

THE ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

BY A. S. COPLEY



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INTRODUCTION

"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:3-4).

By comparing Acts 1:1 with these verses, we learn that Luke wrote both books. He was the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew, that is, not "of the circumcision" (Colossians 4:11, 14). He had written the Gospel of Christ, portraying Him as "the Son of man," to a man, Theophilus, for all men. How fitting that he should now write the continuation of all that Jesus began, the words of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, which the Acts records.

This book is rightly called, "The Acts of the Apostles," and it is the continuation of the deeds and teachings of Christ. Note the words: "Of all that Jesus began." The same Holy Spirit who filled and led Jesus, also filled and led the apostles. Through His mighty power, Christ went on working and teaching by their agency. You will notice also that this book has an informal and abrupt ending, for the works and words of Jesus Christ can never be written fully with pen and ink. John said, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (21:25). All these things are written "on tables that are hearts of flesh" (II Corinthians 3:3). The Lord does not lack men to carry on His work today.

The Book of Acts forms an important bridge between the four Gospel Records and the Epistles. It is not only historical, but also emphatically prophetic, typical, and dispensational. We must look for all these features in the book in order to obtain the greatest profit from our study. There are also many personal lessons throughout the book, by which we may benefit greatly. Let us always bear in mind when reading any book of the Bible, that we are reading the Mind of God; hence, this is no ordinary account. We are treading upon supernatural and holy ground. One is amazed at the depth and breadth of truth contained in the book of Acts, which falls into –

TWO GRAND DIVISIONS

Chapters 1 - 12 comprise the first part, and chapters 13-28 form the second part. Each division has one particular character. The first division centers around Peter, and the second around Paul. Division one pertains especially to the Kingdom of God, of which Peter was the chief apostle. The second division pertains to the Church, or Body of Christ, of which Paul was the chief apostle. We cannot easily overestimate the value of seeing this distinction and holding to it, if we would understand the book.

DIVISION ONE: CHAPTERS 1 - 12

They summarize God's dealings with Israel at the beginning of this age, and ends typically with the overthrow of anti-Christ, in the death of Herod. This book is not simply a biography and history in cold type, but it is also rich prophecy in letters of fire. The first 12 chapters cover a period of about 12 years. Twelve is the full kingdom number, the number of Divine dominion on earth, which is very significant here. While God was preparing to suspend His dealings with His ancient people, Israel, He was also preparing to introduce a new order of things, even the Church.

DIVISION TWO: CHAPTERS 13-28

This part summarizes the arduous ministry of Paul and his co-laborers among the Gentiles, planting churches to which he wrote letters afterward. We consider the Acts a delineator, or pattern book.

Here we learn what to do and how to do it. If we keep to the simplicity of religious operations outlined in this wonderful sample case, we will be spared unspeakable failures and unnecessary heartaches. We will not adopt the religious machinery of carnal men but go on in the liberty of the glory of God's dear children. The supernatural power of Jehovah will increase in our midst. Signs and wonders will never wane. Never will we have to cry out with shame, "Oh, for the old-time power!"

OUTLINE OF DIVISION ONE -- CHAPTER 1 - 12

1. The Appearing's and Ascension of Jesus Christ - Chapter 1.
2. The Lordship of Jesus, even the despised Man of Nazareth, shown by the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 2.
3. The Glorification of Jesus as the Son of God, even Jesus of Nazareth, by the healing of the lame man, type of Israel's restoration at the end - Chapters 3 and 4.
4. The Exaltation of Jesus as the promised Prince of Righteousness, intimated by His swift judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, and by the many special signs and wonders wrought through the apostles - Chapter 5. Note especially Verse 31. The millennium is foreshadowed in Verses 33-37, with Leviticus 25. Jesus as Prince and Savior, rejected by the religious officers - Chapter 5:17-41.
5. Jesus as the Just One, the Son of man, rejected by the religious sects, the people, and the elders, also typical of the present time - Chapters 6 and 7.
6. Jesus proclaimed to Samaria and to the Eunuch by Philip, typical of Jesus being proclaimed to Israel and to the Gentiles at the beginning of the Millennium - Chapter 8.
7. The Salvation of Saul of Tarsus. A new regime in sight - Chapter 9.
8. Jesus proclaimed to the Gentiles in Cornelius's house - Chapters 10 and 11. The New Age introduced.
9. Jesus as the King, rejected by Herod, who is a type of anti-Christ - Chapter 12.

CHAPTER ONE

APPEARINGS AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (1:1).

The Gospel of Luke was addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:5), and by that fact, we know that Luke wrote this book also. The little verb "began" is full of meaning. It indicates that the wonderful works and words of Jesus Christ cannot be confined to three and a half years. Chapter 1 connects the Book of Acts with the Gospels. It intimates Christ's resurrection, which fact is emphasized in the early chapters. The results of "His passion" (His death on the cross), and of His ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit, were dependent upon His resurrection. For this reason, Peter insisted that the number of the twelve be complete, to bear "witness of His resurrection" (1:22). Verse 1 is the key verse. Verses 3 and 6 indicate the theme of the first 12 chapters - the Kingdom. Verse 7 was a concealed portion to those disciples. They did not then see this Church Age. The question of verse 6 expressed their great concern. The plain and repeated words of Jesus to them made them to hope for His return to reign. Observe the intimate relation of the important facts of this chapter as if they occurred in immediate succession: today, Christ's death; tomorrow, His resurrection; the next day, His ascension; then the advent of the Spirit, and finally, Jesus' second advent. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this

same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (1:11). Indeed, it is just that real with God! The disciples did not understand Jesus when He said, "On this Rock I will build My Church" (Matthew 16). They expected the immediate return of their Lord. Their language throughout these opening chapters shows forth that fact. The word "church," which occurs a number of times in the first 12 chapters, simply means "congregation, or assembly." Compare Stephen's words, "the church in the wilderness" (7:38) with Leviticus 8:3-5. It plainly means God's people.

Let us remember that these first chapters are primarily occupied with Kingdom matters. Church affairs really begin with Chapter 13. The Master's answer to the disciples' question of Verse 6 shows that He wanted them to be concerned just then with "the Promise of the Father." He had before given them a symposium on the Holy Spirit (John 14-16), but they had to receive Him in order to understand Him and to be witnesses for Christ.

AN IMPORTANT VACANCY FILLED

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples left for the "upper room," perhaps a chamber in the temple. (Compare II Kings 23:12, I Chronicles 28:11, Mark 14:15) There they continued with "one accord in prayer and supplication." It was in the midst of this prayer time that Peter announced: "One must become a witness with us of His resurrection." There is no room for question as to whether Peter was in emphasized in Divine order. The need was there.

Twelve is always the Divine number of Kingdom fulness. Four, the divisible number of humanity, multiplied by three, the indivisible number of Deity, equals 12, the comprehensive number of Divine dominion on earth and of new creation completeness. Study the holy city in Revelation 21. The Holy Spirit would not come until that vacancy, left by Judas Iscariot, was filled. Wonderful! God had a man in training for that place during those three years. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (1:21) with Mark 4:10 - "And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable." No doubt Matthias knew it long before, even as Moses knew 40 years before that he should lead Israel out of Egypt. Note that "He was numbered with the eleven apostles" (1:26); also, "Peter standing up with the eleven" (2:14). In Chapter 6:2, he is counted with the twelve. But some who apparently do not wish to give Paul the place that God has given him, arises and says that Paul should have had that place, that he actually did become the twelfth apostle. Let Paul answer for himself. In I Corinthians 15, he is recounting the occasions on which Christ was seen and by whom, after His resurrection. He declares that "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve ... after that, He was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And LAST OF ALL, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (Verses 5-8). A careful study of the following citations shows that there were at least seven other apostles besides the 12, and that Paul was one of that group. (Acts 19:22 with II Corinthians 8:18, 23; I Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:6 with II Corinthians 1:19; Acts 14:14; I Corinthians 4:6, 9; Philippians 2:25) The word "messenger" in II Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25 is "apostle" in the original Greek text. It is translated apostle in the Revised Version. Paul was the chief apostle of another group, the Church, for another and distinct purpose, even as Peter was the leader of the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

INTERESTING NOTES

The "not many days" (1:5) were ten days to which add the "forty days" (1:3) and we have the time from Christ's resurrection to Pentecost, or 50. See Leviticus 23:15-16. The word "power" (1:7) is "authority." The word "witness, or testimony" occurs about 50 times in the book. It expresses our duty to God. The phrase "one accord" (1:14) occurs seven times, a significant feature of those days. It is a musical term. If we walk in the Spirit, there will be harmony among us as Christ's instruments, "making melody in our hearts to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

The word "appointed" (1:23) means "set forth" as in Chapter 6:6. The saying, "that he might go to his own place" is the final proof that Judas Iscariot was not saved. He did not "fall from grace" (Galatians 5:4), nor from his "own steadfastness" (II Peter 3:17). He "failed of the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15). He had never laid hold of saving grace. By transgression, he fell from his office (1:15). The word "place" means "district, or region."

RISEN WITH CHRIST

Risen with Christ! Oh glorious truth.
We shout aloud the refrain.
Risen with Christ! No death or gloom,
But a joyful, happy strain.
Risen with Christ! But crucified first.
To the cross we all were borne,
Put to death in God's holy Son.
Our sins His brow did adorn.
Risen with Christ! Though buried with Him
In the darkness of the grave.
Sentenced! Crucified! Buried!
And now only God could save.
Risen with Christ! The story goes on.
The tomb no longer holds sway;
For out of its silence and darkness
Burst the LIGHT of eternal day.
-- Mary M. Bodie

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

CHAPTER TWO

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place" (2:1). Pentecost was the fourth annual Jewish feast. It occurred early in the third month of the Jewish sacred year.

That day came just 50 days from the time that Israel waved the barley sheaf, or first fruit unto God, (See Leviticus 23 with I Corinthians 15. The Holy Spirit was poured out just 50 days from the morning the resurrection of Christ. The many Old Testament types and promises of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, were fulfilled that hour. The Comforter, of whom Jesus spoke freely, John 14-16, then came. He became to the disciples the enduement with power. Perhaps we can study this chapter in no better manner than by answering several questions:

1. What happened that day? Several striking things First, "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (2:2). That sound was from heaven, and it came suddenly and sovereignly, entirely independent of the people. It went nowhere else but came and "filled all the house where they were sitting." They were in one accord, waiting for the fulfillment of the last word of the Lord. Does this not speak of the Spirit as a mighty, intelligent One? What if He desires to manifest Himself in such a manner today? Should anyone object? But very many do. Second, "And there appeared unto them tongues, parting asunder, like as of fire" (2:3). A strange phenomenon indeed! Had not John foretold of a "baptism with fire?" (Matthew 3). Yet, that too, was a surprise. There were not only a few new tongues, but 120, one for each disciple, cloven, as if speaking to all mankind.

Third, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (2:4a). That was the central fact. All the others were accompaniments. For that event the disciples were looking and waiting.

They did not, and could not, understand what the Spirit's advent should mean until they experienced His indwelling. It is even just so today. Yet, those who have not been filled, or anointed with the Spirit as were the one hundred and twenty, attempt to teach others about Him. How can they? How greatly all saints need anointing! And what a privilege to be filled with God's Spirit! Reader, do you appreciate it? Oh, matchless love! Oh, unspeakable condescension, that He, the spotless Dove, should deign to dwell in this tenement of infirmity! Ah, but the precious blood of Jesus purchased our bodies and made them His temples (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Thus, weakness becomes dynamite. Fourth. Dare I name it? "And began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance" (2:4b). The devil hates this phenomenon more than any other thing pertaining to the Christian life, except the blood of atonement. And why? What harm can it do? Be it remembered that the speaking in tongues was altogether Divine. The disciples knew nothing about it beforehand. Perhaps they were familiar with Isaiah 28:11-12, but they were not waiting for tongues, nor for any other manifestation, but only for the Promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. However, they spoke "as the Spirit (who had just come upon them) gave them utterance." Were they to be blamed? Of course not. Well, if I receive the Holy Spirit and speak in another tongue, why do you blame me? If I do not speak in a tongue, how can anyone know that the Spirit has come to me? How do I myself know? What right has any man to tell us that we should not speak in tongues? "Forbid not to speak in tongues," exclaimed dear Paul. Why denounce it as of the devil? Was Peter's new tongue of the devil? There is some indication that the devil is not very far off from the folks who would fight the sign and manifestation of new languages.

The "BEGAN" to speak, which implies that speaking in tongues was to be continued, even as what "Jesus began to do and teach" should be perpetuated by His disciples. What is the use of tongues? cries the critic. Are you not ashamed to speak so lightly about Jehovah's sovereign acts? Are you not afraid that you might offend His love? Dare you set your carnal, finite ignorance up against Divine, infinite Wisdom? If you are honestly enquiring, simply run the Bible references and the Holy Spirit will give you a dozen reasons for this peculiar phenomenon. "Tongues are for a sign" of the Divine Presence, a sign that the Spirit is poured out, for there were no tongues before the Spirit was sent.

They are a distinct sign of Divine power, for without that power, no one can speak the heavenly language. People beg for money, teach rank error, indulge in chicanery in the Lord's work, but Satan never disturbs them for so doing. Yet, to stop the unruly member from worshipping and adoring the blessed Lord, men write pages upon pages of the most scathing sort. Is it not written that "tongues shall cease?" someone asks. Yes, tongues shall cease when the Author of this gracious gift shall have accomplished all the Father's will thereby, but not until then. And let Jehovah, not men, say when tongues shall cease. (Order our tract, "This is That") It is very evident that the advent of the Holy Spirit was with mighty power, very manifestly supernatural and phenomenal, accompanied with signs and wonders and dynamics. Why should they have ever ceased? Why do ministers discountenance the supernatural's? Why do they fear the phenomenal? How can they expect the Holy Spirit to continue what "Jesus began to do and teach" if He is not allowed to demonstrate His unlimited power, and employ the gifts which He brought with Him? Need we wonder that there is no life, no joy, no victory, no healing balm in most religious circles? Why are prominent men crying out for a revival? Why are they exhorting the Church to pray for it? Because they are rejecting the revival which Jehovah sovereignly sent in 1906, and which has been circling the globe. Sir, you will never have a revival unless you accept God's Revivalist, the Holy Spirit, after His own Scriptural fashion.

2. Who received the Spirit? The twelve apostles and "certain women," who were of one accord with them. Most likely the seventy, whom Jesus had sent forth, were there also. "All the apostles" of I

Corinthians 15:7 must include the seventy. The word "sent" in Luke 10:1 is "apostled" in the Greek; also in Mark 6:7. Some men claim that the Gift of the Spirit was for the apostles only, but the first company filled included the "apostles, the women and the brethren" (Chapter 1:12-14). Women were filled, and prophesied, even as Joel foretold (Chapter 2:17-18). In Chapters 8, 10, and 19, we learn that the Spirit was the Father's Gift for all His people if they would receive Him.

3. What was the effect on others when the disciples received the Spirit? The answer is plain and full. The multitude was confounded. The people were all amazed and marveled. They were in perplexity, saying one to another, "What meaneth this?" Others mocking, said, "They are full of new wine." The God of mighty power was on the scene. The whole city was stirred. But what was the particular fact that amazed the people? Three times it is here stated - Verses 6, 8, 11 - that the people marveled because they heard the disciples speak in their own languages. A multitude of Jew and Jewish proselytes from 15 different countries and speaking the dialects of those lands, were assembled in Jerusalem because of the annual Jewish feast of weeks, or Pentecost. (See Leviticus 23:15-21). It was the miraculous and unheard of phenomena that aroused the slumbering masses. Oh, if the clergy of our day were only simple enough to be plain ministers of the Christ of apostolic days, what wonders God would do! Alas, they run from the supernatural, the phenomenal, the really spiritual! They rather join those who are mocking and talk worse than in those days; for they say that speaking in tongues is "of the devil."

4. How shall we account for the outpouring of the Spirit and the speaking in other tongues? Peter answered, saying, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (2:16-18). Joel did not say that the recipients should speak in other tongues, but the record declares that they did. Isaiah foretold those days by saying: "With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people, to whom He said, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing" (Isaiah 28:11-12). The due time came for the fulfillment of Joel's and Isaiah's words. Peter also announced the death and resurrection of Jesus, confirming the latter by quoting David's words in Psalm 16. Then he added this undeniable fact: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit; He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (2:33). The will of the Father was done by the outpouring of the Spirit. The will of Jesus Christ was done. It was the will of the "other Comforter" to come at that moment, and the 120 disciples were fully prepared to receive Him. Neither did they object to the manner of His advent, nor to the accompanying supernatural sign of speaking in new tongues. By the direct orders of Jesus, 120 were assembled in one accord, waiting for the descent of the promised mighty Holy Spirit. That was not the peak of perfection, as one has written, but rather, the peak of power.

PRAYER CHANGES THINGS

Do you know what happened on that day
When, burdened for souls, you tried to pray?
Did you think you failed to touch the Throne
When your lips were dumb, your prayer a groan?
Over the sea in a hot, dry land
A sower sowed with faltering hand,
And lo! in that hour refreshing came;
God's servant spoke with a tongue of flame.

Souls long steeped in a land of night
Passed from gloom into marvelous light;
Away from idols they turned to God,
Finding salvation in Jesus' blood.
'Twas your prayer that moved God's mighty hand,
And blessing poured down in a desert land.

-- Author Unknown

- * Christ's birth brought the infinite God within reach of finite man.
- * When Christ rules the heart, peace reigns supreme.

PETER'S PENTECOSTAL SERMON CHAPTER TWO

In the apostle's first Spirit-inspired message, he quotes from two Old Testament men -- the prophet Joel and King David. His quotation from Joel falls into two distinct parts. The first part, verses 17-18, refers entirely to the Gift of the Holy Spirit pertaining to this present age and to the next age. The second part, verses 19-20, refers to the beginning of the next age. Verse 21 covers both periods. Let me call particular attention to verse 17: "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh ..." Some men deliberately denounce the present, effective, phenomenal working of God, as fanaticism and devilish. Was Peter correct in calling that time "the last days"? No one denies his words. In what days are we now? Not one prophetic student denies that we are in the last days. What happened in the last days then? If all that Luke records in Acts 2 took place, then, how can verse 17 be fulfilled now, if these are the last days, unless we allow a repetition, or continuation of those happenings? If those phenomena were the fulfillment of Joel's words, then, what else but those amazing supernatural's can be said to be the fulfillment of his prophecy today? How dare any man attempt to garble the Scriptures and introduce a supposed substitute for Jehovah's own sovereign, almighty Gift and confounding accompaniments? How can Bible students conscientiously slip over those plain words: "And it shall be in the last days, saith God?" If, as the apostle declares that God says, it behooves us all to believe it all and profit by it. And not only did Peter announce that God said it, but He has been saying it ever since Joel wrote those words. Happy and victorious are they who "gladly receive" Joel's and Peter's words as the words of God!

Note an important difference in the wording: Joel said, "Afterward," but Peter says, "In the last days."

The reason is that God had first promised material blessings and prosperity, which were to be followed by the pouring out of the Spirit. Study Joel 2:18-27. "Corn and oil and wine" were promised. He bid the beasts not to be afraid, for the trees would flourish and be fruitful for them. He bid the children of Zion to rejoice because they should "eat in plenty and be satisfied," and never again be ashamed. The material rains, which had been withheld for so many years because of Israel's disobedience; that is, the former and the latter rains, should be poured out copiously upon the holy land. Then "afterward" -- after those bountiful blessings, the spiritual blessings should flow forth with the advent of the Holy Spirit.

