bound now.

It appears that the connection of unfallen man with God was through the channel of Spirit. This connection with God was absolutely broken in the fall leaving man and the holy God infinitely separated from each other. This grim fact is the foundational principle for the redemptive work of Christ.

We are told that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. For present purposes, let us take note of the fact that in Christ, God was reduced to such terms that man could comprehend Him, even in the fallen state of man. John tells us that the Word

became flesh and that in this fleshly form men beheld His glory—a glory which man is utterly incapable of comprehending apart from the revelation of Christ in human form. In his first epistle, John again mentions the fact that men have seen and examined the Word of Life in a physical way.

To be comprehended by mankind, God reduced Himself to mankind in Christ as the Son of Man. He did this because it was and is the only way that man can understand God. As the Son of Man, Christ had a day of birth, a day to be crucified, a day to arise from the dead, and a day to ascend back to Heaven. The point is that the movements of Christ in the world were governed largely by the limitations and bounds that are common to mankind. The turning of many events hinges on the actual accomplishment of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was not to come upon the church until Jesus ascended back into Heaven. The church itself hinges on the fact of the actual, accomplished works of Jesus in redemption.

Thus we see that God responds or reacts to man as man responds or reacts to God. This means that when and if a man trusts Christ for salvation he is saved. Until he does have a will to come to God, he never will be saved; and, the foreknowledge, election, and predestination of God have nothing to do with it in a personal way so far as man is concerned. For an essay on this, see the introduction in Lesson 21.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF UNITY

Verses 1—6

The Ephesians had been called first to salvation, but the calling which is discussed freely in this book is the call into the church relationship and walk.

We are to walk in humility and meekness, with forbearance toward our brethren in love. If for no other reason, we should endure the weaknesses of our brethren because more than likely our own faults are as bad as theirs, or worse.

Verse three seems to say that the unity of the Spirit will bind us together in a mutual bond of peace. If our interests are centered on the church rather than on ourselves, we contribute immensely to the cause of peace among the brotherhood.

The seven unities are:

1. One body, which is the church.
2. One Spirit, which is the Spirit which came on the church on Pentecost.
3. One hope of our calling, which is glorification in Christ.
4. One Lord, who is Christ, as He is revealed in the New Testament.
6. One baptism, which is water baptism, which procures the benefits of Holy Spirit baptism.
7. One God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE BASIS OF THE GIFT OF GRACE

Verses 7—10

Grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. The gift of Christ is measured by the fact that He purchased the church with His own blood. His gift was unlimited, therefore the gift of grace to the church is without bounds.

Christ led captivity captive when He ascended in triumph to Heaven after His works on earth were finished. He took the spirits of the saved dead into Heaven; see Revelation 6:9 and Matthew 27:52—53.

Jesus ascended up on high after He had descended into the lower parts of the earth. The Bible throughout represents the lower parts of the earth as being the place where the Devil held the spirits of the dead as prisoners until Jesus went there and took the keys of death from him; see Revelation 1:8.

At His return to Heaven, Christ was exalted above all principalities and powers of the universe. He is now enthroned beside the Most High God as the result of His perfect and victorious works in the world.

III. THE PURPOSE OF GIFTS

Verses 11—13

Five gifts of grace are enumerated. These are gifts of men of Divine calling to fulfill offices to which they are called:

1. The apostles are the ones so named in the New Testament, such as John and Paul.
2. The prophets gave the New Testament Scriptures.
3. The evangelists are those who major on preaching the gospel.
4. The pastors are literally the shepherds of the flock, which is the church.
5. The teachers are those whose chief office is to interpret the Scriptures.

The business of these men is to set the church straight on teachings and practices, and for the general upbuilding of the body of Christ, which is the church.

The reference to the "perfect man" is a figure used to describe a church working in full harmony and unity. Such a church is said to have attained the stature of Christ. This does not mean the members are sinlessly perfect. But, when a church is preaching the pure gospel of Christ it is doing exactly what He would be doing if He were in the world. It is in this sense that it attains to His stature.

IV. THE RESULT TO BE OBTAINED

Verses 14—16

The perfect man, which refers to a church body with its members standing in the unity of the faith, will escape the shaking winds of false doctrine and all the deceptions of men who seek to lead people astray in religious matters.

We are promised that if we act truly in love we shall increase in all things to Christ. He is said positively to be the Head. We are told elsewhere in the New Testament that He is Head of the body which is the church. With such testimony everywhere before us when we read the Scriptures, it is hard to see why many are so eager to ascribe the large majority of New Testament church promises to all the saved.

Verse sixteen is a fitting description of the church and of nothing else in the world. The saved outside the true church do not make increase of the body of Christ; they rather hinder its growth. Neither do they edify themselves nor anyone else in love. Though they are saved, they preach and practice a gospel of slavish fear right along with the unsaved apostates with whom they are identified in religious walk. We need to awaken to the fact that the New Testament is a church book and that nearly all its promises are to those who serve Christ in the church relationship.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. To what were the Ephesians called?
2. What should be our attitude toward our brethren?
3. What will the unity of the Spirit accomplish?
4. What are the seven unities?
5. How abundant is the gift of grace?
6. What is "the lower parts of the earth?"
7. How highly was Christ exalted?
8. What are the five gifts of grace?
9. To what is the perfect man a reference?
10. What will the perfect man escape?
11. Of what is Christ the Head?
12. How did God give His revelation to mankind?

Lesson 21

THE CHRISTIAN WALK

Ephesians 4:17-32

INTRODUCTION

In the last introduction, we were introduced to the idea that the attitude and actions of God toward man are largely contingent or dependent on the attitude of man toward God. Let us now see Scripture illustrations of this thought.