However, it pleased the Lord to send the Spirit ahead of the material blessings. The latter did not come upon Palestine before the Spirit was poured out. Therefore, Peter could not say "afterward," but "in the last days," which also include Joel's "afterward." Now mark two noteworthy facts. About

1875 A.D., the rains began to fall in the holy land, restoring it to some measure of productiveness, as foretold by Joel. Then, about 1906, the Lord began to visit the Church with the spiritual "latter rain," the Holy Spirit, with the invincible sign of speaking in new tongues. Joel's "afterward" could not come at the beginning of this age, but it has come near the close of this Church Age. Now, if Peter could say of the advent of the Spirit, "This is that," how much more can we shout, "This is that," because the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is more complete now than the Pentecost at the beginning. Not only has it come after the material rainfall, but the mutterings of judgment are so manifest that the judgments foretold by Joel, which were not fulfilled at Pentecost, are sure to come upon the world very soon.

Iniquity with blatant infidelity and modern idol worship is at its full today, and Jehovah cannot endure it much longer.

The second part of Joel's prophecy, verses 19-20, were not fulfilled at that time. They await fulfillment. We should expect them to follow the present down-pour of the spiritual "latter rain." It is just before the coming of the day of the Lord, that God will show wonders in heaven and signs upon the earth. That coming time of judgment, which Joel termed "great and terrible," Peter calls it "great and notable." The latter word is "epiphane" in Greek, which literally means "shining upon;" hence, "appearing, manifestation." Prophetic students frequently term it the "epiphany" in distinction from the "parousia," or presence of the Lord. The word "appearing" in Peter's first epistle is not the same as here. There it properly means revelation," as in I Peter 1:13. In the Greek, it is apokalupsei," that is, an uncovering.

Peter always looked for the unveiling, or revelation of Jesus. To obtain a fuller understanding of the word "appearing," or epiphany (Acts 2:20), it will pay the diligent student to compare I Timothy 6:14; II Timothy 1:10 and 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13. In II Thessalonians 2:8, the same word is translated "brightness." From the last citation, we can readily see why Joel calls it terrible, for by the dazzling, outshining of His presence, Christ will destroy His enemies forever. Joel calls the Day of the Lord a "day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (2:1-2). Then will the Lord be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (His whole Body of people), in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 2:8).

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved; therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (2:22-27). Peter turned suddenly from Joel to David, who was also a prophet as well as a king. Jesus' burial and resurrection were the fulfillment of David's graphic words. It was the same Peter who wrote afterwards of Jesus' visit to the believers in Hades, or Abraham's bosom, where He preached to the spirits in prison -- those who had died believing God and accepting His Word (I Peter 3:19-20).

It was not possible that Jesus should remain subject to death. His holy body could not yield to corruption. Life repels and overcomes death. Light expels darkness. Weakness succumbs to power. Not only did Jesus comfort the prisoners of hope and then depart from their abode, but "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive." He descended first into the lower parts of the earth (lower than the grave, even into Hades) and freed the captives and took them with Himself "far above all heavens" (Ephesians 4:8-10). No marvel that Paul wrote that "to depart and be with Christ is far better"

(Philippians 1:23-24). There is only one excuse for staying here -- "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses" (2:32). The apostles emphasized greatly the resurrection of Jesus. It was the unanswerable proof to every honest Jew of His Divine Sonship and Messiahship. "He was declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead, even Jesus" (Romans 14). Having heaped up an array of plain facts, confirmed by Old Testament prophecies, demonstrating the Divine sonship and call of Jesus Christ, Peter concluded his masterful discourse by a burning exhortation: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ (Messiah, or Anointed One), this Jesus whom ye crucified" (2:36). WAS PETER'S SERMON EFFECTUAL?

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37). Yes, Peter's sermon was effectual because it was the voice of God. The 120 were together in "one accord." Likewise, the apostle's hearers were present as one heart. Their need was one and their cry for help was one. Therefore, the Spirit could enable His servant to give an answer at once. "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38).

Israel's repentance and baptism had a particular meaning. They were not "sinners of the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15), nor sinners as we commonly term today. They were all God's people, actual worshipers of Him and looking for the promised Deliverer. Being zealous for the law of Moses, they were observing the rites and ceremonies in the temple as set forth in Exodus and Leviticus. Up to the light they had many of them, no doubt, walked in God's will. But now Christ came as the fulfillment of those rites and ceremonies, which He had said: "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). "By mighty works and wonders and signs" God approved of His Son in their midst.

But as a nation, the Jews rejected Him. He also had said to them, "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of ME; but ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life" (John 5:39).

When the Holy Spirit was poured out, Israel was granted unbounded evidence that Jesus was indeed the Anointed One of the Father. Therefore, they should repent of their former attitude toward Him and accept Him as their Savior and Prince. By one outward act, they could express their faith in Jesus of Nazareth; namely, by being baptized in water in His Name. Peter did not mean, as some teach, that God would forgive their sins if they yielded to baptism in Jesus' Name. That would have been a salvation by works, against which the whole Bible stands boldly and plainly. He meant rather, if they believed on Jesus, they would be baptized in His Name. God did not save the Jews one way, partly by works, and the Gentiles wholly by grace.

"He made no distinction between us (the Jews) and them (the Gentiles), cleansing their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Paul's words to the 12 at Ephesus indicate the nature and force of water baptism. He said: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:4-5). Compare also Luke 1:76. In both cases, they showed their faith by yielding to baptism. They who hearkened to John and to Paul were not pricked in their heart and did not need to cry, "What shall we do?" They did not resist the truth when they heard it.

The preposition "unto" in the phrase "unto the remission of your sins," is "eis" in the Greek. Its radical sense is "direction towards, motion to, in or into." Baptism cannot mean more than in the direction toward, or as a motion unto salvation; that is, it expresses faith in Christ as the Savior.

Furthermore, John the Baptist had announced "the axe laid at the root of the trees" (Matthew 3:10).

Both Jews and Gentiles proved themselves unable to bring forth good fruit, for "there is none good, no not one; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:12, 23). Therefore, God's judgment axe, the law, cut down the trees through Christ's substitutionary death on Calvary. He was "cut off, but not for Himself," but for all men -- Daniel 9:26. "We thus judge that One died for all; therefore, all died" (II Corinthians 5:15).

When Israel yielded to baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ, they simply acknowledged that the Man whom they had rejected, is indeed their promised Redeemer, and that through Him only could they have eternal life. Thus, they outwardly declared that they could not help themselves, that the rites and ceremonies were only shadows of Christ, and could bring them no blessing, but He was the real Substance. They acknowledged that they died in His death and were raised in His resurrection to live by His very life in them.

"They then that had received his words were baptized" (2:41); or which is richer: "Those therefore who gladly had welcomed his words were baptized." And there were added in that day, about three thousand souls. Of course, with their heart turned to Jesus Christ, they could receive the Holy Spirit quite readily, for He had been given freely already, even poured out upon all flesh and was waiting to be received. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (2:42). We just studied the teaching of the apostles, as set forth in verses 38 to 41. How blessed it would be throughout all Christendom today if the ministers and people still continued in the same doctrine. The disciples continued in fellowship, for a wholehearted acceptance of the whole truth results in full fellowship among believers. As Jesus gave instruction to the twelve (Matthew 26:26-29) and years afterward to Paul (I Corinthians 11:23-25), so they observed the "breaking of bread." Instead of cutting out this memorial, as some would do, they continued it. Instead of pronouncing it a "tradition nailed to the cross," the Apostle Paul perpetuated the observance of it and gave us the correct interpretation as related to the Church.

Some people are so afraid of formality, that they would exclude spiritual forms and symbols. They fear that the Spirit cannot be free to operate through what they call forms and ceremonies. Let us remember that the Holy Spirit does not move haphazardly, like a bird in the air. He always moves according to His written Word. If we follow His direction, we too, will move thus, and we never will be bound by any dead form. Every motion of every meeting will be living, shining with beauty and pulsating with power. Let us rather fear that we might get away from the inspired pattern delineated in this book of Acts. It is the record of "the Acts of the Apostles," but they were filled and guided by the dear Holy Spirit. When we conform to the pattern, we are moving in the Spirit. In I Corinthians 11, we read of two of the three church ordinances. The Greek word "paradoseis" translated "ordinances," is also translated "traditions" in II Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6. They were not nailed to the cross, because they were given to Paul to be observed by the Church. Baptism in water is the third ordinance, or tradition.

"And in prayers." The saints in the beginning continued to pray as well as did the apostles.

Nowadays, the preacher does the praying, and his prayers are sometimes as cold as Greenland. There is no real warmth or power in them. Too often they proceed from uncircumcised lips. It appears that the primary purpose of gathering was for prayer. Peter and John went to the temple at three P.M., for that was the hour of prayer (Chapter 3:1). Now the people assemble to hear a list of worldly announcements and a formal talk, or lecture. Then the lame were wonderfully healed. Then they lifted their hands to God in streaming cries of need, and He shook the place of meeting in answer thereto (Chapter four). Many wonders and signs were done in Jesus' Name. When Peter was imprisoned later

because of his loyalty to the truth, the Church prayed him out (Chapter 12). If you want a safe symposium on living, effective prayer, read the Acts. "All that believed were together and had all things common, and they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all according as any man had need" (2:44-45). The same facts are stated in greater length in Chapter 4:32-37. The conduct of the saints as expressed in these verses with the fulfillment of Leviticus 25. Every 50th Jewish year was a jubilee year, which pointed forward to the millennium. That very year in which Jesus died and the Holy Spirit was poured out was a Jubilee. The disciples supposed that the millennial reign of Christ was due and that He would return very soon. Indeed, it was due, and He would have come back about seven years later, if the Jews as a nation had received Him. Therefore, they acted in obedience to Leviticus 25 and sold their possessions and had all things common, as they will do again when the Lord returns.

However, Jesus did not return then, but introduced a different order of procedure. The Church was never intended to observe that rule of order given to Israel. Hence, the Apostle Paul, the Church apostle, distinctively never taught the community of goods. For that reason, wherever men have endeavored to introduce such a custom, it always failed. They were not led of the Lord. The unity required of the Church is the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"-- the seven ones of Ephesians 4:3-6. We are not admonished to try to bring it about, for it already exists, but we should be "diligent to keep the unity." The gifts and offices have been bestowed that we might "all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13). "And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home; they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people" (2:46). The breaking of bread here was not a part of the worship, as in verse 42. There the prayers are mentioned with it, but not so here. Note how joyful they were. This also is an earnest of how glad and wholehearted Israel will be in the millennium. "And the Lord added together day by day those that were being saved" (2:47). It may be of interest to the Bible student to read this verse exactly as it occurs in the Greek - "And the Lord added those who were being saved daily to the assembly." If ministers would compare this verse with Chapter 5:14 and 11:24, they would not stress church joining.

At least, they would not attempt to do the adding, for it reads distinctly that the Lord added. He did not add any unsaved people, but those being saved. Furthermore, they were not added to any man-made sect, or denomination. There we read that they were "added to the Lord." That agrees with Paul's words, "joined to the Lord," in I Corinthians 6:17. When He saves people, He adds them to Himself. The New Testament admits of no other adding, or joining, except to Himself, or by Himself. After the sad episode of Ananias and Sapphira (Chapter 5), "no man durst join himself to them." That ought to be full of instruction and warning to all believers today. The foregoing happenings occurred in the year 33 A.D.

I AM HAPPY IN HIM

My soul is so happy in Jesus,
For He is so precious to me.
His voice, it is music to hear it,
His face, it is heaven to see.
He sought me so long ere I knew Him,
When wand'ring afar from the fold;
Safe home in His arms He hath brought me,
To where there are pleasures untold.
His love and His mercy surround me,
His grace like a river doth flow,

His Spirit, to guide and to comfort,
Is with me wherever I go.
They say I shall some day be like Him,
My cross and my burden lay down;
Till then I will ever be faithful
In gathering gems for His crown.

-- E. O. Excell

THE GLORIFICATION OF JESUS CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour (3 P.M.). And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple, who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH RISE UP AND WALK. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (3:1-7).

People are generally more or less familiar with this healing narrative, and it is a marvelous miracle among many which were done through the apostles' ministry. How few, however, observe its typical value. If we do not look for typical teaching in the Acts, we will miss much that is ours by Divine Grace. The healing of the lame man was an object lesson to all Israel of what God was about to do for them as a nation, if they had received Jesus. It was in His mind also to do the same stupendous things for the Gentiles.

The man had been lame for about 40 years (4:22). Forty is the number of testing. Moses was tested forty years as to his faithfulness. Then he was tested another 40 years as to his qualifications for responsibility. Finally, 40 years more tested his success as a leader and his fitness to receive a full reward. Jesus was also tested 40 days in the wilderness.

The beggar's lameness illustrates Israel's utter helplessness after 1500 years of tutorage under the law (Galatians 3:21-25). When Christ came, the Law, the Tutor, or Schoolmaster, was no longer needed. The Law could not give life, nor sustain life. The Law could only chide, correct, curb, and chastise its pupils until Christ should come - not, "to bring us unto Christ" - Galatians 3:23. Christ did come and proved His readiness and ample ability to heal the people, spirit, soul, and body, by recovering the lame man. Some of the people present believed and received the great blessings also. They, too, went walking and leaping and praising God. Thank God! They who today believe fully on Jesus receive the like fulness of blessing, freedom and joy. The Law cannot make people walk uprightly, leap and shout for joy. It cannot heal the sick and alleviate pain. Only Grace can bless.

The lame man's wonderful healing foreshadows the healing of the whole nation of Israel, when Jesus comes again. "Shall a nation be born at once?" cries the prophet (Isaiah 66:8). Yes, the whole nation will be healed and leap and praise God. They will accept Christ whom they have rejected these twenty centuries. Read Isaiah 25-27, also 35:10, and note the frequent utterances of the phrase, "in that day." They will gladly acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God, the Holy One and the Just, the Prince of life, whom their fathers killed. His Name through faith in His Name will give them perfect soundness in soul and body. Dear Peter in his second recorded sermon, explained that all these

blessings resulted from the death of Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. (3:12-18)

AN APPROPRIATE APPEAL

"Repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things (3:19-21). The Apostle Peter wisely uses the healing of the beggar and the explanation he gave, as a mighty leverage to persuade his audience to accept Jesus.

The Spirit inspired Peter to declare that the "times of refreshing," promised to them in the Old Testament could only come by the personal return, or "Presence of the Lord." How true is that! He uttered also another solemn truth - those refreshings were dependent upon Israel's repentance. As we shall see by the seventh chapter, their refusal to turn to the Lord, shut up the heavens and penned up their Lord in the regions above. Hence, their cry, like a vexed widow (Luke 18:3-8), will bring Him back to deliver them and refresh them beyond measure.

Dear Reader, consider these words most carefully. Today, God is visiting the Gentiles and taking out a people for His Name (Chapter 15:14-17). We can expect nothing more. The Jews must accept Jesus nationally before the worldwide revival can come. The world is not turning to Him. When we read or hear that a whole city is taking a stand for Christ under the ministry of some modern evangelist, we may know at once that the full Gospel of the despised Nazarene is not being proclaimed.

Ministers and methods that are popular with men are an abomination to the holy God. Compare John 5:43-44 and I Corinthians 4:9-13. The greater revival, the world-wide revival for which some claim to be praying, will not arrive until Jesus returns and will be received by the Jews. Observe the last verses of Chapter Three. "Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed, shall ALL THE FAMILIES of the earth be blessed" (3:25). Note in particular the following: "Unto YOU FIRST, God having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless YOU in turning every one of YOU from YOUR iniquities." The great responsibility is upon Israel for the salvation of the nations. "If the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead" (Romans 11:15-31).

How rapidly the Spirit sweeps us forward in the unfolding of the Divine Plan. In Chapter Two, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit were manifested, and the resurrection of Jesus proved. In this third chapter, the return and presence of the "Prince of Life" are announced. The entire period of Israel's partial blindness is spanned by this chapter and their deliverance offered to them. Of course, the apostle did not then know how long the Lord would be detained in the heavens. Doubtless, he was made to know later on reading Psalm 90:4 and Hosea 6:2, whereby he learned that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" (II Peter 3:8).

CHAPTER FOUR MERCY REFUSED

"And as they spoke unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled, because they taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in ward unto the morrow; for it was now eventide" (4:1-3). In their addresses, the apostles constantly aimed to make Israel see that Man, whom the Jews had just crucified, was indeed the Anointed of God. Those Spirit-filled men proved that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jews' own Scriptures. Thus, they were forced to behold the Spirit's perpetual effort to show them God's amazing grace, which their legality hated as poison.

Study the rapid growth of their malice, which sought to keep pace with Jehovah's gracious and mighty workings. From "amazement and marvel," they go on through "mockery," and "grief." Then they are "filled with indignation," and "gnash" on Stephen and "stone him" to death, thus "crucifying to themselves Christ afresh."

Peter's first sermon was occasioned by the amazement and perplexity of the people, who asked one another, saying, "What meaneth this?" and by the cry of some, saying, "What shall we do" (2:12, 37). His second message was occasioned by their greatly wondering, as if the holiness of the apostles had healed the impotent man (3:11-12). The present discourse was the answer to a question by the sore-troubled officers who say, "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" That a notable miracle had been wrought, they could not deny; but they did not wish to receive it as Divine.

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (not, filled again), said unto them ... In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in this Name, doth this man stand here before you whole" (4:8-10). What a comprehensive and convincing reply! Their critical question gave the apostle the opportunity to emphasize the NAME, which is above every name. You will observe that the word "name," as referring to Jesus, occurs seven times in this chapter. That is very significant. The angel said to Joseph in a dream, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). From His birth, the Jews hated His name. Peter rung the changes on His name. The Stone which the Jews rejected; God made the Head of the corner. Note these striking words: "And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (4:12).

At once it becomes evident why the apostles from the beginning exhorted the people to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ (2:38). And this is why we read throughout this book that the people were baptized invariably in His name, and in no other name. Not once is it written that any one was baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. "God hath made Him both Lord and Christ (Anointed), this Jesus whom ye crucified." "The God of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus." Moses wrote of Him, saying, "Him shall ye hear in all things." "Believers were added to the Lord," and to Him only. "Him did God exalt with His right hand, a Prince and a Savior (2:37; 3:13, 22; 5:14, 31). For these ample reasons, everything was done in Jesus' name.

Should baptism in water be an exception? Nay, verily not.

Matthew 28:19 will be observed when the Lord returns with the Church, His Body, of which He is the Scriptural Head. He will then be given all rule and authority by His Father and will reign one thousand years. Really, they who baptize in the Name of the Trinity, pull the millennial age into this Church Age, which robs Jesus Christ of the exalted and honored place which the Father gave Him as the Head of the Church. Observe Colossians 3:17, 23.

Is not the Book of the Acts an inspired record? Did not the 12 apostles and also Paul move in God's perfect will? If they did, what authority have we to deviate from their mode of operations? If they did not do as the Holy Spirit bid them, why did not Paul teach us better? Why do his writings agree with the Acts? Compare I Corinthians 1:10, 13; 5:4; 6:11; Philippians 2:9-10. The mighty power of the Name of Jesus was further demonstrated, when the disciples gathered together in prayer, beseeching God to give them boldness to preach, heal the sick and work signs and wonders "through the Name of Jesus" (4:24-31).

A MILLENNIAL FORECAST

In their petition to the Lord, the disciples quoted from the second Psalm: "Why do the Gentiles rage? ..." The opposition and rage of the Jewish and national officers then was only a shadow of how both church and state will be arrayed against our Lord at the opening of the coming dispensation. The earnest of those days is apparent now. The people are imagining vain things.

The kings are setting themselves in array against God's Anointed. Modernism in Christendom no longer wants Jesus to be the "Savior," and of course, the kings do not want Him to be "The Prince." Likewise, as intimated in our notes on Chapter Two, verses 32-37 of this chapter are a millennial scene. Israel will be of one heart and have all things common. With great power will the ministers then witness, and great grace will be upon them all. There will be many "Barnabas's" in evidence then.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXALTATION OF JESUS

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things ... And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?" And she said, "Yea, for so much." Then Peter said unto her, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out." Then fell she down straightway at his feet and yielded up the ghost ..." (5:1-10).

These events are not simply bits of history. They are profoundly instructive, both as to experience and type. Let us not miss God's deepest thought and purpose in them. Therefore, we are not to see only the individual sin of that selfish couple here, but also the deep-seated sin of national Israel. In Luke 12:1, Jesus said, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." But back of this, lay a still deeper sin, which is generally overlooked, or treated lightly. Men throw clubs at the evil fruit but fail to see the root. Jesus Christ killed the root. The old creation never likes this. Study the last one of the Ten Commandments. Observe the fulness of that verse, and all is summed up in one tremendous word - "COVET." The Holy Spirit declares this to be the root evil. In Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5, coveting is termed "idolatry," or worshiping another. This is why Paul uttered Acts 20:33 and singles out coveting in Romans 7:7.

This is also the full lesson on coveting in I Timothy 6:1-10. The Apostle Paul says: "THE LOVE of money is the root of ALL EVIL," because money can buy all that men covet. The old creation, whether it is in the world or in believers, raises a great cry about other sins, notably drunkenness, adultery, lying, etc., but the Holy Spirit strikes at the taproot of sins. Coveting is the mother of drunkenness, adultery, lying, stealing, etc. What is coveting? It is desiring anything out of God's will.

It is desiring someone, or something else as a source of comfort and support rather than God Himself. It is "IDOLATRY."

The hypocrisy of Israel - "who say, and do not," and who claimed Abraham for their father and the living God as their God, were far from both in their hearts, and this sin was projected on the screen in the conduct of Ananias and his wife. God's just wrath against hypocrisy, the fruit, and coveting, the root, is displayed in their sudden cutting off. From Old Testament writings they knew what to expect. God was still dealing with Israel, and His judgment of this couple was an object lesson to the nation.

It should also be a warning to us today. In I Corinthians 10:5-10 is found the reason for such severe treatment. Chiefly, "Those things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." In like manner, Simon was smitten with blindness for a season (Acts 13:11), which is a type of the spiritual blindness which has happened to the whole nation because they

refused Christ as their Messiah (Romans 11:25). Those early days were a transition from the Kingdom of God on earth to the Church of Christ, seated by faith with Him in the heavenlies. This will appear plainer as we proceed in our studies. Hence, the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira form a transitional place between the Kingdom and the Church.

Israel, led by Joshua, entered in triumph into the promised land. They were progressing finely. God delivered fragrant Jericho into their hands, which typified their provisional conquest of the world.

"BUT," says the Holy Penman. It is always a sad day when God has to record that blunt conjunction, "BUT." "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing; for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Joshua 7:1).

Achan threw a blot and blight upon the scene. He broke the sevenfold tenth commandment. He "coveted." And God had Achan stoned to death for troubling Israel.

ACHAN IN THE CHURCH

Acts Five corresponds with Joshua Seven. Spiritually, Israel was then in the promised land. The world was judged and cursed at Calvary. Those who received the truth were filled with the Spirit. Provisionally, the world lay at their feet, conquered and subdued. They were meeting with unbounded success. "The Lord added together daily such as were being saved ... BUT!" Here is this same significant blunt conjunction, the first word of Chapter Five. What does it mean? Was not the Spirit given? Were the disciples not in the will of God? Do we not read: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit"? How then could there arise that dreadful blight in such a holy and Spirit-empowered gathering?

Verse 13 lets us into the secret. Some people attempted to "join themselves to them." Those self-joiners pretended to make a full consecration to God. It soon becomes evident as to whether people are self-joined to the meeting, or divinely "added to the Lord," and the manifest love of the world proves men's hypocrisy and coveting nature. The whole world, ruined by sin, was cursed in the death of Christ. It is therefore justly devoted to God, for whom it was purchased by His Son's death. When we believe on Jesus Christ, God gives us a nature that loves Him, and which uses this world for His glory. We are "added to the Lord." And that old nature in all of us, which covets, was condemned, and cursed at Calvary, when "Christ was made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Constantly admit this fact; count with God; then "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life" will be forever powerless. (I John 2:15-16)

"And of the rest dared no man join himself unto them ... And believers were the more added to the Lord" (5:13-14). Where the Holy Spirit has His way and His power prevails, there is no such thing as "joining the church," but people are joined to the Lord (I Corinthians 6:17). By the seductive method of "church-joining," the "four hundred prophets of Baal" are filling up the creed bound churches and reporting great results, but how few are born of the Spirit. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was set at the gateway of this Church Age as a warning against this subtle religious snare. The religious spirit of the age is so fascinating and powerful in its cunning, has so much of the truth, and in many respects is so like the genuine, that very few people are not snared by it. Our only safeguard is to take Christ as our life and walk in the fulness of the Spirit and keep filled with the Word. Bear in mind that the foregoing is typical of the righteous reign of Christ during the millennium. His judgment of those two hypocrites suggests the full authority He will possess as the Prince, or King of kings and Lord of lords. This explains why similar hypocrites are not judged in like manner today as were Ananias and his wife. Now, the wheat and tares are allowed to grow together until the harvest (Matthew 13:27-30).

JESUS OFFICIALLY REJECTED
CHAPTER 5:17-40

"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison" (5:17-18). In Chapter Four, we saw that the Jewish officials were beginning to take a stand against the apostles. Hence, Peter's third discourse was addressed to the "rulers of the people and elders" (Chapter 4:8). His former messages were addressed to all the people - "Men of Judea, or Israel, men and brethren." The answer of the apostles and the continued miracles did not allay their rage. At first, were "sore troubled" because of the apostles' teaching (Chapter 4:1). Now they are "filled with jealousy" and determined to wipe them off the map. But the Lord came to their rescue and delivered them miraculously from prison and bid them preach "all the words of this life." Of course, they obeyed, and an unusual thing happened. They held a "daybreak" meeting in the temple.

Oh, what a message they had - words of life, yes, all the words of this life; not this natural life (psyche, Greek), but the supernatural, eternal life (zoës, Greek). It was the new creation life, which had recently sprung out of death. The original reads thus - "all the utterances (hramata) of this life."

Jesus said to John, "I am the Living One" (Zon, Revelation 1:18). Therefore, he says, "He that hath the Son hath the life" (zoe), which he terms "eternal life," in the verse before. I say that we have a wonderful, life-giving, life-sustaining message in the Divine utterances of this eternal life. We do well if we search and see Christ on every page of Scripture.

A COURT OF JUSTICE

The high priests called the council and all the senate, or elders together. Look at that assemblage - high priest, captain, chief priests, officers, Sadducees - a religious senate. They had met about two months before and had put the Son of Man to death. Now they show again their enmity against Him by refusing to heed His Spirit-anointed messengers of peace. They were not ignorant but acknowledged that the truth was being proclaimed. They said to the apostles: "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine (not denying that it was scriptural) and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (5:28). They deliberately refused the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb; hence, they knew the inevitable consequence - banishment from God forever. Instead of yielding to conviction and turning to Christ, they officially decided to stop the mouths of God's faithful servants who were the channels thereof. But for Gamaliel's wise counsel, they would have slain them immediately, even as they killed Stephen and James later (Acts 7 and 12). "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (5:41-42). It is worth our while to note how the Church at first met persecution. THEY PRAYED. After the first arrest, "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (4:24). They comforted themselves by recalling Scripture, which their foes were fulfilling. Instead of being discouraged, they cried for added power and boldness to declare the truth. Likewise, after the second arrest and release, they went on with their God-appointed task, rejoicing in their persecutions. Generally, people count it a shame to suffer for Christ, but they counted it an honor to suffer dishonor in His behalf. Why? Because they knew that they were fighting for a good cause and for the One who surely will win. Observe also that they did not try to defend themselves. When questioned, they answered and explained. When light was sought, they gave it.

CHAPTERS SIX AND SEVEN
REJECTION OF JESUS SETTLED

"Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily

ministrations." (6:1)

Mark the first phrase - "in these days." A period of about two years elapsed from the death of Christ until Stephen's career began. Therefore, we date Stephen's ministry from 35 to 40 A.D. In studying Chapter Seven, we will see reasons for this view. An observance of these dates helps us to understand valuable typical and dispensational teaching in this book.

The "Grecian, or Grecian Jews" were either Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith, or Jews born in foreign countries. The Greek word is helleniston, that is, Hellenists. They rightly claimed the care of the congregation, which began to deviate from the "all things common" plan with which they started. The apostles' hands were full of the ministry of the Word. They had no time to serve tables. As Paul wrote later to Timothy, they were not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. Paul did not always work with his hands; but when occasion required, as for example when entering a new field, he was not ashamed of toil, nor afraid of soiling his "delicate" hands. As a rule, if divinely called ministers "continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the Word" they will have ample employment in spiritual things. The apostles summoned the congregation to select seven men to look after the needy. Note the co-operation of the ministers with the assembly. Note also that they were not chosen chiefly for their ability to serve, but they should be "full of the Spirit and wisdom." They did not fear the speaking in another tongue in a restaurant in those days. What if some did shake, or were prostrated under the power of God? Mark another fact: It is not stated that the Lord directly led to the appointment of those seven, but at least, He permitted it. People who are filled with the Spirit may do many things by permission, which are not against the doctrine of the Lord, or His clearly defined plan. There is evidence that the Spirit was leading them because "The Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith" (6:6). Why did they choose exactly seven? It was because that was a transitional time. The number "seven" is pre-eminently the number of dispensational completeness. It is employed distinctly with reference to this Church Age and with the beginning of the next age. Study its constant occurrence in Revelation. Since God was about to do a new thing, and Stephen and Philip were soon to be sovereignly set to be links between the old and the new, seven men were then chosen to manage the business affairs. Some believers today have erroneously imitated the apostles and appointed, or elected boards of seven men and called them elders, or deacons. Those seven were not called either one. Men today call them deacons. In truth, the Greek word for deacon, is sometimes translated servant, and other times minister. It applies to spiritual service far more often than to material service. Furthermore, Paul never appointed seven men as deacons, or elders of any assembly. The number seven will be a millennial number, which Stephen's day figures.

STEPHEN'S SPIRITUAL SERVICE

"And Stephen full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (6:8). It must have been an interesting sight to behold Stephen praying for the sick while also ministering material food. No one objected to his laying his hands on a suffering guest. No doubt, between meals he was busy preaching, casting out demons, and recovering the afflicted. At any rate, God's hand was sovereignly upon Stephen and Philip. Men had appointed them to a business career, but the Lord gave them a more important appointment.

Why did the Lord choose Stephen? Was not the ministry of the apostles, Peter and John satisfactory? Yes, they had performed their part well, but God was introducing a new act which required new actors. The Jews were rapidly drawing further and further away from Christ. Kingdom interests were receding. A transition period required a transition figure, and he was Stephen. John the Baptist closed the old, shadowy regime and opened the new, substantial one by introducing Jesus Christ. Similarly, Stephen arched the way between the twelve apostles and Paul, or between the Kingdom and

the Church. He was not an apostle. Jesus had not chosen him to be one, and yet the Holy Spirit made him a mighty miracle worker, a fiery messenger with an unanswerable message. God sovereignly appointed him to proclaim the truth. Amos said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7:14-15). Stephen's call was like that. God did not ask counsel of the Jewish priests, or senate, nor of the twelve apostles. He does what He wills and chooses whom He desires.

Here are some stubborn facts: When Jesus came and taught and wrought, the Father expected Israel to listen to Him. If they refused, He went right on, counting only those who followed Jesus as His own. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the 120, God moved on with them and with those who received their word - "the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). They who believed the word of the apostles were counted as the congregation of the Lord. The same ongoing God held Stephen's listeners responsible to accept what he was saying to them, because Stephen's address was the voice of God to them. The same order obtains today. In the early years of this century, the Holy Spirit brought many revivals throughout the world, they who received it and walked in its power had the presence and power of God with them. Denominations have grown formal and dry, because they refused to move on with Jehovah in His own sovereign way. Soon Paul's full message of grace, which shall be crowned with glory, appeared among us. They who have received it and are walking in the liberty, joy, power, correction, and hope which it affords, are going on with the Lord; the Word of the Lord is mightily growing and prevailing. Others are becoming worldly and formal and selfish. I dare say that these are solemn facts. God moves on. If His people do not move with Him and in His way, they invariably move backward, lose out and grow cold.

What is now the Roman Catholic Church was once the true Church of Christ. Alas! She is not such today, despite all her claims. God calls her the "mother of harlots." For years, the Protestant Bodies constituted the true Church of Christ, but alas, they are certainly not such now. Are they not the harlot's daughters? Only local meetings and individuals can be counted as the Church. And what about the Pentecostal sects, who have either gone the way of formal Protestantism, or who prefer physical demonstrations to Bible doctrine? God moves on with those individuals who are willing to let Him lead them.

"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they are not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke" (6:9-10). The Libertines were Jews, who had been imprisoned in Rome, but were set free and dwelt in Jerusalem. The second ones named were Jews from Cyrene; the third group were Jews from Alexandria, the largest and most noted city of Egypt. The fourth named were Jews from Cilicia and Asia. It seems that these made up a certain synagogue, which became especially incensed against the truth as set forth by Stephen. There was a temporary cessation of hostilities after the second arrest of the apostles, but now these from that particular synagogue stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes. They seized him, brought him before the council and swore falsely against him. Note Stephen's countenance - "as it had been the face of an angel." They all beheld that face. If men will not listen to the voice of God's Word and Spirit, they will not be moved by the angelic countenance of His messengers.

Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine. – Crosby

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
CHAPTER SEVEN
STEPHEN'S SCRIPTURAL DEFENSE

"Then said the high priest, Are these things so? And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee ..." (7:1-3)

Chapter Seven is a masterful answer to the high priest's question, "Are these things so?" Stephen begins with "God of the Glory," and consummates with "the Glory of God." He called Abraham on the witness stand first; then he traced God's dealings with Israel and their attitude toward Him from that time to the advent of Christ and the Holy Spirit. He deftly showed that "the fathers" maltreated and resisted God's servants throughout those two thousand years. The patriarchs were moved with jealousy against Joseph, a perfect type of Christ, and sold him into Egypt (7:9). Moses' brethren "thrust him away," when he sought to deliver them from Egypt, saying, "Who made thee a ruler and judge over us?" (7:27). Stephen emphasized the fact that as God had sent Moses whom his brethren refused, so God had sent Jesus, the Prophet like unto Moses, and of whom he wrote. He showed them that Jesus was the Angel who spoke to Moses in the mount (Exodus 33:2, 14; Isaiah 63:9).

They had raised a great hue and cry in defense of the law and the holy place, as if Jesus would destroy it. Stephen met that foolish stand by quoting from their own law, or holy writings, which they seemed to revere, even I Kings 8:27 and Isaiah 66:1-2. "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?" (7:48-50). Having reached that invincible climax, filled with holy indignation by the grieved Holy Spirit, Stephen exclaimed: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye" (7:51). Those were indeed scathing utterances but provoked by years of hatred against Jesus Christ. Stephen continues: "Which of the prophets did not your father's persecute? And they killed them which showed before the coming of the Righteous One." Then he culminates his burning charge by adding: "Of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels and kept it not" (7:51- 53).

STEPHEN'S TRIUMPH AND EXIT

The remaining seven verses of this chapter are very significant. Be sure that you catch their meaning. At the beginning of his address Stephen's face shone "as the face of an angel," because he was filled with God's Spirit and Word. At the conclusion, he was still filled with God's Spirit. Like everyone thus filled, "he looked up steadfastly into heaven." What did he see? Ah! Spirit-anointed upward-gazers always behold special and wonderful things. He saw three entrancing objects - "the heavens opened, the Glory of God, and Jesus standing." He began his sermon, believing God's Word, by declaring that "the God of glory appeared to Abraham." This is the first time that phrase occurs. It intimates a doctrine and hope of which Israel were ignorant, even the "mystery of God" (Ephesians 3:9). Now near the end, he sees, by revelation, the glory of which his faith made him speak.

What did it all mean? Plainly this. Jesus was standing up, ready to return and be Israel's King if they had welcomed Him. (See Chapters 1:11; 3:20) He had not yet "sat down at the right hand of God," as we find Him later - Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 3:21. God is always slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Probably for about seven years from His ascension, Jesus was standing at the Father's right hand, waiting for Israel to invite Him back. Through Peter and John, He had spoken to them and wrought mighty miracles. An earnest of millennial blessings, liberty, and power flowed in every direction in

Jerusalem, filling the city with the doctrine of the Lord. It seemed that the last seven years of Daniel's seventy determined weeks, or 490 years, was being fulfilled (Daniel 9:24). The first three items of Daniel 9:24 were fulfilled by the death of Christ. The other three were due also within that time, from His resurrection, about 33 to 40 A. D.

The infuriated council and officers did not hearken to Stephen's words. Their attitude toward him was like that against Jesus Himself. Indeed, it was their rejection of Jesus all over again. It was their official renunciation of Jesus and His Message. They crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh (Hebrews 6). They virtually said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us" as they said earlier (Luke 19:14). Therefore, when we next read of our Lord in heaven, He is "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He is there interceding in our behalf during these two thousand years, that we may live in victory and reach the Glory in triumph (Hebrews 7:25). Stephen's own nation cast him out and stoned him, running upon him and stopping their ears against his sublime testimony. Did he resent them? Nay. He offered two prayers to God. First, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Either he knew he was dying, or he desired to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, as Paul wrote years afterward (Philippians 1:23). Then filled with the unselfish Spirit of Jesus (Luke 23:34), "He knelt down and with a loud voice cried, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he fell asleep.

What young man was with that rebellious mob? What two facts are recorded of him? Was Stephen's career a failure? Were his utterances fruitless and lost? Nay! No doubt his ministry was the instrument of Saul's salvation. He spoke the Word of God "who watches over His Word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12, R.V.). Also, Isaiah 11 must be fulfilled to the uttermost. Hence, he could fall asleep in the sure hope of a glorious resurrection, and of the restoration of the Kingdom.

DANIEL'S LAST WEEK

In a preceding paragraph, we stated that the first three promised blessings of Daniel 9:24 were fulfilled on Calvary. Yes, the Lord "finished the transgression, made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity" on the Cross. Full provision for a complete salvation was accomplished through Christ, who "obtained eternal redemption" for us, as well as the Jews (Hebrews 9:12). The provision made also for the other three promises in that verse were fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The last week of seven years were actually fulfilled, from the Day of Pentecost to the stoning of Stephen. The Jews, by rejecting Christ again, by refusing to believe Stephen's plea, forfeited their right to enjoy those blessings of Christ's death and resurrection. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life (Chapter 13:46).

Because the Jews did not accept Christ at the beginning of this age, it is generally supposed that Daniel 9:24 will have to be fulfilled again. It is held that Verse 27 teaches that, but that is not correct.

Daniel 9:27 has never yet been fulfilled; it is not a repetition of Verse 24, nor a fulfillment of the last seven years of the 490 decreed years, or 70 weeks. Let us give both verses side by side. "Seventy weeks (490 years) are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place" (Daniel 9:24, R.V.).

"And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week (7 years); and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolater" (Daniel 9:27, R.V.).