For the first illustration, let us go to Genesis 6:6 where we read of God repenting when He saw the wickedness of mankind on the earth in the days of Noah. Some say God did not really repent, but that the terminology used is for the accommodation of finite human thinking. To say this is one thing; to prove it is a different matter. There is no indication of figurative language in the situation. Others say the word "repent" does not really mean repent. We are very adept at explaining away the Scriptures when they do not say what things to our own satisfaction. The fact of the matter is that the word translated repent here does mean repent, as anyone will see who traces its usage through the Old Testament. In its peculiar grammatical usage in this instance, the words say that God repented, or he grieved Himself, because He had created man. This repenting took place when man had become exceedingly wicked on the earth, and it took place because of this same wickedness. This is God reacting toward man as man reacted toward God.

Next, we examine chapter thirty-eight of Isaiah, which states that the Lord commanded King Hezekiah to set his house in order, for he must die and not live longer. The king turned his face to the wall and wept and prayed to God for mercy and an extension of life. After this prayer—and because of the prayer, the Lord sent King Hezekiah an exactly opposite message: that he should yet live for fifteen years. Again, some may say this is only language of accommodation and that the Lord did not intend for the king to die in the first place. If this is the way we are to deal with Scriptures, just who is to say what is true in the Bible and what is not reliable? God intended for King Hezekiah to die until the king prayed for an extension of life. God deals with man in harmony with the way man reacts to God, and this situation is clear proof of it.

Next, we note John 3:16, which says that whosoever will believe shall have eternal life. While the Hardshells hasten to say that the non-elect will not wish to be saved because God does not convict them of sin and righteousness, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will convict the world. It is then left up to us to choose between Jesus and these authorities as to whom we believe on this subject. The best that a fatalist can do with this verse is to say God deals underhandedly with mankind in not making it clear that some are not elected. Therefore they cannot do what the verse commands and claim the blessings it promises. Such a thing is too ridiculous for

sensible people to entertain seriously. The verse meant that if and when any sinner believes Jesus from the heart he will then and there be saved.

As man is capable of grasping things, the only way the eternal purposes of God affect his salvation is that God has provided the way in Christ for whosoever will accept. Election deals predominantly with plans and group movements rather than the personal salvation of people in its prominent presentation in the Bible.

Although there are many illustrations which could be called upon to demonstrate our point, these are sufficient. Then let us fit it into the overview of things.

When the angels to whom the rulership of the earth was given forfeited their right because of sin, God committed it to man. When man sold himself and the earth out to the Devil, God responded by permitting man and the earth to go into bondage to the Devil for the time being and by sending Christ to be the redeemer as the Son of man. God allowed the bondage because man had chosen it. He will end the bondage in due time because of the works of the Son of man demand an end to it. There is an infinitely beautiful logic in the response of God to all His intelligent creatures.

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I. THE CONDITION OF THE NATIONS

Verses 17—19

Church members are not to walk as the nations walk. We are told that their walk is in the vanity of their mind. Let it be remembered that this was the condition of the nations in general before Christ came and set up the church; see the first chapter of Romans. Remember that these nations were all religious nations, but their religions were false and idolatrous. The point is, we are not simply to be religiously pious, but we are to be religious according to the New Testament pattern.

The nations all knew God in ancient times, but they followed these steps into apostasy:

1. They walked in the vanity of their minds, causing their

understanding to be darkened.

2. They were alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that had come to abide in them.
3. This ignorance also came because of the hardening of their hearts.
4. They further hardened themselves and went into all manner of excesses and uncleanness.
5. The peculiar thing is that they worked out all these excesses with covetousness as a motive. It must be that they coveted glory to themselves as well as coveting material advancement.

II. THE OLD AND THE NEW MAN

Verses 20—24

The saints had not learned Christ after the manner of these heathen nations. This can mean two definite things. They did not discover the ways of Christ by walking in the ways of the nations. The Scriptures tell us the world by wisdom knew not God. The meaning may be that when they learned Christ, they found His ways to be entirely different from the ways of the world.

The condition of learning Christ is to hear Him and to be taught of Him. We must hear Christ of someone who knows Him to learn of Him. The world never invented nor discovered a system of teachings like His. Thus, we must go to Christ as our source of teaching. Then we must definitely be taught of Him. Many people are too lazy or too indifferent to be really taught of Him. We would rather get some hazy idea of Him and mix it with that wisdom of the world we have and then call the result a knowledge of Christ. Also, few of us are willing to surrender what seems right to us as men to be fully taught of Christ. We are too prone to inject our "I think so" into the Scripture teachings. We should resist this tendency above all else.

Verse twenty-two seems to say that the old man is being destroyed by the deception of his lusts. This can mean two things.

First, it may mean the natural man is destroying his physical life by his indulgences in the lusts of the flesh. Second, it may just as readily mean he is destroying his chances of having a real spiritual life by practicing a fleshly religious system. A good example of this latter is the sects who destroy the possibility of their ever coming into real spirituality by satisfying themselves with purely fleshly emotionalism.

We are to be renewed with a spiritual mind and to be clothed with the new man who has been created in righteousness, and holiness of the truth. This new man was created in the likeness of Christ in the new birth. The putting on of this new man as to our lives is simply doing what the New Testament teaches. We are saved by full submission to Christ; our lives are saved by full submission to His Word. This is why the Christian life is so prominently

presented as a passive thing. We do not need to invent any additional teachings. We need to learn, believe, and do those things Christ has instituted.

III. THE CONDUCT OF THE NEW MAN

Verses 25—32

We must speak truth with one another because we are formed into the same body with our brethren. If we injure our brother, we injure ourselves. Harming a brother in our church is like attempting to stamp one of our feet off with the other foot. If one hand takes a knife and cuts off the other hand, then the hand which did it will have the work of both hands to do.

The statement, "Be ye angry, and sin not," involves so many technical possibilities in the Greek as to what it really says that it would require much space to suggest them all. It is merely suggested that it means: "ye are angry, and do ye not sin?" or it may mean "do not sin in allowing anger to abide in you."

The thief who becomes a church member is to stop his stealing and work with his hands so that he may have something to give to the one having need.

No evil word should be spoken. But we should speak those words which will contribute to the building up of the needful things in the church. In this light, speaking an evil word would include teaching a false doctrine. Teaching a false doctrine is worse than telling an off-color story. What Baptist will deny it?