Observe that Verse 24 promised blessings only, and all those proffered blessings came through the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus, and through the Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But Verse 27 offers no blessing but foretells distress and desolation. It is important to note all these distinctions.

The "one week" of Verse 27 is not said to be the last of the 70 weeks of Verse 24. It must mean some other week, or seven years. The last week of the 70 was "determined," or "decreed," with the other 69 weeks; but it is not stated that the one week of Verse 27 was determined or decreed. Its fulfillment is simply foretold, and wrath is "determined upon the desolater."

The Lord grants the gracious things of Verse 24, but the "prince" of Verse 26, whose ancestors, the Romans, destroyed Jerusalem in 71 A.D., will be the cruel actor of Verse 27. He will act squarely against Divine Authority, incited by Satan. Hence, "his end will be with a flood" (Verse 26); that is, in judgment, for wrath will be poured upon him as the desolater. That prince will be the anti-Christ, an abominable usurper, who will reign for three and a half years as world ruler but will be overthrown and slain in the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). At the beginning of that week of seven years (Daniel 9:27), the Jews will accept the overtures of a league of nations and bring upon themselves unspeakable anguish and pain. They ought to accept "the Messiah, the Prince (Verse 25), who brought in the blessings of Verse 24 at His first advent.

It is very unfortunate that any of us ever fell into the error of calling Daniel 9:27 "the Last Week of Daniel," for Daniel never calls it such, nor does any other Bible writer. Furthermore, the 70th week, or last seven years of Daniel 9:24, were fulfilled by the activities recorded in Acts 2 - 11. They were an earnest of millennial blessings. Chapter Nine records Saul's conversion and anointing with the Spirit. Chapters 10 and 11 record God's visit to the Gentiles. While the Lord was preparing the Gentiles for Paul's message through the ministry of Peter, He was preparing Saul of Tarsus for the Gentiles through the ministry of Ananias and Barnabas.

AFTER WORK

Lord, when Thou seest that my work is done,
Let me not linger on,
With failing powers,
Adown the weary hours --
A workless worker in a world of work.
But, with a word,
Just bid me home,
And I will come
Right gladly --
Yea, right gladly
Will I come.
-- John Oxenham

CHAPTER EIGHT

PHILIP'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

"And Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen's) death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles ... Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." (8:1-5)

The first sentence of this chapter properly belongs to the preceding one for a convenient division; nevertheless, Saul is the important link in the narrative. He was the chief actor in the "great persecution." How those people loved Jesus and the truth! for they would rather be scattered abroad than deny their Lord. The fourth verse is very full of meaning. Those who were scattered were on the

way to fulfill Jesus' words to the apostles (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; compare Colossians 1:23). This is how God overrules and makes good use of even the opposition of Satan (Psalm 76:10). Philip's public spiritual ministry began about 38 A.D., or at least his trip to Samaria doubtless dates from then. Note that the great persecution "arose on the day of Stephen's death." The fact that they all went preaching, is no argument that all who are filled with the Spirit today and speak in new tongues, should immediately quit their work, and begin preaching, or attempt it. In the first place, note that they were compelled to go forth, or surrender their belief, or their lives. In the second place, they knew the Word, that is, the Old Testament. (Compare Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Psalm 78:4-7; Ephesians 6:4).

In all the addresses and writings of the apostles there are constant references to the Old Testament.

That was to them the "Word of God." Hence, Luke could rightly record that they went "preaching the Word." When people get saved today, and even filled with the Spirit, they do not know the Word of God. How then can they proclaim it? Nay! but after receiving the Holy Spirit, who fills believers that He may guide and instruct them in the truth, we need to read and search the Bible that we may be able to instruct others also. (John 16:13-14)

Observe further their message: Philip "preached the Christ," or Anointed One, and Jesus (8:5, 35).

He preached "the good tidings concerning the Kingdom of God and concerning the Name of Jesus Christ" (8:12). Accordingly, what did the people receive? The "Word of God." What were the results?

Demons were cast out; the sick were healed; and great joy prevailed (8:7-8). Though Philip baptized, yet baptism was not his theme, and though he wrought miracles in Jesus' Name, yet the Name was not his theme. Christ Jesus Himself was always the theme of all the apostles. Therefore, from the Scriptures, they announced Him (8:25, 35).

Of course, they declared both the humanity and deity of Jesus (8:32, 34, 37). Consider who Philip was, and that he was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Chapter 6:3, 5 and 21:8). He was not Philip the apostle (Luke 6:14). Who gave him his office? Consider the results that follow a real Scriptural ministry (Verses 6-8, 14-17, 35-38). Shame on the modern make-believe gospel preachers who "know neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God," but reject the former and deny the latter. Do you want more evidence of the emphasis that the Holy Spirit puts on God's Word? Then read Chapter 13 and note how often special mention is made of the Word, and see the results of such emphasis (13:42, 44, 52). Hallelujah!

THE SPIRIT GIVEN TO THE SAMARITANS

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit" (8:14-15). Everywhere the Divine Order is that the Spirit should be received immediately after accepting Christ; thus, avoiding two grave blunders. First, the erroneous teaching that Christ and the Holy Spirit are received simultaneously. The practical proof of this error is before us, in that its devotees lack the joy and power of the Holy Spirit. Second, Not receiving the Spirit at once, leaves a gap for Satan to intrude with error, or indifference, discouragement, or uselessness.

"Now is the accepted time," is the wooing voice of the Father. Observe that the apostles did not pray that the Spirit be poured out, but that they "might receive the Holy Spirit." We need not pray Him out of heaven. He is here. He came once, over 1900 years ago. He only waits to be invited into His temple, the believer's body (I Corinthians 6:19; Compare Chapter 19:3, 6). There were three days' time between Saul's conversion and his anointing with the Spirit (Chapter 9:17).

Why did not Philip pray for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit? Why should the apostles come down for that purpose? Answer: After the death of king Solomon, the twelve-tribe kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, known as the "kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel" (I Kings 12). This division continues to this day, and they will not be re-united until Jesus comes and establishes His Kingdom (Isaiah 11:12-13; Ezekiel 37:15, 28).

Now, when the Holy Spirit came from heaven, He came as the fulfillment of God's promise to the whole house of Israel (Acts 2:36); but Israel were not all represented in Jerusalem when the Spirit was poured out. As Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, that kingdom only received the Spirit. Israel, or the ten tribes, whose capital was Shechem in Samaria, must also nationally be visited by the Spirit. And since "the keys of the kingdom" were committed to Peter (Matthew 16:19), it was officially proper that he should introduce the other Comforter to the ten tribes in Samaria as well as to the two tribes in Jerusalem. Peter also unlocked the blessings of heaven for the Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit (Chapter 10:34-48).

Why was the Spirit not poured out upon the city of Samaria until about seven years after His descent upon the 120 in Jerusalem? This is an important question. The ten tribes were the first to depart from the Lord, and they will be the last of the whole Israeli empire to return to Him. When Jesus comes back, He will begin dealing with the two tribes first, and they will be the first to receive Him - "A remnant shall be saved" - then later the ten tribes will receive Him - "So all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). The Lord's dealings with the Jews through the apostles and with the ten tribes through Philip and the apostles at the beginning of this age, was an earnest of His final treatment of them. And yet, individuals from the ten tribes were with the Jews at the beginning (See Chapter 2:22; 4:10).

"But there was a certain man, Simon by name, which before time in the city used sorcery and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God" (8:9-10). The essential difference between Philip and Simon is obvious. Simon magnified himself, Philip exalted Christ.

Simon proclaimed himself; Philip proclaimed Jesus. Simon's religion was cunning, beguiling, enchanting witchcraft. It was of the devil. Philip's Gospel was simple, comforting, and sufficient. It was altogether Divine. Simon the sorcerer is an illustration of those who become religious for the purpose of speculation.

"Simon believed also and was baptized, continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done" (8:13). Yes, he believed, or assented to what Philip taught, but he did not believe to the saving of his soul. See Verse 23: Peter told him, "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." It is easy to be baptized and appear religious in view of getting a name and the people's money. His witchcraft had succeeded before, "giving out that himself was some great one." Now he sees an opportunity to add to his trickery. "Perhaps I can even get Philip with me," he thinks. Then he imagines that the power of dispensing the fullness of the Spirit, with the entrancing sign of speaking in other languages can be bought with money, he is engulfed with the hope of unparalleled prosperity. Observe that Peter's rebuke does not induce him to repent.

He only selfishly desires to escape judgment. Fellow Student, consider the most dangerous species of witchcraft, typified by Simon's career. Do you know that the Holy Spirit calls seeking justification by works, or seeking the Spirit by works, sorcery and witchcraft? (Galatians 3:1-5) "Are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" asks the apostle of the Galatians. Be it ever remembered that the "Simon crew" are not all gone yet. Their number is legion. It is amazing how men, some of them professedly Spirit filled, can deceive hungry, needy hearts by their make-believe piety and holy walk. People look up to them as marvels of perfection, because they talk boldly of straightening up back tracks, paying debts, keeping the sabbath, etc. And because they have learned to throw a religious,

pious spell over people by their own peculiar personality, they get a hearing before thousands, get results, and get the people's money. However, it is simply pious, religious flesh inspired by the devil. God rightly calls it "witchcraft."

FLYING EVANGELISM

Philip's further ministry, his experience with the Ethiopian eunuch, verses 26-40, are typical of the ministry of God's servants gathering together the dispersed of Israel at the coming of Jesus (Matthew 24:31; Revelation 14:6). Study the various ways and means by which God makes His will known to Philip. "And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (8:26). "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (8:29). When he heard the eunuch reading Isaiah, chapter 53, he asked him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch invited him into the chariot and later received Christ as his Savior and was baptized (8:36-39).

It is probable that as Philip was "caught away" by the Spirit, perhaps bodily borne across the country at that time, so after the Church has been taken to Glory, there will be Spirit-anointed men preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and the soon-coming of the King. They will be miraculously sustained and transported to different places; for the time of trouble will be unspeakably terrible.

Then, that the "elect of Israel" may be saved from physical destruction, that time of tribulation will be shortened 250 days (Matthew 24:21-22).

The eunuch took the message of salvation back to Ethiopia, and from that one encounter with Philip, the Gospel spread in that region. Philip's experience with the eunuch is typical of the Gospel going to the Gentiles, which was officially granted them under Peter's ministry earlier. It figures also Israel taking the Gospel to the nations (Isaiah 52:7, 10; 66:10-12, 19; Luke 24:47; Acts 15:16-17; Consider Revelation 21:24). The Ethiopian eunuch was a descendant of Ham.

Gaza was 50 miles southwest from Jerusalem. Azotus, Ashdod, was 40 miles due west.

CHAPTER NINE THE SALVATION OF SAUL

"And Saul yet breathing out threatening's and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (9:1-6)

The first thirty verses of this chapter record the beginning days of the most striking character and his career in the New Testament, Jesus Himself excepted. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is like a parenthesis in the first twelve chapters of the Acts, but he became a necessary link between divine purposes.

Saul's hatred of Jesus Christ was unspeakably great. With Chapter 7:58; 8:1, and 9:1-2, compare Galatians 1:13-14, I Timothy 1:13, and Acts 26:11. Why did Saul so bitterly persecute the Church?

Read the citations again. Religious tradition is a terrible snare. Trace its source - "have walked after the imagination (stubbornness) of their own heart" (Jeremiah 9:14). God made His will known to His people, but self-will and unbelief leave a great gap for Satan to introduce a false religion. Years later, Saul knew by experience how to write about self-righteous Israel (Romans 9:31-32; 10:2-3). He

magnified God's grace in his salvation: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (I Timothy 1:14-16). He did not call himself the chief of sinners because he robbed banks, nor was dissolute, or an insurrectionist; but because he was so persistently and successfully religious and outwardly holy. "As touching the righteousness of the law, (he was) blameless" (Philippians 3:6). He endeavored to establish his own righteousness, which was against God's righteousness, and thus make void the redeeming work of Christ.

Saul accused Jesus of being an impostor, and portrayed Him as "a blasphemer and injurious," because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and died to redeem everyone, for all have sinned, even self-righteous Saul. He came the nearest of any man to saving himself by fulfilling the righteousness of the law. He sought perfection, and outwardly attained it, apart from the redemption of the only Perfect Man. Meanwhile, he showed out his heart rebellion against God by persecuting the people of God. This made him "chief of sinners. He did not apparently need God, or His righteousness. He appeared to be righteous, but that was only the old creation posing as pious. It was not of faith. It was not based upon the redemption wrought by another, even Jesus. There was no life, for the law cannot give life (Galatians 3:21).

When Saul, enroute to Damascus, saw the Lord, he found himself to be the "blasphemer and injurious" to an inexpressible depth. He exclaimed: "CHIEF OF SINNERS." Oh, what a view of self-righteousness, the religion of works, the sorcery of lawkeeping, he attained! Hence, Christ, received and enjoyed forever by simple faith, was ever afterward his glowing message. Note these statements: "And straitway he preached Christ;" "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews, proving that this is very Christ;" "He preached boldly at Damascus in the Name of Jesus;" "And he spoke boldly in the Name of the Lord Jesus." He wrote later to the Galatians: "For I neither received it (the Gospel) of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ; but when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (1:12, 15-16).

My Father's Way

My Father's way may twist and tum,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad to know
He maketh no mistake.
My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away;
But still I trust my Lord to lead,
For Father knows the way.
There's so much now I cannot see,
My eye is still so dim;
But come what may I still can trust
And leave it all to Him.
For by and by the mist will lift
And darkness turn to day;
Then looking back, we'll praise His Name
Who led us all the way. -- Author Unknown

SAUL'S CONVERSION DESCRIBED

"And Ananias said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (9:17). The Persecutor was blind for three days after he saw the Lord. Jesus looked different to him than when he probably saw Him on earth. Compare II Corinthians 5:16. Five facts prove that he accepted Christ immediately upon being struck weak and blind.

- (1). His own testimony: "Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Chapter 26:19).
- (2). His answer to Jesus: "What wilt Thou have me do, Lord?" (V. 6). Compare Romans 10:9.
- (3). His worship - "Behold, he prayeth" (V. 11).
- (4). Ananias's words of salute, "Brother Saul." If he had not yet believed and was not saved, why did not Ananias say, "Mr. Saul, repent and believe the Gospel;" or "Repent and be baptized;" or "repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out"?
- (5). The penitent persecutor's willingness to be baptized in water.

As circumcision meant a complete cutting off from the world and the death of the old creation, so John introduced water baptism as a similar symbolic death. John's ministry summed up and culminated the ministries of the prophets of the Old Testament, buried all the Mosaic rites and ceremonies in Jordan and introduced a new religious regime in dipping Jesus into and lifting Him out of the waters of Jordan. Hence, Jesus declared that there was no greater prophet than John the Baptist.

It was therefore no small matter for Saul to be baptized in water. Baptism into the Name of Jesus, the Chief of the New Covenant, meant a complete and eternal cutting off from all the past. He virtually said, I am no longer a Jew, but a disciple of Christ, the despised Nazarene. Baptism in water, to a Jew, is the outward expression of death to Moses and of resurrection unto Christ. No Jew will submit to baptism until, with all his heart, he accepts Christ as his personal Savior; and his fellow Jews will not believe that he is saved through Christ if he is not willing to be baptized in water in Jesus' Name. Ever afterward, they call him "the blotted out." Saul had already repented, and had received the forgiveness of his sins, before Ananias arrived; therefore, he was prepared to be baptized as a sign and seal to his faith in Christ.

The conversion of Saul is typical of that of Israel; for they will see the Lord descending in glory and will receive Him (Isaiah 25:6-9). In I Corinthians 15:8 is a remarkable statement: "Last of all He was seen of me also as one born out of due time." After Jesus was seen of Stephen standing at God's right hand, as if ready to return to Israel, if they had received Him, He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3; 12:2), because they rejected Him in rejecting Stephen. His sitting down was to continue two thousand years, which Hosea 6:2 terms "two days." But for a special sovereign purpose, Jesus arose from His seat of mediatorship and appeared to persecuting Saul of Tarsus. Saul accepted Christ there and then, and was born again; thus, he was born two dispensational days, or two thousand years, ahead of the due time for the new birth of Israel as a nation. Compare Isaiah 66:8.

Consider closely the radical change wrought in Saul and the theme of his teaching henceforth. Study verses 20, 22, and 29. Note also the attitude of his own people toward him after he received Christ - verses 23-24. Why did Saul emphasize the Divine Sonship of Jesus? Because that was the root-cause of the Jews' hatred of Him. His claim to being the Son of God, they termed blasphemy (John 5:18; 10:30-36). The Jews had scriptural ground for stoning Jesus if He were not God's Son (Leviticus 24:16). Therefore, they took the same bitter stand against His avowed friend, seeking to kill Saul. We little understand how the Jews could maintain such bitter hatred against the Son of God, but it simply shows the outcome of refusing to walk in the light. Christian people today, who reject Divine light, show a similar spirit, because they walk in the flesh, which hates Christ, who is always spiritual.

PETER EVANGELIZING

"And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all parts, he came down to the saints which dwelt at Lydda" (9:32). After the parenthesis of Saul's salvation, the ministry of the kingdom apostles, in Luke's record, is resumed. Two remarkable miracles were wrought by Peter's hands in Jesus' Name. Now if Saul's conversion is typical of the conversion of the Jews as a nation when the Lord comes, is not Peter's ministry "Throughout all parts" typical of the powerful ministry of the Jews to all Israel when Jesus returns? Doubtless the healing of Aeneas, bedridden for eight years with palsy, foreshadows Israel's deliverance from their long-drawn-out spiritual palsy. The raising to life of Dorcas figures the national resurrection of Israel, as outlined in Ezekiel 37, where we hear the rattle of the "dry bones."

Dorcas is the Greek and Tabitha is the Syriac for "gazelle." Indeed, with gazelle-like swiftness, resurrected and restored Israel will spread the glad tidings to the nations. "Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isaiah 27:6). As a result of the typical ministry, Luke says, "Many believed in the Lord" (9:42). Just so it will be when Israel turns to the Lord, and Isaiah 35 will be fulfilled: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (35:5-6). It is quite probable that Peter's letters to the "strangers scattered" will be read by them at the end.

Yesterday He helped me,
Today I'll praise His Name, Because I know tomorrow
He'll help me just the same.
-- Author unknown

CHAPTERS 10 AND 11 JESUS PREACHED TO GENTILES

"Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always" (10:1-2).

The date of the events of these two chapters was about 41 A.D., or eight years after the Holy Spirit fell on the 120 in the upper room in Jerusalem. The descent of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius's house was only an earnest of His world-wide out-pouring which will come after Israel receive the Messiah. They will then proclaim Him far and near. The last week (seven years) of Daniel 9:24 had to be fulfilled before the Lord could begin with the Gentiles. This fact occasions the above date.

The phrase, "a certain man," is quite suggestive. The word "certain" occurs about 50 times in this book. God has certain times for the accomplishments of certain ordained purposes. Bear in mind, that there is nothing haphazard with His plans. He orders men's footsteps. Cornelius was being prepared beforehand for that day and purpose. Therefore, he was not ignorant of the truth concerning Jesus - "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all): That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached" (10:36-37). He may have been a proselyte to the Jewish faith. The brief history of his devotion in verse two is truly interesting. Hungry hearts find the Lord, and the loving Lord finds folks who will take the truth. The different means employed by the Lord to make His will known, as recorded here is a profitable study. God used an angel, a vision, the Word, a man,

and the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is not a proof of knowing everything. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, wrought great miracles, and was the chief of the 12 apostles; yet he did not know until that day that salvation was for the Gentiles, although he had unwittingly declared it before. (See chapter 2:17, 39; 3:26) By the Spirit, men often say more than they know, but when we are teachable and pliable to the Holy Spirit, God can show us any new truth.

Israel was forbidden to eat swine's flesh and certain other creatures, because they were not so wholesome. However, all those sanitary rules, all those Mosaic rites and ceremonies, were written to convey invaluable spiritual lessons. Indeed, a great spiritual truth was just then to be uncovered to Peter and his people. Surely that vision of the sheet let down from heaven, "Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air," is ample proof that God meant His people to see, on the one hand, how He abominates the old creation, and how, on the other hand, He has made all men provisionally clean by the redeeming act of His Son. Note that the sheet with its freight of apparently unclean creatures - "all manner of beasts" - came down from heaven. The new creation came up from the grave in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it also comes down from heaven. All who believe are "born from above." God "hath concluded all under sin, all in unbelief" (Jews and Gentiles, or as wild beasts, creeping things, etc.), "that He might have mercy upon all," or provisionally cleanse them, and actually cleanse them that believe on Jesus (Romans 11:32; Galatians 3:22). This truth of God's gracious sovereign provision and offer of salvation ought to grip us. "God granted repentance unto life" to Jews and Gentiles (11:17-18). Once for all, Jesus "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26). All men are clean provisionally, and all are actually clean the moment they believe on Jesus Christ, even "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (I Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:10). Oh, glorious news! Hence, "the voice (of the Spirit, of course) said the second time to Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou uncommon" (10:15).

Study Peter's address. He preached peace and healing through Jesus Anointed, Jesus crucified, buried, raised, and the coming Judge, and remission of sins for those who believe. Note verse 43: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." We call particular attention to this verse, because some people claim that Peter and John taught a salvation by works mixed with grace. They hold also that those apostles had authority to remit sins, which we do not have, basing their view on John 20:23. The above verse, however, shows plainly how the apostles "retained, or forgave" men's sins. The apostles simply declared that everyone who believes on Jesus Christ shall be saved, and we do the same. What happened while Peter was declaring such good news? "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" (10:44-46). The Holy Spirit always accompanies the preaching of the Christ in His fulness. That was, of course, the official advent of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as was His advent to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Chapter 2:4).

This was the third time that Peter turned his official key of the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19) for the descent of the Spirit. Compare Chapter Two and 8:14-17. What was the satisfying proof to the six Jews with Peter that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit? "They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." How else shall we know today that people have received the Spirit? There is no other distinctive sign of being anointed with the Holy Spirit, if the Bible samples are our guide.

PETER'S REHEARSAL

"When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "Thou wentest into men uncircumcised and didst eat with them" (11:2-3). People, even believers, are slow to receive new unfoldings of truth. There is something in our make-up that practically says: "What I have not experienced, or seen, is not to be experienced or seen." Job in irony addressed that element in man, saying: "No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you" (Job 12:2). Of course, that something is of the old creation, which is blind, deaf, and dumb to the truth. Because his friends censured him for preaching to the Gentiles, Peter related his experience in detail. It was effectual. "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (11:18).

Three men, Shem, Ham, and Japheth peopled the earth after the flood. And three saved men were employed to begin the peopling of the earth with a new creation stock. They were the "Eunuch of Ethiopia," a Hamite (Chapter 8), Saul, a Shemite (Chapter 9), and Cornelius, a Japhite (Chapter 10). "Repentance unto life" is a Divine gift. Men imagine that they can repent at will and by doing so, appease God's wrath against their sins. Salvation is a gracious gift from God. He owes no man His salvation. And no one would, nor could ever repent if the Lord Jesus had not appeased the just anger of an offended God, by His own sacrificial death on the cross. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit enables men to repent and believe. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

OVERLAPPING EVENTS

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen (Chapter 8:1-5) traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only" (11:19). The remaining verses of this chapter are extremely interesting and comprehensive. The hidden purposes in the Spirit's workings fill and thrill one's heart with wonder, when we read with opened eyes. God is bringing one program to a close, the meanwhile using its final performances to pave the way for another. In His wonderful wisdom, God is planning for that special ministry of that special man with a special message, even the Apostle Paul. Those scattered abroad were supposed to preach to the Jews only, but in spite of themselves, "some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus" (11:20). And why? Because the Holy Spirit was directing them and "the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord" (11:21). Thus, an assembly was begun by those whom Saul had persecuted, which afterward became the glorious center for His Spirit-filled operations. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas thither, who later became Paul's first associate. A sweet thing is recorded of him: "When he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (11:23). Why was he like that? "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." What was the result? "And much people was added unto the Lord" (11:24). God surely had a hand in directing Barnabas: "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul" (11:25).

"And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (11:26). This verse is full of spiritual meat; the last sentence being especially replete with meaning. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch, not in derision, as some suppose. The Holy Spirit gave them that name because that is what believers really are - "Christians," or "Anointed ones;" for "as He (Christ, our Head) is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17).

All believers are called to be sons of God, but most of them remain babes in experience, because they do not grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Similarly, we are all called to be "Christians,

or Anointed ones" (the promise is unto you, and to your children, etc. Chapter 2:39); but how few avail themselves of their blood-bought rights. While the disciples of Jesus may be called "Christians," yet those only, who actually receive the anointing with the Spirit and live in His power, are Christians truly in experience. Oh, how many saints live way below their privileges! It was the proper place for the disciples to be called Christians, because that was the real Church center. Men give many vain interpretations of Holy Writ, and rob the truth of its true meaning, and the blessed Holy Spirit of His glory. Jerusalem was the Kingdom center, which was national and local. Now, because the restoration of the Kingdom was to be postponed and the Jews were to be scattered, there had to be another center for the Church. That it was a new center, emphasized the facts, that the Church of Christ is not a local, nor a national body, but a worldwide and spiritual body. "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (11:27-30). This great famine was due to the fact that Israel, as a nation, had rejected the Son of God and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The phrase, "all the world," means all the inhabited earth. That, too, was typical of the sore trial, world-wide, from which the full overcomers shall be delivered at the close of this age (Revelation 3:10). Thank God! After Jesus comes and Israel receive Him, there will be no more dearth, but abounding plenty. See Joel 2:19-27.

A PRAISE SONG

Father of all, whose mercy, ever tender,
Hath crowned with blessing all our fleeting days,
Accept the humble tribute that we render,
Receive our song of praise!
Safe through another year Thy power hath brought us;
Thy guiding hand has led us all the way,
And Thy kind care hath loving lessons taught us
With each passing day.
For every joy that tuned our hearts to singing,
For health, and friends, and days from trial free,
For wishes granted, our glad hearts are bringing
A song of praise to Thee.
And if for some of us the cup of sorrow
To our reluctant lips Thy hand hath pressed,
We bless Thy Name, if on the dawning morrow,
We saw Thy will was best.
We thank Thee for the strength so timely given,
For promises of Thine that were our stay,
And for the precious hope of home and heaven
That cheers our pilgrim way.
For all Thy mercies, Father, we adore Thee!
With loving hearts our grateful song we raise,
And wait the day when, crowned with joy before Thee,
We'll give Thee nobler praise!

CHAPTER TWELVE

JESUS REJECTED AS KING

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread)" (12:1-3) In Mark 11 and 12, we find mentioned all the pronounced representative enemies of Jesus Christ. First, the chief priests, scribes, and elders; then the Pharisees and Herodians, and finally, the Sadducees, or infidels. The religious world was arrayed against Him first, then the political world. These two united to put Him to death. The same order occurs in our present lesson. First, the Jews (the religious world), then Herod, representing the national powers, show their hatred of Christ by seeking to kill the apostles.

During the opening years of the Kingdom Age, there will be a huge religious-national combine arrayed against our Lord, but He will overthrow them and reign in peace. Of course, we are studying history, and Chapter 12 records God's final dealings with national Israel in the beginning of this age.

Therefore, this chapter closes the biography of the 12 apostles. A new record of them will have to be made when Jesus comes and they "shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:30).

The Holy Spirit was preparing the way for a new order of things entirely, and to bring on the scene another body of believers. However, in these narratives, there is more than history. The Spirit can cause men to write history in such a manner as that it also becomes prophecy, more wonderful than the history. This is just what we have before us in this chapter. The consummation of this present age and the introduction of the next age is clearly foreshadowed here. Oh, how marvelous is God's precious Word!

In the Gospel records, Peter and John are always found associated, so also in the Acts. Compare Chapters 3:1, 3; 4:13, 19; 8:14, 25. After their official trip to Samaria and after the conversion of Saul, John was no more in evidence. Even at Joppa, where Peter "tarried many days," John was absent. All this is freighted with deep meaning. Peter's ministry at the last two points mentioned, is typical of a similar ministry of one, or more, who will bring God's Message to Israel during the seven years of tribulation, which will be the first years of Christ's millennial reign. Doubtless they will speak from Peter's epistles. On the other hand, John was given a message (the Book of Revelation) to the Church of this entire period and to Israel at the beginning of the next age.

Accordingly, John's absence in this chapter typifies the catching away of the Church, positively foreshadowed by his ascension through the open door into heaven, in his vision of the coming of Jesus (Revelation 4:1). John typifies especially the translation of the full overcomers, of whom he wrote (Revelation 3:7-12). The killing of James, recorded here, typifies the cruel death of those who will fall at the ruthless hands of anti-Christ, because they will refuse the "mark of the beast" (Revelation 13:7, 15; 14:12-13; 15:2). Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison, is a type of those of Israel who will refuse the mark of the beast, but will be supernaturally delivered from the power of the anti-Christ and will "endure to the end" of those awful tribulation days (Matthew 24:13, 21-22; Revelation 2:26). Each of these men is a type of what he teaches, as if the Lord made them to act out in miniature the great things which they foretell shall come to pass. James, mentioned in Verse 17, was the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3) and the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19). He wrote the epistle, of James and was the pastor of the congregation in Jerusalem. Compare Chapter 15:13.

Herod's Part in the Drama

Herod is a striking picture of anti-Christ. His grandfather sought to slay the baby Jesus, because the spirit of anti-Christ dominated him (Matthew 2). This world never has been friendly to God and His people, and never will be. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), because Satan made it so in Adam's fall. Herod slew the Apostle James, then aimed to kill Peter also, because they continued to proclaim the right of Jesus Christ to be the King of empires. Consider these verses: "And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon; but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost" (12:20-23).

These verses figure the present closing days of this age and the opening days of the next. The people of Tyre and Sidon "asked for peace" with Herod. Indeed, ever since the great war of 1914-18 the nations have been endeavoring to establish universal international peace by means of perfecting a "peace and safety league." Will they ever succeed? No doubt they will meet with surface success, for the Scripture declares that "they (the nations) will say, Peace and safety" (I Thessalonians 5:3).

That Herod was Agrippa, the third of the four New Testament Herods. He was king from 37 to 44 A.D.

How forcefully Herod speaks of the reign of anti-Christ. The shout of the people, saying, "It is the voice of a god and not a man," agrees with Revelation 13:3 and II Thessalonians 2:4 - "All the world wondered after the beast," and "the man of sin who exalteth himself above all that is called God ..." As it was with Herod, so it will be with the anti-Christ. Herod reigned only seven years, about the length of Daniel 9:27, the period of international usurpation. The anti-Christ will reign as universal despot for 42 months (Revelation 13:5). At the very acme of his pride, pomp and power, suddenly "he shall come to his end and none shall help him" (Daniel 11:45). For it is written, "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape" (I Thessalonians 5:3). When the peace pact shall be packed with regulations and international agreements, which will be supposed to insure "peace and safety" throughout the world, certain nations ("tidings out of the east and out of the north," Daniel 11:44), like an angry volcano, will belch forth in fury against the world ruler. The peace and safety pact will suddenly be unpacked and scattered to the four winds, and unparalleled devastation will ensue. The beast, the anti-Christ, and the second beast, the false prophet, will be slain and cast into the lake of fire forever.

"An angel of the Lord smote Herod, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost." He glorified himself instead of God. Just so, the anti-Christ will do. He will glorify and deify himself and even attempt to dethrone Jehovah; but Almighty Jehovah will hurl him down forever. Herod died the horrible death described here in 44 A.D. "But the Word of God grew and multiplied" (12:24). Yes, thank God, no matter what men may do, or say, the Lord watches over His Word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12). After the above-named international engagements, after the overthrow of the two beasts, and after Satan will be cast into the pit of the abyss, the Word of God will grow and multiply throughout the whole world for a thousand years. Israel will again be a kingdom and will dwell in their own land. They will worship God without hindrance. A great world revival will follow. The Gentiles will seek the Lord in fabulous numbers. Study Chapter 15:16-18.

"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled with ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark" (12:25). Their ministry was taking help to the famine sufferers in Jerusalem (Chapter 11:29-30). Barnabas and Saul became the direct transition characters

from Kingdom affairs to Church affairs. The following 16 chapters record a new order of spiritual activities under the superintendency of a new company of Spirit-filled men. Not one of the leading men of the Kingdom regime was employed by the Spirit in establishing Gentile churches. Years later, John, by the Spirit, wrote in the Book of Revelation to the churches which Paul had planted.

Let the beatify of Jesus be seen in me--
All His wonderful passion and purity!
O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.
-- Osborn

CHAPTERS 13 AND 14 PAUL'S FIRST GOSPEL TOUR

"Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (Acts 13:1)

The date of our present lesson was about 45 A.D., or 12 years after Pentecost. The most interesting portion of the Acts is just before us. We are entering upon the study of a career of special importance to us. We do well to move here with special deliberation that we may thoroughly understand the mind of God in these chapters. If we see with "Doves' eyes," namely, by the Holy Spirit, the place that Brother Paul occupies in God's plans, we will also learn the deep things revealed to him for us, by reading especially his writings.

First then, observe the founding of the assembly in Antioch - Chapter 11:19-21. Saul of Tarsus was the main actor in the persecution of the saints who were scattered from Jerusalem. One of the results of his persecution was the planting of a church in Antioch out of Jewish stock, for we read, "they preached the Word unto Jews only." God was planning a new order of affairs; hence, they preached to Grecians also, of whom "a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." A Jewish-Gentile assembly was the fitting foundation for this new scheme. How wonderful are the ways of God! Compare Ephesians 2:20-22.

As soon as the saints in Jerusalem heard this good news, they sent a proven disciple to encourage them, Barnabas, "who, when he was come and had seen the grace of God, was glad." Still the Lord was leading. "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul." Notice, how continually that "good man" Barnabas clave to the "young man, Saul," from the time he first took him to Jerusalem and introduced him to the saints there - (Chapters 9:27; 12:25). Paul accorded him a high honor year afterward (I Corinthians 9:6).

It is evident that Saul was at least five years in Divine training before he was launched upon his special mission as outlined in our present lesson. He received Christ and was anointed with the Spirit in Damascus. There he boldly declared his faith, then went into Arabia for a short season, and returned into Damascus for a Bible course of several years under the instruction of the Holy Spirit (Chapter 9:19-23; Galatians 1:17-21). Then he came back to Jerusalem, but being in peril by his own countrymen, the disciples sent him to his own home in Tarsus.

It is quite probable that the Jewish believers did not take readily to his new doctrine, which no doubt was burning in his heart and beginning to flow from his lips. They drew back from the strange teaching of the young prophet. He saw in some measure the depth of the grace of God. He saw it for

the Gentiles, to whom Peter, at a later date, announced salvation (chapter 10). "The mystery of Christ" was possessing Saul, and those older saints could not understand him. But the Lord did not let him stay long in Tarsus. He sent Barnabas after him. Having brought him to Antioch, "a whole year they were gathered together with the church and taught much people" (11:25-26). We mention the foregoing facts, because too often, when the Lord calls his children to a particular line of service, they run ahead of His perfect will, unfitted and unempowered from on high. To go in the will of God is to go in the power of God; but to go out of His will is to go without His enabling. In the will of God, we find an "open door which no man can shut" (Revelation 3:8). Success is certain in God's will; failure is sure out of it. If we could see the wasted lives, the fruitless efforts, the harmful ministries, on account of premature, unscriptural "work for God," we would faint with horror. All that is rubbish must "be burned" (I Corinthians 3:15). Oh, what a bonfire! Paul heard the call enroute to Damascus. He learned the message while pondering the Old Testament writings during those three years in Damascus. Then he received his commission from God through the church in Antioch. We saw in Chapter 11:26 an interesting and necessary link between Peter's ministry and that of Paul. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch," because Antioch, and not Jerusalem, was to be the radiating center for the new school of apostles. That was no accident. That name was assigned to them by the Holy Spirit. The word "Christian" (Christianous, Greek), means "anointed ones." Compare I John 2:20, 27. We are truly the anointed ones of God.

PAUL'S COMMISSION RECEIVED

There were two cities by the name of Antioch. One was in Pisidia, a country of Asia Minor; the other, the starting point of Paul's operations, was about 300 miles north of Jerusalem in Syria. It was fitting that Jerusalem was represented at that little meeting by Barnabas, "the son of consolation"; northern Africa by Lucius and Simeon of Cyrene (See Matthew 27:32), Asia by Saul of Tarsus, and Galilee by Manaen. "And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (13:2). Our chief and first ministry is not to preach, but to worship. "The Father seeketh worshippers" (John 4:23). If the Lord can find good spiritual worshippers, He soon can get able laborers and teachers and preachers. What a deep delight this ministry becomes as we learn to yield to the holding, waiting, preparing power of the Spirit. And what eternal profit we afterwards see! The word "minister" (leitourgeo, Greek) means to serve as a priest at one's own expense; to worship by choice, cheerfully. Our English word "liturgy" is derived from this word. Compare Romans 15:16; Hebrews 1:7; 8:2; 10:11. Yes, they fasted, but fasting is not some laborious, rigid refusal to eat. It is a spontaneous cessation of everything that might interfere with a prolonged waiting upon the Lord. See God's view of fasting in Isaiah 58:3-7.

Truly God can make known His will when we thus wait upon Him. Five men in conference with the Lord were authorized to separate two. Which two? Whom "I have called." Can anyone deny that Jehovah definitely calls certain persons for certain tasks? And He does not leave this important matter to finite man. How dangerous and foolish for others to interfere with the course of the conduct of such called ones. They are going against God Himself. For what were they called? "For the work," not for pleasure, money-making, nor fame-getting; nothing for old man. Compare Luke 10:2. Neither was this the work by which they should earn their salvation, or eternal life. Nay! They were already wonderfully saved and filled with fire and the Holy Spirit - "God's workmanship, (or Poem) created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Good works are possible only by those who have eternal life. Good works are those only which God has ordained.

CO-OPERATION OF THE CHURCH

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (13:3-4). Here is a very important item. Notwithstanding all of Paul's inward holy fire, his knowledge of the truth, and the full and deep conviction of his call, yet he kept in the background, followed Barnabas, and waited for the co-operation of the church in entering upon his distinctive mission. The Holy Spirit called independently of others, but He separated and sent through others.

The sending forth by the brethren was the sending forth by the Holy Spirit. What was the lasting result? They ever after stood with him in faith. See Chapters 14:26-28; 15:35-40. This is the Divine Plan, and it should always be observed. The Lord makes the saints to know who is called and when he should go. "A man's gift maketh room for him" (Proverbs 18:16). The Lord may sovereignly choose and send someone, especially when the people of God are not walking in His perfect will, or when He purposes to do a new thing. Consider John the Baptist, Stephen and Philip. "They preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews" (13:5). Yes! Yes! The Word of God was their message. How often this is declared in the Acts. Also, they went "to the Jews first," and "also to the Gentiles. This was God's order. See Chapter 3:26; Romans 2:9-10; and I Peter 4:17.