From the context, grieving the Holy Spirit is speaking false things in a religious way.

We are to forgive on a basis of absolute freeness, for that is the basis on which God forgives us.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How are church members to walk?
2. How did the saints not learn of Christ?
3. What is the condition of their learning Christ?
4. What is the destiny of the old man?
5. How are we to be renewed?
6. How is the new man created?
7. Why must we speak the truth with one another?
8. How may the Holy Spirit be grieved?
9. On what basis are we to forgive?
10. Is every sinner given the privilege to be saved in Christ?

Lesson 22

WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Ephesians 5:1-17

INTRODUCTION

Once again, let us summarize viewpoints and examine scripture teachings about the foreknowledge of God, election, and predestination. Subjects such as these are in the realm of infinity and therefore are impossible to be fully grasped by the finite mind of man. Since this is true, in Christ God gave the revelation which 'He meant for man to understand and resolve to the terms of human thinking. Christ became the Son of man and reduced Himself to the finite for the comprehension of mankind. In Christ God responds to man as man responds to God. From this viewpoint, when man repents and trusts Christ, then God saves him as the result of his repentance and faith. By the same token exactly, men go to Hell because they reject Christ, and they do not go there because they were not elected to salvation back in eternity.

The big mistake many people make on the subject of election has been in ascribing what the Scriptures say on the subject to personal salvation, when this is not the case at all. the election mentioned in Ephesians is election of the church; and, individuals come into this election when they come into the church. In fact, it is seriously questioned whether election applies to personal salvation at all, as it is brought out in the Bible.

Some of the great points in election are given as follows: God elected and predestinated from eternity that a creation should be brought into glory through the works and virtues of the eternal Son. But it does not mean that God either elected or predestinated all the details that should be involved in the accomplishment of this goal. Right at this point there is danger of our making God responsible for sin if we are not careful in our thinking.

God predestinated the nation Israel to glory at the time of the Abrahamic Covenant. Possibly He predestinated it even earlier. But this situation is quite different than predestination to personal salvation. In a group movement, if one individual refuses to do the will of God, he is discarded as the agent of God and a substitute is sought out by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is full of testimony to the working of this principle. On the other hand, if God predestinated a man to personal salvation, there is nothing for the man to do but submit to the will of the higher power.

The third great point in election, which has already been mentioned, is the church. Once again, it is hoped these discussions will be studied for whatever merit they may have.

I. CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE

Verses 1-2

We are told we are to be followers, or mimics, of God as beloved children. This is the picture of children responding to a parent who showers on them all the things of a boundless love. The gifts of the Father find a corresponding response in Christian service. It stands in sharp contrast with the fear in which some serve the Lord.

We are told to walk in the same manner of love wherewith Christ loved us in His giving Himself on our behalf. Once again the love of Christ was not a mushy, senseless, fleshly love, whereby He would sacrifice all the principles He had to gain favor with men. He loved the righteousness and justice of God above His love for the world, else He would have compromised Himself to gain the world as the Devil attempted to induce Him to do in the wilderness temptations. This is why His sacrifice for us was a sweetsmelling savor to God. We are to walk in the same manner of love. When we stink worst to men because we will not sacrifice truth, we smell best to God.

II. SHUNNING MORAL SINS

Verses 3-5

It is fitting to saints that fornication, all uncleanness, and covetousness should not be named among us. Not only are we the born children of God, but also we committed ourselves to walk with Him in truth when we united with the church of Jesus Christ.

Every shameful thing, which is filthiness; foolish thinking, which is the babbling of a moron; and jesting, which is what we call vulgar talking, are also not to be named among us. The Christian is supposed to think and talk of Bible doctrines-and he will if he loves the Lord. Of course, much of the religious world believes verse five teaches that saved people fall from grace if they commit the sins named. If we take it in its setting, which is the way Scriptures should be viewed, these sins are completely apart from kingdom work and kingdom desire. To the extent a church saint indulges in these things he divorces himself from kingdom blessings and advancement. It may include the idea of entering the Millennial Kingdom devoid of the reward of good works.

III. SHUNNING RELIGIOUS SINS

Verses 6-14

At verse six Paul turns from the notice of moral sins to that of

religious sins. He says the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience because of vain words. This is nothing but people following a fleshly, human invented, religious system teaching false doctrines.

First, we are light in the Lord because we are saved. But for practical purposes, it is far more vital that we are light in the Lord because we believe and do what His Word teaches. It was not to all the saved that Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). It was spoken to His church.

The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. In bearing fruit to God, we are to test the things that are well pleasing to the Lord. The only way in the world to do this is to seek the will of the Lord in the Scriptures.

Fellowship with darkness is avoided in the same way that we bear the fruits of light-by knowing the Scripture rule and walking in it. Any time we walk in human wisdom we walk in spiritual darkness.

Those who walk in spiritual darkness do things too shameful to be mentioned. As a concrete example, think of those who brazenly commit adultery and say it is no sin because they are sanctified.

Verse fourteen is to be taken figuratively. Jesus quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures at Luke 4:18 to show how He had come to bring Israel out of the darkness of the Law dispensation into the light of the new order of things. Simeon prophesied essentially the same thing at Luke 1:79. The promise is that Christ will shine upon us if we will come into the place where the light is. Should we say once again that this place is the church?

IV. WATCHFULNESS COMMANDED

Verses 15-17

We should walk most strictly, redeeming the time. We should do this because our personal stay here is very brief and uncertain. For another reason, we are told the days are evil. The Devil has more reason to hate the church than any other body which has been on earth. Therefore, we must expect the days to be very evil.

Because the days are evil, we are not to be unwise, but we are to understand what the will of the Lord is. We will not find this will in supernatural visions and revelations. We will not find it in the religious inventions of men. We will not find it in a fleshly battle against the flesh. We will find and understand the will of the Lord by a prayerful, diligent, and sustained study of the Word of God. We will also find much of it in meeting the issues of life squarely on a truly Christian basis.