Our God is the God of emergencies, and He finds those who will prove Him and also be proved at such times. "Elymas, the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith" (13:8). We should never be alarmed at opposition, nor quail before hardship. It is our opportunity; it is God's opportunity. That was God's time, for His own glory, to put Saul in the lead. Would he rise to the occasion? Was Barnabas a little shrinking? Who should prevail? the legalist (of whom the sorcerer is a type), or Jehovah?

THE FATHER'S HAND

While through this changing world below
I would not choose my path to go;
'Tis Father's hand that leadeth me,
Then O how safe His child must be.
Sometimes we walk in sunshine bright,
Sometimes in darkness of the night;
Sometimes the way I cannot see
But Father's hand still leadeth me.
Sometimes there seems no way to take,
But Father's hand a way doth make.
Sometimes I hear Him gently say,
"Come follow Me, this is the way."
Why should I mind the way I go?
His Way is best for me, I know.
He is my strength, my truth, my way,
He is my comfort, rod, and stay.
So on we travel hand in hand,
Bound for the heavenly promised land;
Always through all Eternally,
I'll praise His Name for leading me.

-- Ida L. Cornett

OPPOSITION OF SATAN

"Then Saul, (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (13:9-10). Saul means "asked for," just like the tall, stately fellow for whom Israel asked a thousand years before, and who had egregiously failed. Will this Saul fail? Nay! Why not? His name is changed to Paul, "the little." He had already learned that Christ alone was his life and strength. He depended upon God only. He learned to glorify his weakness (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

We should not only be filled with the Spirit, but also yield to Him absolutely. God never fails the believer who acknowledges his own weakness, and at the same time counts on Him who is all sufficient. Saints often miss God's best because they fail a test. He knows when we are in a difficult place. He could make it easier, but He seeks our development. He wants to show what He can do for us and through us if we count on Him. He would make us warriors of steel. Elymas was full of the spirit of Satan; Saul was full of the Spirit of God; hence Paul overcame the sorcerer. Elymas's birth name was Bar-Jesus, or "Son of the Savior," but he was not true to his name. In his walk and lifework, he was Elymas, "the sorcerer." Saul was true to his new name, Paul, by depending on the Lord. Therefore, he prevailed in the fray. Compare the phrase, "son of the devil," with the phrase, "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2-3). For them, there is no salvation. They have grown in their surrender to Satan and have become his sons. What a terribly solemn fact is this! All of us who are saved were once "by nature children of wrath," but not children of the devil, much less sons. Thank God! by the new birth, we became children of God. Now it is our privilege to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord" and thus become sons of God, "led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14. Contrast John 8:44). Observe that the blindness of Elymas here is typical of Israel's religious blindness for this age. Study Romans 11:10, 25. Their pharisaical teachers, who taught that men must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved, were the worst kind of sorcerers. And some saved Jews partook of this heresy.

They "bewitched" young saints into a religion of works (Galatians 3:4). Paul's words declare that such a doctrine is subtle, mischievous, and enemy of all righteousness, and is of the devil. Of course, it perverts the right ways of the Lord, which are ways of faith and grace. The teaching of Barnabas and Paul was rightly termed "the doctrine of the Lord," which deeply impressed the pro-consul, Sergius Paulus. The doctrine was manifested through the power of God. Too many people ignore the former but run after the latter. Indeed, what is sometimes supposed to be power of God, is only the gesticulations of the flesh. Man's carnal display is erroneously called "the manifestations of the Spirit." Real truth grips honest hearts. Real truth, the doctrine of the Lord, results in real "manifestations of the Spirit, which are to profit with all."

THE APOSTLES MOVING ON

"Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem" (13:13). Of the seven points visited on Paul's first Gospel tour, we have noted two. It is not stated whether they preached in Seleucia or not. Its meaning, "white light," was doubtless unlike the city morally considered, but it was so-called because it was a seaport town. Salamis, meaning "shaken," was shaken indeed in a new way when the apostles proclaimed the Gospel there. Paphos, meaning "which boils," was a pot of religious iniquity which Elymas stirred with his ladle of sorcery. However, the apostles introduced "a pot of oil," boiling with the glory of God, being heated by the fire of God's Word. Perga means "very earthy." Therefore, it needed the Gospel, as do all places for the same reason. They may be bright, beautiful, and promising in the natural, but they are nothing to God without Christ. Pamphylia means "mingled people."

It was therefore a fine place to spread the Glad Tidings, thereby reaching different nationalities. We should not study these narratives as history only, but also as full of typical and spiritual lessons.

"And John departed." The youthful John Mark could no longer endure to be only an attendant of those men who "hazarded their lives" for the truth. He could not stand "the work" (Chapter 15:38). It is always easier to go to Jerusalem where there is a crowd, "many thousands of Jews that believe," where there is something doing. How few stand for the truth, crowd or no crowd, results or no results. But the truth will bring results, even fruit that will abide, if we are willing to toil and suffer in the will of God. John means "the gift, or favor of God." Mark means "the polite or shining one." But it is required in a minister to have more than an excellent and beautiful name to keep him going on in such a strenuous way.

However, the time came, when even John Mark had to rally to the standard and write of Jesus Christ as the faithful Servant of Jehovah - even the Gospel of Mark. God wrought faithfulness in him and made him willing to be a servant, even under Paul, and "profitable for ministering" (II Timothy 4:11). Herein lies a rich lesson. John's first period of service with Barnabas and Paul was that of an attendant, an underling officer (hupereten, Greek), called "officer and servant" in John 18:12, 22, 26. After he became willing to serve in that capacity, the Holy Spirit made him a minister of a more spiritual character, even a deacon (diakon, Greek). If you desire promotion, be content with your present ministry and serve faithfully in it. You will be promoted when you deserve it for God's glory.

And yet, if John had continued with Paul from the first, he would not have needed to return by the humiliating route of being brought by Timothy, who was younger in the Lord, and probably in years. Young man, taking warning from John Mark and take courage from him also.

IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA

"But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down" (13:14). The rest of this long chapter is devoted to the apostles' labors at that place, which was several hundred miles from Antioch in Syria, whence they started.

Study Paul's mode of operation and testimony here. Observe that he spoke profusely from the Old Testament in addressing that Israelitish community. First, the apostles "sat down." However full of truth and fire we may be, it is usually wise among strangers to sit and wait. (Compare Isaiah 30:7). Note that Paul addressed them as "men of Israel." By a tactful historic recital, Paul brought his hearers to the birth of Christ, the offspring of David. Verse 23 is therefore a new item of history to them.

"Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus." He called Him "this salvation" (13:26). He announced Him to be Glad Tidings, and the fulfillment of their own holy writings. Scripture explains Scripture. The statement in Psalm Two - "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee," is here explained to mean Christ's resurrection (13:33). You will find "the sure mercies of David" pictured in Psalm 89, as God's promise of Jesus' millennial reign. Observe also that Paul taught not only "forgiveness of sins," but also "justification" (13:38-39). For the first time in Acts, we read of this marvelous doctrine of justification. You ask, "What is the difference between forgiveness of sins and justification?" The difference is great. An offended party can forgive an offense, because he chooses to do so, but he cannot justify the offense, nor the offender. In fact, the offender remains an offender forever. The offense was committed once, but forever. But the offended Jehovah can justify the offender. He not only "forgives our iniquity," but He "covers our sins" (Romans 4:7), so that offended justice can see those sins no more. The ungodly, when forgiven, stand as if they had never been ungodly; the offender is counted as never having offended. He stands righteous before the highest tribunal in the universe. "It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33). We learn in Romans 3:23 and 5:9 how this was made possible. Because Christ paid our debt in His death for us, God no longer imputes sin to

us, but instead imputes righteousness unto us the moment we believe on Jesus (II Corinthians 5:19, 21; Romans 4:3; 5:1). Reader, if you really believe that you are thus justified before God, you can never deliberately designedly accuse your brother (Romans 8:33).

Learn Paul's invincible doctrine of justification in his epistle to the church in Rome. Note how the Gentiles hung on Paul's words - Verses 32, 43-44, 48. Observe also the emphasis put upon the Word of God. The only salvation taught in the Bible is "everlasting life," Verse 46, and some "were ordained to it," Verse 48. This ordination is not arbitrary on God's part. By listening to the Word, they arranged themselves to it. Compare II Thessalonians 2:13 and I Peter 1:2, and see that faith is required on our part, or the "obedience of faith." God "opened the door of faith" unto us and we enter in by choice (Chapter 14:27). What is the heart attitude of unbelievers toward those who do believe and why? Read verses 45, 50, and Chapter 14:2, 5, 19. When people close their hearts against Christ and the truth, they leave an opening for Satan to enter. But what is the result of believing "the word of God's grace?" Verse 52: "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." How strange that man will not believe (See II Corinthians 4:4).

THE DIVINE ORDER ALWAYS

"It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (13:46). Whenever Barnabas and Paul went to that town, they first offered their goods to the Jews. On that particular occasion, they began to be more pronounced in carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Spirit was showing them that the Jews would not receive it. Study the clause, "judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life." What a solemn and strange statement! That was the way the Lord looked upon their rejection of salvation through His Son. Many people today also judge themselves unworthy, even believers. Why do they attempt to perfect themselves and earn eternal life by thinking to hold out faithful? Most of the saints, even after they see the grace of God, yet deplore the fact that they are unworthy. They still wish that they had some merit. But there is no merit, nor worthiness in the old creation. In Christ, we are wholly worthy, for we are a new creation in Him. The new life is His life, which cannot be otherwise then worthy and accepted. Again, we revert to Verse 39. He, whom God justifies is accepted, because his very righteousness is the spotless righteousness of Christ counted over to him when he believes. "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth" (13:47). The apostle quotes from Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 to prove to the Jews that the Gospel should go to the Gentiles also. It is a fine thing to know the Scriptures. A "thus saith the Lord" makes our teaching unanswerable. Observe, however, that Paul identified himself with Jesus Christ. Isaiah wrote of God's Son, that He should be for a light to the nations, but here Paul declares that he himself is that light, as if Isaiah had written of Paul. Well, did not Jesus say to His disciples: "Ye are the light of the world"? Is it not written, "Among whom ye are lights in the world"?

(Philippians 2:15). Not only did Paul represent Jesus Christ among the Gentiles, but he labored in their midst as Christ. It is not enough to represent Christ, reflect Him in the world, as some put it, but we are here as He. They, who apprehend this truth, cannot be false to Jesus. They cannot flirt with the world, nor court its favors, nor make merchandise of the Gospel.

THE APOSTLES IN ICONIUM

CHAPTER 14

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the

unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." (14:1-2)

Despite the bitter opposition of Satan through the unbelieving Jews, while the missionaries were in Antioch, the Word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all that region (13:49). "I will work, and who shall hinder," is God's promise. When He allowed the chief men of the city to cast them out of their borders, then they came to Iconium. Here they had great success and continued a long time. The persecution seemed to fire them anew to proclaim the truth; for they spoke boldly in the Lord. Observe closely verse three: "The Lord gave testimony unto the Word of His grace." If a Reader does not like the message of grace, consider this statement. That we emphasize the Glad Tidings of Grace, may not impress some or interest them, God's witness to it should convict every law-keeper deeply. And, indeed it does, but he resents it and throws off the conviction. How does the Lord bear witness to the Word of Grace? The answer is simple - "granting signs and wonders to be done" by the hands of His servants. In spite of this saying and of other similar Scripture statements, some men, even some who claim to see the grace of God, ignore and repudiate the Lord's manner of witnessing to His grace. Then what Bible proof have they that they are proclaiming the Gospel?

IN LYSTRA

"And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, they were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about" (14:5-6). The enemy could not endure the prosperity of the Word in Iconium; hence, the Jews and Gentiles sought to stone the apostles.

Therefore, they went on to other points. Satan could not stop them. Nay, nay! The sun is a great ball of fire. Nothing can hinder it from shining, though man may try to hide from its light and heat. Just so with men filled with the Word of God and with the Holy Spirit. Nothing can extinguish the fire in their bones, though some may reject the flames that leap from them. Lystra was a Gentile town; therefore, the apostles did not quote so freely from the Old Testament at first. Note that it is not said that they went into the synagogue of the Jews, as in other cities. "There they preached the Gospel, that is, they announced Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Saviour of men, without especially trying to prove it from Scriptures, The Lord confirmed their wonderful message by healing the impotent man. Modern missionaries ought to study the travels of those first missionaries. They certainly never would talk of sending "medical" missionaries.

The physical impotency of that man in Lystra expresses the inward impotency of all mankind. All men are crippled in their feet from birth. None have ever walked uprightly before God since Adam and Eve stumbled and fell. "All have sinned; all come short." All are helpless apart from Christ. His healing also is a beautiful picture of how the Lord lifts up all those who believe on Him, and enables them to stand, leap and walk, by giving them a new life and making them new creatures in Himself.

Observe two important facts here: First, the Gospel message begets faith in the hearts of its hearers; Second, Paul did not attempt to heal everybody that was ailing, but he was ready to deliver those who had faith. The faith of God is not presumptuous but waits and operates on prepared soil. What was the public effect of the healing of the impotent man? "And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker" (14:11-12). Jupiter (or, Zeus), or Father Jove, was the deity of power among the Greeks and Romans. He was regarded as the king and father of gods and men. He was the son of Kronos (Saturn) and Rhea, hence called Kronides, ruler of the lower air. Rains and storms are supposed to come from Jupiter. Compare Chapter 19:35. Mercury (Hermes, Greek; Mercurius, Latin) was supposed to be

the son of Jupiter and Maia. In Homer, he is called by the various names according to his different ministries - the giver of good luck, the god of secrets and cunning, the conductor of ghosts to hades. Later, Mercury was worshipped as the god of learning, trade, the arts and sciences, and eloquence. Indeed, Mercury means eloquent, learned, crafty. Barnabas was older than Paul (Chapter 7:58), and doubtless of a larger physique. His powerful fatherly presence impressed the people, but Paul's learned eloquence, his invincible words in the Spirit, arrested them. We can see at once why those ignorant, needy people called them gods. They knew that only God could perform such a miracle as the healing of the helpless cripple.

Did the apostles accept their deification? No! That is what many Christian workers today encourage. They want the admiration and applause of the public. They count it the highest honor, and a proof of spirituality to be borne aloft like kings on the shoulders of their hearers. Not so with Barnabas and Paul. Instead, they rent their garments and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out and saying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them" (14:15-18). They avoided everything that would cause their hearers to be occupied with them but sought to make them see the Lord and His wonderful goodness. They were seeking nothing for themselves. They were seeking the good of the citizens and the glory of God. Every faithful minister of God today follows in their steps. In Chapter 16, we will learn of a choice youth who believed about that time.

As the Jews had done elsewhere, so here. "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead" (14:19). The apostle refers to this experience, no doubt, in II Corinthians 1:8-10. He takes occasion thereby to set forth an excellent item of truth for practical use. He said, "We have had the answer (sentence) of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us out of so great a death, and doth deliver." On the surface, it would seem that he had the sentence of death in his body at that time when he was taken up for dead. But is there not a deeper truth, a background fact here? Does not our brother mean also that we all have had the sentence of death pronounced upon us on the cross? When do we cease to trust in ourselves, and absolutely trust in the God of resurrection? Is it not when we really believe with all the heart that there is nothing in the old creation to be trusted? Yes, we accept the sentence of Calvary; then go forth to prove it in actual experience. How often death would have been our portion if the God of resurrection had not intervened.

If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within, and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery could find a key.
But not today. Then be content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold,
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart --

Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.

-- Mary Riley Smith

PAUL'S FIRST GOSPEL TOUR

"And when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God" (14:21-22). Eight points were visited with the Glad Tidings covering a period of several years, resulting in many converts to the Christian faith and the founding of assemblies. Ongoing homeward, was their Gospel Bell cracked? How did it ring? It rang loud and clear in three distinct tones in particular: CONFIRMATION, EXHORTATION, AND INSTRUCTION. They left the saints in good hands in every place: "they appointed for them elders in every church." The word "appointed" or ordained (cheirotoneo, Gr.), means to "elect by stretching out the hand." Assembly order is Scriptural, but not organization. There is not the first intimation of any carnal bounds set about the saints.

"They sailed to Antioch" (14:26). There is no question as to which Antioch, for Luke says, "From whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled" (14:26). I find two meanings of the word Antioch: "driven against," and "speedy as a chariot." Both meanings apply aptly to the assembly there. They sped on with the Lord, and of course, the enemy drove his chariots against them. Do you observe to what Barnabas and Paul had been committed?

"The grace of God." That would not suit most ministers today. They prefer to be committed to some official board, or district elder, or general overseer. Thank God, under His grace, we find the adorable Trinity a reliable official Rock, tested by the ages. We find a kind and wise general Overseer in our Head, the Lord Jesus, and a powerful and co-operative district Superintendent in the Holy Spirit. For over 20 years, the writer has demonstrated the Scriptural-ness of these statements with ever increasing profit, power and joy. In brokenness of spirit and overwhelmed with awe, I can only exclaim, "What hath God wrought!"

"And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples" (14:27-28). Oh, how full of meaning and nourishing meat is every portion of God's Word! What the eyes of my heart see in this book of Acts would fill a thousand pages, but time and space forbid. The church did not know the apostles were coming.

They could not telephone, nor telegraph, much less, teleface. The city was not stirred carnally by the news of their arrival. The church only was concerned in them, and they were interested chiefly in the church. Note how those dear men said nothing of themselves, or what they had done. Paul seldom spoke in his letters about his troubles and persecutions, yet, who had more than he had? They simply recited God's dealings with them, which necessitated a bare mention of opposition. A door of faith opened to the nations was the great marvel. And who did that? Did eloquent Paul? Did big father Barnabas? Nay! but God did it, and it pleased Him to use Paul and Barnabas to spread the Good News.

The word "tarried" (diatribo, Gr.) literally means to rub between." Hence, it means also to abide, to tarry, to spend time. It occurs only five times in the New Testament; twice in this chapter; for example, Verse 3, where we learn the nature of their tarrying. They were not idle. They were not engrossed with the things of the world. They ground out some of the old corn of the land of Canaan. They rubbed out the Word of God between the times of laboring with their hands and praying for the sick and ministering to the saints of spiritual things. I dare say that they who learn GOD'S PLANS the rare art of rubbing between, grinding out a little meal, snatching a morsel of truth now and then, eating

less, sleeping less, visiting less, reading less of unimportant things, but searching the Word more, these people become the beacon lights to the world.

When your cup overflows, share it!

LEGALITY CONDEMNED FOREVER

CHAPTER 15

"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (15:1) There is scarcely a more important portion of Scripture than this chapter. The only general council recorded in the New Testament, met to settle questions which have disturbed the peace of saints in this age. If the teachings of that council were really believed and practiced, there would be no need of many convocations today.

Paul and Barnabas had spent a whole year in Antioch. Afterward they had established assemblies in seven other places, teaching salvation by faith alone, wholly apart from works. It was after they had returned to Antioch and had been "long time" there, that those troublers came down. It was more than 18 years after Pentecost (Compare Galatians 1:18; 2:1-2), when that unannounced conference was held in Jerusalem to deliberate on the way of salvation. All the apostles, including Paul and Barnabas were there (Verse 2, 6).