In this lesson much has been said about moral purity. Let us note again the New Testament basis of it. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galations 5:16). A practical application of this rule is that if one is at home studying his Bible on Saturday night, he is not reveling in a night club or dance hall.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is our attitude toward God supposed to be?
2. What has Christ done in love for us?
3. What is fitting to saints?
4. What is filthiness, foolish talking and jesting?
5. What brings the wrath of God upon people?
6. How are we now the light in the Lord?
7. What is the fruit of light?
8. How can we avoid fellowship with darkness?
9. Who did shameful things in darkness?
10. What are two reasons we should redeem the time?
11. How may we understand the will of God?

Lesson 23

THE CHURCH, THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Ephesians 5:18-33

INTRODUCTION

Although most Baptists teach that the church is the bride of Christ, there are varied opinions on just who the bride is. Explanations by Baptists range from a vague statement that the church is the bride to the setting up of standards of righteousness in the flesh that almost amount to sinless perfection. Let us make an effort to show a Scriptural way out of this maze of confusion.

There is not a more vital statement in the New Testament about the church in general and the bride of Christ in particular than is found in Ephesians 5:25-27. What we must do is get the vitality of this statement in its fullness, and we must allow it to be expanded somewhat by the teachings of the New Testament elsewhere if we would understand who the bride is.

In the first place, we are told that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. I John 2:2 tells us that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. This does not mean that the whole world is the church. It means Christ paid the price for the sins of the whole world. So, the whole world can be saved if it will believe.

In the second place, John 3:16 tells us God gave His Son that whosoever believes in Him may have eternal life. This does not mean that all the saved constitute the church. It means that every believer will be saved. Thus we see two ways in which Christ gave Himself, and we have not arrived at the church as yet.

Since He gave Himself that all the world might be saved, and He gave Himself in a narrower sense to actually save all believers, we have the suggestion that He gave Himself in yet a narrower sense for the church. Our passage mentioned above tells us plainly what that narrower sense is. He gave Himself for the church that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word. This is not the sanctifying and cleansing whereby a sinner is saved. If it were, then the universal church theory would be true. This purifying is of people who are already saved and who have already united themselves with the church. In other words, it is no more nor less than a righteousness of works of saved people that is meant. It is people who have a righteousness of works who will constitute the bride of Christ. But just what is this righteousness of works? It is at this point that some become very vague, and others become very vehement for a righteousness of fleshly works.

This righteousness of fleshly works might do very well except that Paul said there was no good in his flesh. Another exception we

should note is that Israel tried for almost fifteen hundred years to live up to a standard of fleshly works as they operated under the Law of Moses. And, they miserably failed to the extent of crucifying their Messiah when He came to them. Again, when we read about the works of the flesh in the New Testament, we find they are always described as unclean and abominable. There simply is no good in the flesh, exactly as Paul said.

Verse twenty-seven of our lesson insists that the purpose of Christ is to present the church to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. If the spots and wrinkles are to be taken out in the resurrection then where does the precedence of the church come in anyway? That is, wherein does the church have any preference over other saved people? But if there is not and cannot be any good in the flesh, how is Christ to have a bride without spots on her raiment? This is where the washing of water by the Word comes in.

The washing of water by the Word is simply believing and doing what the scriptures teach in the way of Bible doctrines and practices. The members of a church cannot be perfect in the flesh, but they can be pure in their church doctrines and practices. Cursing, drunkenness, and adultery are bad, but they are not the spots and wrinkles meant here. These spots and wrinkles are such things as sprinkling babies, teaching falling from grace, works for salvation, the universal church, post-Millennialism, etc. If the church is holy and without blame in these respects, it need have no fear of having spots and wrinkles on its raiment at the judgement day. If these things are not true, then we had best all join those who are attempting to reach a sinless perfection in the flesh.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHTEOUS WORKS

Verses 18-21

As church saints, we are not to be drunken on wine, wherein is excess, or destruction, as the Greek text puts it. Rather, we are to be filled with the Spirit. The idea is that we are to substitute spiritual singing for fleshly revelry.

Three types of music are enumerated in our spiritual singing. From the standpoint of the Bible languages, their meanings are given as follows:

A psalm is a song sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The idea of the musical instrument is intimately built into the world itself.

The word, hymn, means the same thing it means to us today. It stresses such things as rhythm, harmony, tune, etc., in our singing. Traced back to its origin, the word means to hum a tune.

The word rendered spiritual songs refers to the sentiment expressed in the words of songs. In other words, it describes the poetry around which the music is built.

Let us note that those who refuse to use musical instruments in

their worship services deny the very fundamental meaning of the word "psalm" when they do so. The way the Old Testament Psalms were used furnishes us with a clear picture of how we are to make music in our worship services.

Since Israel could sing and make a joyful noise to the Lord as they worshipped under the Law of Moses, we have a hundred times more reason to the same things, who have all the blessings of the church, which Israel did not have. Refusing musical instruments in church services illustrates the legalistic folly of those who really have no conception of what the Bible actually teaches. It is the same kind of thing that wrecked Israel spiritually.

II. THE PARALLELISM OF MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH

Verses 22-24

In the creation of mankind, the man was made what is called the federal head of the human race. This really means the ruling or governing head. Later, woman was made as a helpmeet for man. She did not share in this federal headship. Therefore, man has a certain preeminence over woman in matters of religion. They are both by nature sinners, and they are both saved in exactly the same way. But men are Scripturally ordained to preach and serve as deacons and take other places of responsible leadership in the church which are denied to women. Women were never meant to be slaves to men. Sin is what put them in that position, and the church is the body which has given woman that freedom and respect which God meant for her to have.

Christ is the head of the church as the husband is the head of the wife. If he is capable of doing so, the husband makes the religious decisions for the family, except the matter of salvation itself. Therefore, we should regard the New Testament Scriptures as making all decisions for the church.