Necessity was upon Paul and Barnabas to have that question settled. They had prolonged and labored discussions with the legalists, who stubbornly withstood them. Therefore, the brethren at Antioch appointed that they and certain others should go up to Jerusalem and confer with the apostles and elders about the subject. Paul wrote afterwards that he "went up by revelation" to that conference, taking Titus with him (Galatians 2:1-3). He was fully persuaded that he was Scriptural in his teaching and toil. He had a clear grasp of the utter helplessness of the law to save, or bless, and was thoroughly persuaded that salvation was absolutely by grace. Note Chapter 13:38-39, which we have studied. If the Lord had not revealed to him definitely that he should go and interview the Kingdom Apostles, he would not have gone. The perfect will of God for him was a constant purpose.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they met with certain of the Pharisees with the same legal opposition. Indeed, they had been down to Antioch, and persisted in their error. Yes, legality withstands the grace message everywhere. "And the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter" (15:6). The problem was not to be solved so easily. Legality is Satan's strong religious fortification. Therefore, it fights tiger-like and hangs on like a leach. The conference began and proceeded with "much question, or discussion." Sure; for legalists are fluent talkers and they never seem to grow weary.

PETER FIRST ON THE FLOOR

After three years of fellowship with Jesus on earth, and after a score of successful years of Gospel ministry in the wisdom and power of the Spirit, Peter boldly declared the way of salvation for Jew and Gentile to be by faith alone. Hear him. "God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and BELIEVE" (Chapters 10-11). Mark the invincible proof he gives - "And God, who knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He died unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by FAITH" (15:8-9). Observe exactly the phrases: "even as unto us" and "no difference." For 20 years, Peter witnessed that both Jews and Gentiles received purity of heart - salvation - and the Gift of the Holy Spirit, and it was invariably by faith alone in Jesus. Not the slightest tinge of works was admitted.

Then note his stern rebuke. "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we were able to bear?" (15:10)

My Friend, do you see what it means to bring in works, or self-effort, as a means of salvation, or of perfecting believers? Water baptism, sabbath-keeping, feet-washing, making restitution, lopping off habits, changing your dress, trimming your beard or hair - all these are acts of "tempting God," if they are done in order to be saved, or to receive the Spirit, or to keep saved. To teach thus is to "put an unbearable yoke on the neck." It proved unbearable to the fathers; it is unbearable to anybody. Hence, Jesus said: "come unto Me all ye that labor (working for salvation) and are heavy laden (with law keeping); take my yoke (grace) upon you, and learn of Me; for My yoke (grace) is easy and my burden (faith) is light" (Matthew 11:29). Yes, God be praised! "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of GRACE and truth; and of His fulness have all we received, and GRACE FOR GRACE. For the law was given by Moses, but GRACE and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:14-17). Then observe Peter's unanswerable conclusion: "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they" (15:11).

PATIENCE

Kept, safely kept;
My fears away are swept;
In weakness to my God I cling,
Though foes be strong I calmly sing,
Kept, safely kept.
Kept by His power,
Whatever dangers lower,
The strength of God's almighty arm
Doth shield my soul from every harm,
Kept by His power.
Through simple faith,
Believing what He saith,
Unshaken on my God I lean,
And realize His power unseen,
But known to faith.
Kept all the way,
E'en to salvation's day,
His mighty love ne'er cold shall wax,
Nor shall His powerful grasp relax,
Through all the way.

BARNABAS AND PAUL'S TESTIMONY

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" (15:12). Whether these two apostles made any doctrinal statements, Luke does not say. The only proof they gave that the grace way was the divine way, was the result of their labors everywhere they had gone. They needed no other proof. If their testimony of 15 years effectual service, seeing many hundreds saved and filled with the Spirit, and unspeakable miracles and wonders wrought, all through simple faith, would not convince the legalists, nothing else would. They certainly rung the changes in declaring that all that had been

done under their ministry, God Himself did it according to His grace. Their addresses were beyond question the most interesting of all.

JAMES ON THE PROGRAM

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written" (15:13-15). Peter proved that salvation was by faith through grace, by showing the beginning of God's plan for this age. Then Barnabas and Paul demonstrated that salvation was by faith through grace to the Gentiles also, by their invincible witness to God's mighty works. Finally, James confirmed the arguments of those three faith-warriors by Old Testament prophecies. He introduced his remarks by recalling what Peter had said. Then he made known three vital truths: First, during this age, God is "taking out a people for His Name." Second, at the end of this age, "the residue of men" that is, Israel, will seek the Lord. Third, "and all the Gentiles," that is, nationally all, but not literally every individual, for some will yield to Christ's reign with pretended obedience. (See Psalm 18:44; 66:3; 81:15)

Study closely Verses 14-18. People talk of converting the whole world today. They claim very religiously, a whole city for Christ. Despite all the headlines that the whole city turned to the Lord, there is no record of any entire city being saved. The nearest to such a victory was in Paul's time, when "almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord" (Acts 13:44). But did all these people who were there believe? If they did, why did they expel the apostles from their midst a few weeks later? Bear in mind that God is only making a visit to the earth during this age, to gather out a Body of people and build a Bride for His Son. Men look in vain for a world-wide revival in view of ushering in a democratic millennium, and that, without Christ!

THE DIVINE OUTLINE

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (15:16-17). James quoted Amos 9:11-12. The personal return and presence of the Lord, not simply as a visitor, but as a permanent resident, is the promise of God and the hope of believers. Only this can bring in the Millennium. Jesus must come and rebuild the tabernacle of David. Then Israel will be restored and then the long-for world-wide revival will come, even the millennial day. Jesus must be sitting upon the throne of universal dominion and His lovely Bride with Him for these things to be accomplished. It will not be popular evangelism, but Christ and His people will convert the world during their honeymoon. Hallelujah! "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (15:18).

THE COUNSEL OF JAMES

"Wherefore my sentence, or judgment, is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are to God" (15:19). James was the pastor of the kingdom congregation in Jerusalem. His words following Peter's words, had weight with both Jewish and Gentile believers, curbing the former and comforting the latter. Observe that he terms the teaching of legality "trouble," just what Paul called it afterward (Galatians 6:17). He put himself on record as believing that Gentiles turn to God, even under Paul's ministry. Those were hard blows against the law-keepers, but the Holy Spirit was moving him to speak. He advised further that they give four simple cautions to Gentile converts: "But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (15:20).

(1) "Pollutions of idols." Of course, they could not worship the true God and other gods also. There is only one God. Him alone they should worship. I Corinthians 10:19-22 is a commentary on this statement. Idol-worship is in fact doing homage to Satan, for "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice,

they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons." By dividing up their devotions between idols and the Lord, they "provoked the Lord to jealousy."

(2) "And from fornication." No man should have more than one wife, and no woman should have more than one husband, because the husband symbolizes Christ, the Head of the Body, the Church; and the wife symbolizes the Church. How fitting that these two exhortations should be given. The first refers to God, the supreme object of worship, and the second to the Lord, our exalted Head. Each is rightfully jealous of His official relation to the saints.

(3 & 4) "And from what is strangled and from blood." These two precautions stand together. The second gives reason for the first. Flesh with the blood in it was forbidden to be eaten, not only under Moses' law (Leviticus 17:10-12), but long before (Genesis 9:4, "The blood is the life"). If we drink blood, we are drinking the life and strength of the old creation. Here again, our God is jealous. He has provided that we should live by the life of His Son, who shed His blood for us. He identified Himself with us in our ruin and died in our stead. In pouring out His lifeblood, He emptied out all our old creation life and strength. God sees the blood, even the blood of animals, as corrupt and spilled on the ground. Therefore, we are not to drink any blood. Furthermore, strangled meat was not to be eaten, because the blood was still in it. Spiritually, we do not live by the life of one who was killed by strangling. Nay! Jesus Christ laid down His life voluntarily. He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep.

No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:11, 15, 17-18). We, who believe on Jesus, live by His resurrection life. Oh, what a wonderful and glorious truth is this!

UNANIMOUS ACCEPTANCE AND CO-OPERATION

"Then pleased it the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren" (15:22). There were no pharisaical legalists among those chosen to carry the comforting news, the decision of the council. Oh, if our brethren, who are under the law, or mix law and grace, would study the conduct and conclusions of that council, their lawkeeping would flee forever. Alas! Legal hearers refuse to read, lest they be converted from their error.

"And they wrote letters by them after this manner: (15:23-29). They termed the Judaizers, "troublers and subverters of souls," and they had never given them orders to teach. In that conference, they "came to one accord" on the question. Note that they regarded Barnabas and Paul as "beloved," and as having "hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And do not overlook this saying: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." They put the Spirit first. It would be a joy indeed to attend a conference of leaders, led and controlled by the Holy Spirit, in perfect harmony with the Word of God. They did not mean by "necessary things," that they were essential to getting saved, or to keep saved, but in order to "do well." Laxity in those practical matters would hinder growth in divine matters. Hence, Paul wrote about them in his epistles later on, warning against everything that would impede progress in grace. "These necessary things" are not stern demands of law, or drawn swords of justice hanging over our heads, but they are fingerboards of love to guard and guide us in our present pilgrimage.

James, in his epistle, written doubtless after that invaluable conference, called this grace-way of salvation, "the perfect law of liberty." Paul pronounced it "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and admonished us not to be "entangled with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5). On that council floor, Peter declared legality to be an unbearable "yoke." If these two chief zealots for lawkeeping, Peter and Paul, threw off that yoke of bondage with its clumsy brood of deadly doings, should we not shun it as a most deadly viper? If Spirit-filled apostles and elders and the first Pentecostal assembly, met in a conference 20 years after Pentecost, and declared boldly that salvation is by grace only and always,

should we not also hold a bold stand in its favor? If salvation by grace alone, wholly apart from human effort, was our beloved brother Paul's doctrine before and after that conference, how can we proclaim any other Gospel than that of absolute grace? And let us exclaim with Zechariah, "GRACE! GRACE!"

THE CONSOLATION DELIVERED

"So, when they were dismissed, came down to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle" (15:30). The further importance of that recent conference is shown by the fact that Judas and Silas were sent with Paul and Barnabas, to deliver the conclusions reached. They exhorted the saints and confirmed them in the truth. It is worthy of note, that those Antiochian saints were already so deeply grounded in the truth of Grace, that the council did not bring them any added light. Its deliberations brought them "consolation" only, for which "they rejoiced." When Paul's Gospel is known and believed, there is little hope of anyone else bringing any further information. His message compasses all the truth. The Revised Version unwisely relegates Verse 34 to the margin. By doing so, an interesting link in God's wonderful chain of providence is cut out. "It pleased Silas to abide there still," because the Lord gave him a special love for Paul and his message. God knew that Paul would soon need a new associate, or yoke-fellow, in the work.

Observe that on the conference floor and when James spoke of them, the order was Barnabas and Paul, but when Luke records the proceedings of the conference and other events, the order is, Paul and Barnabas. Let the student notice Chapters 13:9, 13, 16, 43, 46, 50; and 14:19. Was that all by accident? Did Paul just happen to be called "the chief speaker?" Do you think that Paul, coming more and more to the front was easy for Barnabas to bear? For every effect there is a cause. Did it comfort dear, weary, and tried Barnabas to see Silas staying close to Paul, and Paul reciprocating his attentions? You see, we are being prepared for the next lesson.

PAUL'S SECOND GOSPEL TOUR CHAPTERS 16 TO 18

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord and see how they do" (15:36). From Chapter 15:36 to 18:22, we find recorded the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. It began about 51 A.D.

Paul had a heart of warmest love for his converts. He felt responsible for the care and growth of the children born again under his ministry. Therefore, like every true, loving father, he purposed to visit them. However, before he could go on his journey, some difficulties arose. Ponder thoughtfully the closing verses of this chapter: "And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (15:37-41).

A SHARP CONTENTION

Reader, are you perplexed at the separation of Barnabas from Paul in the way it occurred? Did not Paul write, "As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men"? Yes, but peace must lie in both parties. Barnabas was older than Paul, a man of wealth at one time and stood in high esteem among the Jerusalem saints, but always befriended Paul after his conversion. When the Lord began pushing Paul to the front with a new distinctive message, Barnabas may have been slow to see that it was God. Why should He give such a revelation to one who had blasphemed and wasted the Church instead of to the one who had always been true to the truth? God gets the greatest glory in choosing unlikely men to accomplish His purposes. Even Jesus was only the son of Joseph, a common carpenter and of

Nazareth, a place to be despised, so said the critics. Reader do not cast everything into the waste basket as error because you have not seen it before, or because some reputed person has not taught it. Weigh it in God's scales. It may be the "Scripture of truth." Do not limit the infinite God. The same Holy Spirit who has come to guide us into all the truth, can show you and me, as well as Martin Luther, or John Wesley, new things in His Word. What man dare stand up and say that he has explored the limits and has delved into the deepest depths of divine truth? No doubt Barnabas thought, what Peter, James, and John had not learned from Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, by whom they were empowered, was not to be learned. Behold what mighty men they were, what miracles they wrought, etc.

Then add to this his personal feelings. His nephew, John Mark, was ready to join them again, but Paul thought it not good to take him, because he had left them before when the work was so difficult, and he was so greatly needed. You can see how easy it was for John Mark to go along now. They were going to visit established assemblies. Personal preferences, family ties, nothing should be allowed to come between us and the will of God. The sequel of this story proves who was in the right. Barnabas took Mark, (meaning "the polite, shining one") and went to Cyprus, ("fairness"), his home. Nothing is said of them until long after Paul had made this second missionary journey. (See I Corinthians 9:6; II Timothy 4:11)

Paul chose Silas, the one "who considers," and he was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God. They departed, not for home, but to labor with and confirm the churches. God always proves who is in His will. All those men suffered - Paul, because he moved in the will of God, suffering with Christ. The other two, going in their own way, suffered defeat, suffered loss, and Mark had to serve Paul finally. (See II Timothy 4-11)

It speaks well of God's ministers, when they go forth "recommended by the brethren." Barnabas and Mark also went forth, but without a recommendation. The divine order always is that we first have a divine conviction to go, impelled by the flaming truth within our hearts. Then we need the anointing with the Holy Spirit. Finally, we need divine co-operation and confirmation of the assembly of saints. Thus, we can advance with confident certainty and unconquerable strength. The results of their ministry prove this. Furthermore, they were "recommended unto the grace of God."

That is no small item. Do you ever hear of such a send-off in modern times? The "riches of grace" was their unspeakable message everywhere they went. If you have a feeling of shyness, or laxity toward the grace of God, study the divine purpose of redemption through grace. Paul declares that it was, "that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6-8).

THE APOSTLES ON THE WING

"And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra; and behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, which believed: but his father was a Greek" (16:1). Timothy was the product of Paul's former visit to Derbe and Lystra. How do we know? He calls him his son - II Timothy 1:2. Being "well reported of by the brethren," Paul took him along, and Timothy always afterward proved a loyal, faithful student and preacher of the Word. Why did Paul have him circumcised? Because his mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek, or Gentile. This is an illustration of his teaching: "I am become all things to all men, that by all means I may save some." He knew that observing the shadowy rite would not affect Timothy's standing with God, but it would give him more freedom among the Jews who were still weak in the faith. Paul was "weak with them that were weak." (I Corinthians 9) The decrees of Chapter 15:19-30 were delivered (Verse 4).

"So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily (16:5). How different the report of the labors of those men from modern reports. These are always exceedingly brief. The character of their teaching and toils is seen by the two results. The first mentioned -

"strengthened in the faith" - most naturally leads to the second - "increase." There is criminal neglect today in this respect. Very few ministers have sufficient love for the saints to feed them on the life-sustaining Bread, the Word of grace, wisely taught. Most preachers itch to precipitate big revivals, so as to get a big name and a big bag of greenbacks. Oh, how different were those men, who "hazarded their lives for the Gospel." Both groups will have their rewards. The one have theirs here and now, Paul and his company will have theirs hereafter and it will be eternal.

CHAPTER 16

A LESSON ON DIVINE GUIDANCE

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night, there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them." (16:6-10)

Study the three means used here by the Spirit to show the apostles plainly the will of God. Back of them, hung the great command of Jesus: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." This they were heeding. But God has a certain time for each plan and person; for He is calling out a people for His Name, and He knows when the people are ready for the truth. These may seem like strange words, "forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach ... but the Spirit suffered them not." Happy for us to be so well acquainted with the Spirit's voice and be so yielded to Him that He can make us to know His will. Because of this lack, many a fruitless word has been spoken, many a vain trip made. It is not enough to say, "Well, He knows my heart." We get no reward for that. He gets no glory out of that. We should know God's heart concerning us. If Paul knew it, we may know it. Let there be in us the persistent purpose to know and to do the perfect will of the Lord, no matter what the cost to us, or to others, and He will see that we have it. Then, too, we shall prove that it is exceedingly beyond all that we could have asked, or even thought. "Limit not the Holy One" by your own meager conception of His will.

First, the prohibition. Second, having yielded to that, a practical vision followed. Paul was not a visionary; hence, God could reveal His will to him in this manner when He saw fit. Third, they concluded from these various experiences and providences, "that the Lord had called" them into Macedonia. The Holy Spirit employs the Word and providences and people, visions, and dreams, as well as His own interior conviction, or voice, to direct our steps. Some folks imagine that they should never act or speak unless they are seized by an irresistible impression, or power, as if God regarded us as machines. Nay! The life and walk in the Spirit is most natural, easy and simple. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

A CHURCH PLANTED IN PHILIPPI

"Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days" (16:11-12). Samothrace, meaning "sign of rags," by its great need, might have detained the apostles. Neapolis, meaning "new city," with its promising features might have appealed to them. No! They heard a clarion call into Macedonia, and into Macedonia they went as soon as they could. Oh, what an example to us of prompt and persistent obedience! Observe also that they sought a central point, the chief city, from which to sound out the Gospel in that country. We do well if we follow their example.

What was the result of that definite leading? Days of discouraging waiting, a prayer meeting found, a demon cast out, imprisonment and stocks, an assembly in grace founded, and a most excellent and needful apostolic letter for our edification. We do not always meet with immediate success when we are led by the Spirit. "We were in that city abiding certain days." Saints often fail of a great victory because they do not hold in faith - "abiding" - until it comes. It is easier to run than to stay. Men can go in their own strength, but they can never stand still except in God's might, which is always at hand when we need and want it. Praise His Name! "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted thither" (16:13). This verse is rich and sweet. They found a prayer band of Sabbatarians; that is, those women were Jews, who had not yet heard of the first advent of Jesus and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they were still observing the shadows. The apostles went to that prayer meeting on the sabbath, not to endorse sabbath-keeping, but that they might bring the truth to those women, the truth which was the fulfillment of what those women were needing. People who sincerely pray to God are sure to be heard. Indeed, it was that prayer meeting which moved the Lord to send the apostles over to Philippi. Pray on, hope one, you shall have the answer to your prayer at last. Hallelujah! But what a small beginning for such faithful, untiring "servants of the most high God."

One would suppose that God would have led them to rent the largest hall in the city and advertise, etc. No, not so with God's best. Analyze the record: they went "out of the city, to a riverside, prayer meeting, sat down, spoke unto women." Oh Paul, are you not mistaken? Did the Spirit actually lead you?

Ah yes! God led. Cowper wrote: "God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." The first to receive the truth was not an inhabitant of that city, but Lydia of Thyatira, through whom, no doubt, an assembly was afterwards founded in that town (See Revelation 2:18-29). Her "heart the Lord opened."

She received the Word and the apostles into her home. That was their first encouragement. They continued to attend the prayer meeting. Luke writes, "We went to prayer." An apostle, or believer who does not love a prayer meeting, but wishes only to preach, or be preached to, is not reliable. It was on the way to prayer that a demon-possessed woman met them. Yes, too often believers turn back and go home again, and miss the mutual fellowship of the saints and of God. "Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Mary, lingering at the empty tomb, should be a lesson to us all, not to be in a hurry, but wait (John 20:11-15). How we need to try the spirits! The demons know the truth and God's true messengers: "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation" (16:17).