Christ is the Saviour of the body, which is the church. This does not refer to the new birth, but it refers to the preservation of the body of the church in New Testament teachings and practices.

The church should be subject to Christ because He created it and gave its working rules and its guiding power.

III. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH

Verses 25-27

Christ gave Himself for the church in the sense of preserving New Testament truth in it until the end of the age.

The church is sanctified in its commitment of itself to walk strictly in the ordinances and teaching of Christ. The individual makes this

commitment when he comes into the membership of the church. Thus he becomes sanctified when he is Scripturally baptized. Throwing away a snuff box does not have nearly so much to do with sanctification as Scriptural observance of the Lord's supper. A church can be without spot and wrinkle as to the fundamental teachings of the Bible. There is no good in the flesh as long as we are in this present world.

IV. THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

Verses 28-33

A husband and wife are joined together as one flesh. This means among other things that all their interests and affections should be mutual. In such a case, a man who injures his wife injures himself.

Christ nourishes the church to the extent of giving it all its working rules in the New Testament and a complete guidance in the Holy Spirit. A church cannot fail so long as it stays within the bounds of these.

Christ so nourishes the church because it is His own body in the world. The church is the full representative of Christ in the world. What the world really sees and hears of Christ it sees and hears in the church. He nourishes the church so that He will be represented instead of misrepresented in the world.

One way of stating the mystery of the church is that Christ can take a people whose flesh is still in the Kingdom of the Devil, and therefore no good at all, and cause this people to remain true and faithful to Him in matters of religion through nineteen-hundred years of the severest trials at the hands of the Devil. This is the thing the angels desired to look into (1 Peter 1:12).

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What should we substitute for wine drinking?
2. Define psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
3. Why should we sing to the Lord?
4. What relationship is like that of marriage?
5. Why should the church be subject to Christ?
6. In what sense did Christ give Himself for the church?
7. How is the church sanctified?
8. How can the church be without spot and wrinkle?
9. Why should men love their wives as their own bodies?
10. How carefully does Christ nourish the church?
11. Why does He so nourish it?
12. What is the mystery of the church?

Lesson 24

THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF CHRISTIANS

Ephesians 6:1-9

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter of Ephesians there is an abrupt change in the nature of the discussion. This new discussion seems to come as an afterthought of some matters that were injected in the last of chapter five. There the discussion had to do with the church as the bride of Christ. The husband and wife relationship was brought into the discussion to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church.

In the process of the illustration, Paul gave much practical instruction on the marriage relationship. The wife is to be subject to her husband, and the husband is to dwell in all charity with the wife. The discussion here presumes that the husband and wife are both Christians. We must look elsewhere for instructions when this condition does not exist. I Corinthians gives the specific instructions when there are breaches of the marriage responsibility. A wife is not obliged to sacrifice her religious convictions in obedience to her husband. Neither are they obligated to live together in such cases as where adultery is found in one of them.

These practical instructions are continued with instructions in family and social relationships. One striking thing about the teachings of Jesus and the apostles is that they did not go forth as social, political, and economic reformers. If we would fully admit this fact, it would keep us out of many situations in which churches have no business.

Jesus paid taxes to Caesar but refused to enter a controversy wherein one brother wanted another to divide the inheritance with him. Largely on the subject of social reforms, He told the Pharisees to cleanse first the inside of the cup so that the outside might be clean also. These last things have been said because the subject of slavery comes up in this lesson.

The first topic has to do with the obedience of children to parents. Allusion is made to the Law of Moses in stressing the point. Obedience to parents gave the promise that the Israelites should live long on the land which the Lord had given them. Precepts of the Law were usually based on principles of common sense and practical righteousness. Older people have a wisdom of experience which children cannot possibly have. This is the practical value in obedience to parents. The prophecies of the last days state that children shall be disobedient to parents. This is one contributing factor to the wreckage in every phase of life that is to come in the last days. Children owe obedience to parents because parents have given them

life and whatever opportunities they have in life.

The next point is that parents are to walk uprightly and wisely before their children. The failure to do this is one of the great causes for the lamented delinquency of the younger generation. The parents have been delinquent before them.

The third point discussed the relationship between servants, or slaves, and their masters. Slavery is a subject that has long been discussed, and it has puzzled many from the standpoint of what the Bible says about it. Let us note that slavery was a product of the fall of man into sin, and it was neither a product nor a by-product of the original creation of God. Adam became the first slave when God pronounced the curse upon him for his transgression. It is suggested that God did no more than to tell Adam the inevitable result of his transgression in the pronouncement of the curse. So we see the responsibility falls right back on Adam instead of on God.

All slavery has come as the result of this curse which man brought on himself. It is true that God said Canaan should be a servant to his brethren as the result of the lewdness of his father, Ham. Again, however, it is believed that God was merely telling this descendant of Ham of an inherited baseness of character which should follow the Canaanite race to remote generations.

I. DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Verses 1-4

The tie between husband and wife is the closest tie in human relationships. Genseis 2:24 says a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This illustration was introduced to impress on us that most intimate connection between Christ and His church in the world.

Children are commanded to be obedient to their parents in the Lord, for this is right. The limitation that they are to be obedient to their parents in the Lord seems to mean they are to be subject to their parents so long as the parents walk in ways approved of the Lord. Not even a child is required to sacrifice moral and religious principles in obedience to parents.

The law promised that obedience to parents would cause Israel to live long in the Land of Promise, which God had given to them; see Deut. 5:16. It has been stressed that we are not under the Law of Moses, which was aimed at the purifying of the flesh of Israel; but though we are not under the Law, we have not become spiritual or moral outlaws. There is the strongest motive possible to the church Christian to observe all moral and spiritual principles of righteousness, for we are motivated by love and faith as opposed to the fear of penalty that moved Israel to obedience. We can expect spiritual prosperity from obedience to parents.

Parents are not to provoke their children to wrath, but they are to nourish them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. A

parent who provokes his child to anger or discouragement has no right to expect love and respect from that child. He must command these by his walk before the child.

II. DUTIES OF SERVANTS

Verses 5-8

The servants who are mentioned first at verse five are really bond slaves, if we are to depend on the actual meaning of the word here translated servant. It is a well known fact that slavery is mentioned constantly throughout the Bible. Slavery came as the result of the curse of sin, which man brought upon himself. God does not approve of slavery any more than He approves of any of the other fruits of sin. However, to say God forbids slavery in many given situations in the Bible would be to say a thing one could not prove from the Scriptures. God seems to take the attitude that slavery is sometimes best in given situations. In the present instance, Paul gives directions for the relationships between slaves and owners and he does not command the owner to set the slave free.

The servants, or slaves, are to be obedient to those who are their lords in the flesh. The owner is only the lord over the fleshly part of the slave, Christ being his spiritual Lord. This fact indicates a clear line of distinction between fleshly and spiritual things in the economy of Christ. It was pointed out in the introduction that Jesus refused to interfere in social, political, and economic affairs during His stay in the world. His reign now is spiritual, and He will take over the rule in these other realms of human life in the Millennium.

Servants are not to do eye-service, or careless service, but they are to serve their masters with zeal and enthusiasm because they are the spiritual servants of Christ. This is a way of telling us to make the best we can of life here, for we have a hope of infinitely better things in the world to come.

Christ is pleased with faithful service of whatever nature it may be so long as it is honest and upright. This pertains only to material things. Jesus is not pleased with any religious service except that taught in the Scriptures.

Slavery is a bad thing from the standpoint of the abuses that are practiced in connection with it.

III. DUTIES OF MASTERS

Verse 9

Masters are to be charitable and patient toward servants, not being wrathful or unjust toward them. The reason for this is that both the lord and the slave have the same Lord in Heaven. Though a great

social distinction is made between the two in the world, the Lord of Heaven is not a respecter of persons and He judges all His people on spiritual standards. Therefore, the servant may stand higher in the estimation of Christ than does the master. Therefore, the master should stand in humility before Christ as he directs the life of the man who is his servant in the flesh.

Again we note that God did not create or ordain slavery, but He tolerates it along with an infinite number of other evils in the world until Christ shall have dethroned the Devil as the god of the world. Slavery in the flesh is not nearly so bad as the spiritual slavery in which the majority of the world and the religious world is held today. It has always been the policy of the Devil to direct the minds and energies of men toward the less vital things on which to work their reforms. If we could bring the world out of spiritual slavery, the matter of fleshly would be no problem at all. Many of our closest neighbors are in this spiritual bondage.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. In what sense are children to be obedient to parents?
2. What did the Law say about honoring parents?
3. What should the attitude of parents be toward children?
4. Who are the servants mentioned in the lesson?
5. Why should masters not mistreat servants?
6. In what sense is there no respect of persons with God?
7. How did slavery come about?

Lesson 25

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

Ephesians 6:10-17

In this very practical lesson the Christian life is likened to a literal soldier making preparations and actually going into battle. The various pieces of his armor and equipment are likened to six different Christian virtues or resources upon which the Christian soldier is to depend. These virtues and resources are truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. According to the figure, when the warrior is supplied with all of these, he has on the whole armor of God. There are many other Christian resources that might be named, but do they not all come under one or more of these six qualities and implements just named?

There is one point of doctrinal difficulty which should be noted in this introduction. It is the realm of activity of the Devil during the present age. Verse twelve tells us our wrestling is with the spiritual things of evil in the heavens. This very statement is the nearest thing we have in the New Testament to telling us positively that the influence of the Devil reaches into Heaven at the present time. The next strongest evidence of this matter is in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, where the Devil is represented as being cast out of Heaven into the earth.

Apparently, the Devil does go into heaven to accuse the saints as he did in Old Testament times; see Job chapters two and three for the clear picture. However, this viewpoint requires the thought that the moves and moving forces in the twelfth chapter of Revelation describes a war and casting of the Devil out of Heaven during the Great Tribulation. Upon closer examination we find a much stronger case to the effect these things took place in connection with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus into Heaven in the body of a glorified man. Let us go back to the beginning and trace some movements briefly.

When Adam was in Eden before the fall, where all the creation was good, the Devil came to him as the tempter. Where did the Devil come from and why was he there? That is, why did God allow him to be there? The answer evidently is that he had some kind of claim to rulership over the earth as the fallen angel which he was. On the basis of this claim God allowed him to tempt Adam. If Adam had rejected the Devil, no doubt he would have been banished permanently from the earth and from the environment of mankind.

Instead, man rather made the Devil the god of the world order. Man could do this because God had given man the lordship over the earth. As we discuss these things, let us remember that God stands as the eternal Supreme Ruler of the universe. But there are many

rulerships and sovereignties under His supreme rulership. The result of man's making the Devil the god of the world is that we see him going into Heaven in the days of Job and accusing this saint of God. Notice that the Devil clearly stands in subjection to God, according to the conversations recorded in Job.

When Jesus was about to go to the cross, He said "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). We are told in 1 Corinthians 15 that the last enemy to be overcome is death. Therefore death is the ultimate weapon and stronghold of the Devil. Jesus invaded this stronghold in His death and He came out victorious from the realm of the ultimate power of the Devil. He brought many saints out of death; see Matthew 27. Not only so, but Jesus also went into the utmost heights of Heaven in the body of a man. The taking of the glorified body of a man into the presence of the Most Holy God seems to have been one thing that pointed definitely to the final defeat of the Devil. For if one man, Jesus, can come out of death and go to Heaven in glory, then His brethren can do the same thing.

With the glorified Son of Man enthroned at the right hand of the Most High God, it does not seem logical that the Devil should go into the presence and openly accuse the brethren of the Son of Man. Therefore it is suggested that our physical Heavens is as far as the Devil goes in his activities now. His great rage at this defeat in Jesus has been poured out most vehemently on the church of Jesus throughout the church age, but it grows more intense as the time for the ultimate victory of the church over him draws near.

I. THE STRENGTH OF THE WARRIOR

Verses 12-13

As Christians we are strong in the Lord if we are strong at all. It is a principle taught from Genesis to Revelation that the abundance of the Christian power is of God and it is not of us. God gave food, drink, guidance, and protection to Israel for forty years in the wilderness when they were not able to provide these things for themselves. He even caused their clothing not to wear out during this long period of wandering. These things are meant to teach us that our strength is only in the Lord.

Strength, power, and might are all mentioned in verse ten. These are very close synonyms, or they are closely allied in meaning, but there are slight shades of difference. Let us note them.

Strength refers to qualities that are inherent in us. This suggests to us that the only way to have the strength of God is to be born again of the spiritual birth. Salvation by grace is taught even in such seemingly unimportant matters as this.

Power has a physical background in the Bible. It teaches us nothing in the material realm is impossible with God. It reminds us again that Jesus will one day break the power of the Devil over the

creation and He will reign over the earth in righteousness. It seems this rule will be established by physical force.

Might is more inclusive in its statement of ability to do. It includes the idea of intellectual and spiritual might as well as physical. It reminds us that God is able to move on all powers of the universe to accomplish His will in the consummation of things. All these shadings of power are at our command as the Lord sees fit for us to invoke their use.

We are told we can stand against the wiles, or crafty tricks, of the Devil by putting on the whole armor of God. This armor is described later.

II. THE SPIRITUAL ENEMY

Verses 10-11

Our wrestling is not with flesh and blood, but it is with principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness. Let us note them briefly.

Principalities means headships or rulerships. The Devil is a ruler.

Powers here means authorities. Note that authority is ascribed to the Devil. He got his authority as a world ruler from Adam back in the fall of Eden.

Rulers of darkness describes the violence with which the Devil rules, and indicates how he holds the world in spiritual darkness.

Spiritual wickedness in high places describes the nature of the power of the Devil. He is a spirit being and it appears his sphere of influence not only covers the earth, but it plagues the heavenly bodies as far away as the sun at least, or the sun does not shine in an ideal way upon the earth.

Three heavens are distinguished in the Bible. The first is the region of air around the earth. The second is the region of the stars and the planets. The third is the abiding place of God. We cannot tell from the statement here whether the Devil goes into the Heaven of God during this age. See the introduction for a further discussion on this point.

We are to take to ourselves the whole armor of God in order that we may be able to stand in the evil day. In many places in the New Testament an evil day is mentioned; and, many times the people of God are told how they may be saved from this evil day. This evil day is the day of antiChrist and the end of the age. All saints are warned against it for two reasons. First, the evil day might come just any time so far as we know. Second, we are supposed to leave a heritage in the church that will help following generations to stand faithful to God if a testing time comes in their day. We should live with the coming generations and their destiny much in view.

III. THE ARMOR OF THE WARRIOR

Verses 14-17

In the figure of a soldier, we are to gird our loins with truth. The loins were girded to give added strength to the body by averting a strain which would cause a permanent disabling for warfare. Being wrapped in truth will prevent our being crippled religiously.

The heart is to be protected by the breastplate of righteousness. The imputed righteousness of Christ will keep us out of Hell, and a righteousness of works will keep us out of religious error.

The feet of the soldier should carry him surely and swiftly to battle and away from danger. The Christian soldier is to have his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The gospel of peace will do more than anything else in the world to turn our enemies into our friends. Every child of God should be able to tell a sinner how to be saved.

The shield of faith will turn away all the fiery darts of the enemy. The opposing armies shot flaming arrows at one another in Bible times. These were turned aside and made harmless if caught on a shield. Faith is the gift which keeps us from being consumed by the cares, burdens, and dangers of life.

The good soldier is to have on his head the helmet of salvation. This is the one thing that will deliver him from eternal death.

The weapon of offense of the Christian soldier is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This is all we need to preach to the world for the salvation of men. It teaches there is personal salvation for every believer and there is no hope of salvation for the present world order as such.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. In whom are we to be strong as Christians?
2. How is strength, power and might applied to the Christian life?
3. How can we stand against the wiles of the Devil?
4. What are principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness?
5. What are the high places of verse twelve?
6. What part does truth play in our armor?
7. How is the heart protected?
8. What gives sureness to the feet?
9. How does faith help us in the battle?
10. What prevents our receiving a head wound?
11. What is the offensive weapon of the Christian soldier?
12. What makes this offensive weapon effective?
13. Does the Devil accuse the saints before God today?

Lesson 26

THE SECRET OF A VICTORIOUS FIGHTER

Ephesians 6:18-24

INTRODUCTION

In earlier introductions we saw how the book of Ephesians stands in sharp contrast with some of the other epistles of Paul in that it presents the church chiefly from the institutional standpoint. About all the practical difference this situation makes is that church teachings and practices are discussed from the general standpoint, rather than dealing with actual problems and questions that come up in the workings of a given congregation. The epistle to the Galatian churches deals with actual problems that arose in the experiences of these churches in actual practice. The instructions to the churches of Galatia are good for any church any time, but Ephesians is written more from the viewpoint of being directed to all the churches of the age. It is only the difference between dealing with theoretical cases and actual cases.

The secret of victorious fighters is mutual prayer, mutual interests and mutual hopes on the part of these saints. Paul was a missionary who traveled widely among the churches and mission points. We are told at Acts 20:4 that Tychicus was of Asia. He was doubtless from Asia Minor where there were many churches. The point we should see here is that neither Paul nor Tychicus had any reason to have more interest in the church at Ephesus than they had in many other churches in many locations, yet both of these preachers did manifest a vital interest in this church. They did it simply because there was a close bond of union among all the churches in those days. The present day spirit of isolationism which is manifest in a few churches and a good many ministers was absent from the churches and ministers of the apostolic age. They had fellowship very freely among the various churches and ministers in those days.

Perhaps we should note the formation of the church at Ephesus before we leave this introduction. The Scriptural account is given in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. This church is notable because it is one of the three that came into existence under peculiar circumstances in the New Testament record, the other two being the church at Samaria and the church in the household of Cornelius.

The church at Ephesus proves that a religious body does not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church without Scriptural baptism. Paul went to this city and found there a group of disciples. Evidently they were disciples of Apollos, who was a mighty man in the Old Testament Scriptures, and he claimed to be performing the baptism of John the Baptist. Evidently, neither he nor these disciples of his knew that Jesus had already come and performed His

ministry. Therefore, they did not know that Jesus had gone back to Heaven and had sent the Spirit upon the church on Pentecost. This is why these disciples answered Paul that they had not heard anything about the Holy Spirit.

When Paul outlined to them all the facts in the case, they gladly believed him and he baptized them into the name of the risen Lord Jesus. The sending of the Holy Spirit upon the church was dependent on the manifestation of Jesus as the risen and triumphant Lord over death. When these disciples were Scripturally baptized, Paul laid hands on them to signify the authority to baptize which he had received from the church at Antioch of Syria; see Acts 13:1-3. The Holy Spirit then came upon the group as it did on the church in Jerusalem on Pentecost. These things are so clear in the account in the nineteenth chapter of Acts that it is hard to see how Bible students have overlooked them and the import that is involved in them. The vital point is not the personal salvation of the group of disciples at all; it is the formation of the group into a Scriptural church, and the response of God in the giving of the Holy Spirit to the new church as soon as the Scriptural requirements were met.

Evidently these first disciples in Ephesus were Jews, but being a city in Asia Minor, no doubt Gentiles were brought into it almost from its beginning.

I. MUTUAL PRAYERS

Verses 18-20

In this lesson the Scripture departs from the figurative language and states plainly what the elements of success are in the Christian life.

We are to pray and make supplication to the Lord in every season. The word rendered prayer is a general term describing prayer. It seems to bear the idea of rendering praise and thanks as we make our petitions to God. Certainly these should be strong elements in our prayers to the Lord, for He always blesses us far above our merits or deserts. Supplication means the same thing as intercession. It refers to those requests we make in a very urgent manner of the Lord. It is insistently asking for our desires.

We are to pray in the Spirit. For one thing, this means we are not to pray with our minds engaged with fleshly desires as we pray. For another thing, it means we are to pray in harmony with the will of the Holy Spirit. We can always learn the will of the Spirit by seeking it in the study of the Word of God. If we pray according to New Testament teachings we will not pray for things to gratify the lusts of the flesh.

We are to watch in the Spirit in all perseverance or continuity, and we are to make supplication of intercession for all the saints. The great point here is that we are to keep close watch as we make our prayers that they may be in harmony with the will of God. If

they are made in the Spirit, they are according to the will of God.

Generally speaking, "saint" is a word reserved in the New Testament for church members. It is doubtful whether it can be proven it ever means anything else in its New Testament usage. The reason for this is that a saint is one who is consecrated to service, and we consecrate ourselves to service when we unite with the church. Of course, Israel was the sainted people of God while the Law of Moses was in effect.

Paul requests that prayers be offered on his behalf that the Word may be given to him to open his mouth boldly in the preaching of the gospel. This may mean that he desires an opportunity to preach. It may also mean his desire is to have freedom of expression when he does preach. Every preacher knows it is easy to preach logically and convincingly at times, and it is almost impossible at other times.

He was an ambassador in bonds. He was in prison at the time of this writing. He may refer to his bonds figuratively in that he was obligated to preach the Word of God as opposed to any human wisdom.

II. MUTUAL INTERESTS

Verses 21-22

We are told in verse twenty-one that the Ephsians should learn the things pertaining to Paul from Tychicus. One view of this matter which we may take is that Paul had revelation from God. Therefore he was in a position to instruct all the churches. However, there is much evidence that the churches were interested in him simply as a beloved brother who as laboring in a common cause with themselves.

Paul and Tychicus were interested in the church at Ephesus just as they were interested in all the churches everywhere, which were laboring in the same gospel they preached; therefore, was a strong bond of fellowship and common interest among them. This fellowship was enjoyed without anyone's exercising lordship over anyone else. It was strictly a case of mutual interests and mutual labors. Fellowship and co-operation extended as far as the churches extended in the New Testament times.

The hearts of the brethren would be comforted when they heard of the blessings of the Lord on the labors of Paul though he was in prison in Rome. It is specifically stated that Tychicus was sent that they might know these things. Association meetings could be a great source of mutual encouragement to all the churches who participate.

III. MUTUAL HOPE

Verses 23-24

If the brethren have the love of God in their hearts and the faith

that comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, then they will have the peace of God in their hearts and among themselves as brethren. We are told at I Corinthians 13:13 that the three spiritual gifts remaining to us after miraculous gifts were taken away are faith, hope and love. The greatest of these is that godly Christian love. In the order of things, love is closely followed by faith as a Christian gift, although hope furnishes our driving motive to continue in service in spite of hindrances. When these abound among us we have inward peace, no matter what the material circumstances are about us.

Paul invokes the grace of God upon all who love the Lord in sincerity. The love of the Lord is not in lip service. That is, not every one who says he loves the Lord really does. To say one loves the Lord, and then to disobey His doctrinal commandments is as contradictory a situation as could possibly be. Jesus said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The one who says he loves the Lord but perverts the gospel is simply prevaricating, and that is all there is to it. Paul was not praying for all the saved in this instance; he was praying the grace of God upon church saints.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is the relation of this lesson to lesson twenty-five?
2. What is the difference between prayer and supplication?
3. In what attitude are we to pray?
4. In what are we to watch?
5. Who are all saints?
6. Why does Paul want the saints to pray for him?
7. How was he an ambassador in bonds?
8. Why did Paul send Tychicus to Ephesus?
9. Why should Paul and Tychicus be interested in this church?
10. Why should the church be interested in these two preachers?
11. How would their hearts be comforted?
12. How would the brethren have peace?
13. Who loves the Lord in sincerity?
14. How was the church at Ephesus founded?

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