Compare also Chapter 19:15: "And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Proverbs 26:28 says, "A flattering mouth worketh ruin." So, we learn the source of flattery and its purpose. Spiritual believers sooner or later, sense it. "Many days" the soothsayer followed the apostles and annoyed them with her vain compliments. Finally, when moved by the Spirit, Paul rebuked the demon in the Name of Jesus Christ and cast it out. Why did the mighty Paul not act sooner? He was led by the Spirit. But whenever we loose one from satanic bondage, Satan puts us in bondage in turn, if God lets him. The disciples were imprisoned. Thank God! the hard place, the circumscribed condition, the opposition of darkness, is faith's opportunity.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed" (16:25-26). How insufficient is carnal security! God never sleeps; and though faith always rests, yet it never sleeps either.

While the jailor slept, the apostles wrestled and prevailed. Prayer turned to praise, and the victory was won. An earthquake shook the building; Divine glory shook the apostles, and conviction shook the jailor. Suddenly he knew that he was lost. Hence, he cried: "SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?" The simple and prompt answer, the apostles' remedy always for sin-sick souls, was: "BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED, AND THY HOUSE." An appropriate sermon on salvation by grace through faith followed. "And they spoke unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that there were in his house." The prison house was made a place of liberty in Christ Jesus. The jailor expressed his faith in God by being "baptized, he and all his, straightway." He expressed his gratitude to the apostles by washing their wounds and giving them an early breakfast.

Of course, "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Study the depth and immediateness of the conviction. Study the brief, simple, direct and all-sufficient mode of salvation. One word – BELIEVE - at the beginning and end of the record, expresses the process. No human merit; all of grace. No works; all of faith. No human power: God alone saved the jailor. When men are defeated, but do not wish to acknowledge it, they seek an easy way out. The authorities said: "Let those men go." But Paul, being innocent, and deserving the protection of the government, would not be thrust out and have it go on record that they were troubling the cities. God gives us an inward courage that commands the respect of magistrates for His own glory, which we should seek continually. The last verse of the chapter is interesting. It will be of special profit to the student to read in this connection that valuable letter of Paul to the church which grew out of his visit to Philippi at that time; namely, Philippians. "And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed" (16:40).

Opening my eyes I see
The answer to my soul's great need. To
belong, to be more than what I am A
stunning new reality
Unfolding now inside of me
I'm a part of the beauty of the bride.
My belongingness,
Was bought by His faithfulness,
Was purchased with His blood. We
shall see Him coming With His
arms held open wide,
Captivated by the hidden beauty of the bride;
Sooner than we know.
And all at once He will appear And
we will finally be made one.
At last we'll hear the Bridegroom calling. "Come."
-- Michael Card

CHAPTER 17 THESSALONICA TO ATHENS

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis (meaning, "around the city") and Apollonia (meaning, "utter destruction"), they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and

Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days, reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (17:1-3).

Thessalonians means, "victory over the tossing of law, and falsity." Such a victory is required to become an overcoming assembly as the saints in Thessalonica grew to be. As always, Paul's theme in that city was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which fundamental truths, he urged upon the worshippers in the synagogue from the Old Testament. Some of the Jews believed. A great multitude of Greeks believed. There, as usual, the truth met bitter opposition. Truly as a modern poet has written, "This world is no friend to grace." Observe however, that the religious world is the champion of persecution. At Philippi, it was the devotees of a "spirit of divination," whose possessor was used to make men rich. In Thessalonica, it was the professed people of God who did the persecuting. Note in both cases, how they deftly made use of the rulers of the city - Chapter 16:19-21; 17:6-8. When the magistrates are against the saints, incensed especially by the religious populace, believers have the hardest time. The charge in verse six was exaggerated, though it was true - "These have turned the world upside down." And yet, rather, sin has turned the world upside down, and salvation turns it right side up. Observe that national jealousy was the root of the persecution. The apostles preached "another king, one Jesus." Thank God, the day is not far distant, when that Jesus will indeed be King.

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who, when they were come thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews" (17:10). It is no sign of cowardice, or defeat to move on in the will of God. The mind of the Spirit is always victory, however humiliating it may appear.

Their course of action fully agreed with Chapter 15:14 - "God visited the Gentiles to take out a people for His name." The Lord never intended His Church to erect costly, elaborate buildings for worship, as if they would stay here forever. Ours is a pilgrim life, "pilgrims and strangers on the earth." Whom does Jehovah call "noble"? Those who "receive the Word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." In the eyes of the flesh, they are called noble, who can command attention and respect by their skill, affluence, pomp, eloquence, self-control and masterful leadership, intermixing enough of Christ to stamp it as Christian. Bosh! Bunk! Sham! Shame on such pulpit dress parade! What will the harvest be? "Wood and hay and stubble," rolling up in blinding volumes of smoke, even as their ministry is blinding many eyes to the real truth. Oh, if we can induce people to search the Word of God daily and honestly for themselves, they will be convinced and believe, because they will thereby be enlightened through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who always hovers over those who honestly delve into the Word. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy, just before he departed for heaven, saying, "Preach the Word." If we heed his admonition, we do well for time and eternity. Again, being opposed, those dear men of God moved on.

Was it for crimes that I have done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

- Watts

PAUL IN ATHENS

"Now while Paul waited for them (Silas and Timothy) at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him, as he beheld the city full of idols" (17:16). Young's Concordance gives A.D. 51 as the date when

Paul was brought before the supreme court in Mars' hill, or the Areopagus. If that is correct, then it was six years from Paul's commission (Chapter 13:1-3) until he came to Athens.

As His custom was, he first preached in the synagogue, because God's order is, "to the Jews first and also to the Greek" (Chapter 3:26; Romans 1:16). Then daily he visited the marketplace with his new and burning message. In that city, the "Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him." They were religious schools, directly opposed to each other, which had sprung up over 300 years before Christ. Paul's discourses on Jesus and the resurrection aroused them. Epicurus, the founder of the epicurean school, sought for happiness and pleasure at the expense of truth. He relied upon experience rather than reason as the test of his theory. The Epicureans held that the world was made by chance, that there is no providence, no resurrection, no immortality, and that pleasure is the chief good.

The Stoic philosophy was founded by Zoan. It took its name from the Stoa, a porch in Athens, where the school met. The Stoics were lofty pantheists; that is, they claimed that the whole creation is God.

Their chief religious boast was to be severely indifferent under all circumstances: neither rejoice over blessings and pleasures, nor wince under pain. Our English word stoical came from that religion. Both of these religious theories had their roots in Cain's self-effort. Self-will is at the bottom of all false religions. Is Cain's doctrine still in evidence? Are there any Epicureans and Stoics around today? Yes!

All self-made men are Cainites. All self-righteousness, all self-improvement, self-perfection, even though it is styled "entire sanctification," is Cainish, because it robs Christ of His glory. Stoicism, or self-killing, is another word for legality. Epicureanism is another way of spelling "lasciviousness." "Do as you please; have a good time; spare yourself, eat, drink, and be merry; for tomorrow we die." Both these religious philosophies have imbedded themselves in Christendom. If believers do not learn the precious secret of recognizing Christ within them as their life, they will almost invariably end up in one of these cults. Some saints grow weary of victories and defeats, and finally give up to a life of ease.

Others, strong in themselves in certain things, seem to cultivate a self-control and graduate into an ascetic, make-believe piety. Both grieve our dear Lord, who deigns to be the victorious life in all His people.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions (idols), I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" (17:22-23). When they had pulled him into the Aeropagus, the hill where the supreme court of justice met, he opened Gospel fire on them. They accused him of setting forth strange gods, or demons; but he declared them to be "very reverent to demons in all things." Superstition means demon worship.

How we should flee from it, therefore. The apostle's proof of his statement was the inscription on their, "To the unknown God." Surely the world is full of Athenians today. They abound in Christendom.

Oh, the sadness of it! Everybody is religious. Everybody goes to church. But to most of them, God is unknown. They ignorantly worship, if the empty, hypocritical form may be called worship. Study Paul's manner of teaching among the Gentiles. He did not first quote from the Old Testament, as when speaking to the Jews. He began with their own religious habits; then pointed out the true and living God and introduced unto them Jesus as the Savior of men. God made man to be a worshipper of Himself, but Satan induces him to worship himself. All false religions really eventuate in the worship of the devil. All error and all that is spurious in Christendom today, though it seems ever so pious, only glorifies man and robs Christ. The apostle uttered an important truth, saying: "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything." They

who believe on Jesus become the living temples for the habitation of the living and true God. Their eyes are not fixed on costly places of worship made of stone and steel. They who really understand God's grace-plan, do not serve Him and beg for His ministries as if He were poor. They trust Him as being rich and able to finance all His enterprises.

They worship Him as the adorable One, whose love and help they need continually. Paul was no evolutionist. He taught that God "made of one (Adam, first) every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (17:26). Adam did not evolve from some infinitesimal germ in the unmeasured distant past. Only the Satan-blinded "wise" can try to believe such insanity. God "giveth to all life and breath and all things." If all have descended from Adam, why should white men be abusive to black men? Why should the rich lord it over the poor? Why should the learned despise the ignorant? "Why should mortal be proud?" All are sinful by nature." They only are truly white, who are washed in Jesus' blood. They who know the Lord are the only rich and wise in God's reckoning. Praise His Name!

"And hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (17:26-27). Deuteronomy 32:8 must be considered in this connection - "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam. He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel; for the Lord's portion is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." This is a wonderful truth. God always antedates His own. He knew how many Israelites there would be and set the boundaries of all the nations in view of their comfort and welfare. Then the Lord has ordered the geography of the nations, not that they might become rich and great, and view with one another and fight for one another's territory, but that "they should seek the Lord." God has sought to reveal Himself through His Son Jesus Christ, to all the nations, that out of them He might gather a people for His Name. But Satan has busied himself in blinding men to the truth in view of inducing them to follow and worship him. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring" (17:28). If that is true of all men, in the sense that all men are His creatures, the offspring of God, how much more radically true is it of those who are "His offspring" by the new and heavenly birth. They live and move consciously in God. Their life is "hid with Christ in God." The times of humanity's ignorance up to the Cross, God overlooked; but now since Christ has redeemed men and made it possible for all to be saved through faith in Him, "He commandeth men that they should everywhere repent." This is why the Gospel has been published during this age throughout the world (Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:23). God has not left His Son without witness. Nations can never complain that they have not heard the Gospel. And why does God declare that men should repent?

"Because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (17:31). This also is proof that mankind has heard the glad tidings. Since the Holy Spirit has been poured out, He has been reproving the world of the sin of not believing on Jesus.

Study John 16:8-11. Therefore, judgment will be necessary, and that judgment will be just. It will be most fitting that Jesus Christ be the competent Agent of judgment because He has proven Himself the competent Savior. Men are left without excuse. Here the apostle adds a beautiful and significant statement, proving the certainty of the judgment: "Whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Jesus was declared, by His resurrection, to be the Son of God. He was raised from the dead for our justification. He offers full salvation to all who will receive Him. Therefore, as surely as He arose from the grave, so surely will He judge the world.

What was the result of Paul's faithful ministry in that courtroom? Even as it is today. When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others (outwardly more polished), said, "We

will hear thee concerning this yet again." Ah, did they? No. For "thus Paul went out from among them." The healthy, wealthy, wise and great of this world seldom accept the lowly Nazarene. They are self-sufficient and do not feel their need of a Savior. However, Paul's ministry in Athens was not altogether without fruit. "Certain men clave unto him and believed; among whom was Dionysius the Aeropagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (17:24).

Dionysius is styled an Areopagite, doubtless because he was a judge, or some other important about the court. The meaning of his name, "divinely touched," agrees with his religious pedigree. Church history states of him, being at Heliopolis in Egypt at the time of Christ's death, on observing the supernatural darkness, he exclaimed, "Either the God of nature suffers, or sympathizes with one who suffers." He was burned as a martyr for the truth in A.D. 95. The name Damaris means "little woman," or a "yoke-bearing wife." Damaris must have become a striking Christian witness in that heathen city, else why does the Holy Spirit single her out and quote her in connection with Dionysius. Her name beautifully describes the Bride of Christ. She is little, apparently, when compared with the world's women. She is not afraid of toil and burden-bearing. "Her price is above rubies" (Proverbs 31).

Recapitulation: We have just been studying very interesting visits to four different cities. We found religious people, in all of them, and they were the chief persecutors. "A man's foes are they of his own household," applies to the "household of faith" as well as to a family in the natural. Spiritual saints learn this painful fact by experience. Later on, the apostle wrote letters to Philippi and to Thessalonica, which we do well to read, ponder and heed. Why did he not write to the Berean saints, who were more noble than some others, searching the Scriptures daily while Paul was there? Maybe they ceased searching after he left. Maybe they were not as needy as others. Why did he not write to Athens? Possibly there was no assembly planted there. We might conjecture many things. One thing is certain - the Holy Spirit sovereignly led Paul to write certain epistles to certain assemblies, setting forth certain portions of truth, for certain divinely ordained purposes. All those epistles were written for the fullest enlightenment and highest good of all the Church during this age.

NONE OTHER NAME

None other Lamb, none other Name,
None other Hope in heaven or earth or sea,
None other Hiding-place from guilt and shame,
None beside Thee.

My faith burns low, my hope burns low;
Only my heart's desire cries out in me
By the deep thunder of its want and woe,
Cries out to Thee.

Lord, Thou art Life, though I be dead,
Love's Fire Thou art, however cold I be.
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head
Nor home but Thee.

--Christina Rossetti

CHAPTER 18

"After these things, he departed from Athens and came to Corinth." There he found Aquila and Priscilla. They were Jews from Pontus, the northeast province of Asia Minor, and it is quite probable that they heard Paul when he preached in that country (Chapter 13:13-14, 16:6-7). Were they also present in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was poured out? Did they sow the Gospel Seed in Rome? They had just been driven from that city to Corinth. No doubt they had already prepared the soil in Corinth for the apostles before their arrival. Paul and Silas did not find some of their own spiritual kinfolk in every new place with whom they could lodge and have fellowship. We infer that Paul followed his trade of tent-making in Corinth as a sideline, but his chief business was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and get men saved. If many young ignorant fellows today were less ambitious to preach and more willing to make tents, or work otherwise with their hands, it would be far better for the people and the Gospel. And very few are willing to labor and give out the Word at the same time.

They would rather pose as evangelists, hold big meetings and get the hard earnings of the people, who very often know the Word and the Lord better than the evangelists. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," but very many are not laborers, but loungers, or religious loafers.

"And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (18:4-6). As usual, his message was met with bitter opposition; therefore, "he shook out his raiment," and withdrew to the house of Justus, who lived near the synagogue. Despite the persecution, the apostles' ministry was fruitful. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his family, and many of the Corinthian's hearing, believed and were baptized. Sosthenes, another ruler of the synagogue, also believed on Jesus, and became an apostle and was associated with Paul in writing a very valuable letter to the church at Corinth. (I Corinthians 1:1)

The enmity and persecution from the Jews must have been unusually strong, so as to cause Paul to be sorely tempted with fear, as verse 9 suggests. "The Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." The apostle believed these comforting words. He boldly exclaimed to the Christ-rejecting Jews, "Your blood be upon your own hands. I am clean. From henceforth, I will go unto the Gentiles." Having found a warm welcome in the home of Justus, he dwelt in that city a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them. Literally, he sat down there; that is, he rested safely in the Lord, determined to continue there and teach his converts as long as God bid him so to do. What an example of patience and persistence in hard toil in the midst of stout resistance from Satan! Often, ministers pack up and run, under the pretext of an urgent call elsewhere. However, if they are faithful to the truth, they will find a bug in the ointment in the new place. Distance lends enchantment to the eye, but facts tell the tale. Study the historian's words of Paul's ministry in Corinth. They suggest an outline to a great message. "He reasoned, and persuaded, and testified, and wrought by day, and taught by night, and sat 18 months. God's Word filled him and fired him with unflagging zeal. "Many of the Corinthian's hearing, believed, and were baptized" (18:8). Baptism in water was always observed by the apostles immediately upon accepting Christ. Separation between the old and the new creations, between Egypt and Canaan, between the world and the Church, indeed, between Satan and God, is forcefully symbolized by water baptism. Death and resurrection, "the great gulf fixed" between these two eternal opposites, is very fittingly figured by immersion in water. By immersion, we go down into death and the grave in symbol, and come up again alive in symbol. Water baptism is the first manifest act of reckoning ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus

Christ. We begin to "walk in newness of life" the moment we are born again. We begin to show it out by baptism.

Did Paul contradict himself in saying, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel"? (I Corinthians 1:14-17). Oh, no. He simply held the memorial of baptism in its relative place and value, as a symbol. Undue stress is put upon it sometimes; therefore, the apostle's caution is very timely. The writer was once a strong advocate of pouring and sprinkling, having been sprinkled at an altar bench at the age of sixteen. But upon seeing by God's Word that "our old man was crucified with Christ," there was no baptism for me but by immersion. Hence, I was buried in Lake Erie, but I was not any more fully saved, nor more really justified before God, than I was 20 years prior, but I had "the answer of a good conscience."

Various questions come to us about water baptism. The apostles all baptized in the Name of Jesus, or Lord Jesus, because He is the divinely ordained Head, or Lord of the Church, or Body of Christ. We are asked if one has been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, must he be baptized again? We do not see any reason for so doing, but the individual should decide that matter. If baptism in Jesus' Name is the New Testament way, can anyone be saved if not thus baptized? I answer by putting a question to you. How did Jesus and Paul say we are saved? By

grace through faith, or by grace through water, or by faith in water? (Consult John 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9).

If Bible students desire the fullest benefits of Paul's visits to Corinth, let them study diligently his two letters written to that church. The first epistle is a setting in order of the Church. The second epistle is that well-ordered church fulfilling her mission on earth by ministering as a company of priests in the things of God. We are made "a kingdom of priests unto God" (Revelation 5:10).

Write for our booklet on "Water Baptism. "

HOMeward BOUND AGAIN

"And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea; for he had a vow" (18:18). The apostle left behind him in Corinth, nearly two years of a laborious and far-reaching ministry. His host and hostess went with him as far as Ephesus. He was hastening to the annual Jewish feast of Pentecost to be held in Jerusalem. He always longed to be there every year if possible. Did he need to meet the other apostles, or be at some large gathering to be refreshed and strengthened? Big meetings are too often the poorest places to obtain help. Nay! Christ was his freshness and strength. And the sheep of his own pasture brought him more comfort than any others.

Why then be present at Pentecost? He sought every opportunity to bring the glad tidings to his own people, the Jews. Those Jerusalem gatherings afforded him a rare chance to reach many Jews at one time. He visited the synagogue in Ephesus with his Gospel message. There he had an exceptional reception at first. They asked him to tarry longer, but he declined, saying, "I will return again unto you if God will." It is to be observed that Paul always obtained the object of his expectations, because he could say as David did, "my expectation is from the Lord." No doubt his hope of reaching Spain (Romans 15:28) was realized. He left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to sow that Asiatic town with Gospel Seed, while he hastened on to Jerusalem. Later, we will see a very special reason for their staying there.

"And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and saluted the church, and went down to Antioch" (18:22). Caesarea was a seaport town on the Mediterranean 70 miles northwest from Jerusalem. From there he went inland, or up, to Jerusalem. Note that he barely saluted the assembly there. Did they not let him preach? Did they not invite him to give them a ten-days campaign, speaking "the mystery of Christ"? (Colossians 4:3). If our beloved brother Paul ever had such an invitation from any of the churches in Judea, it is not so recorded. They allowed too much legality to give him a hearing

with his transporting message of Grace, even as is the case with legalists today. True it is, and pity that it is true. Grace does not even have a chance to offer a salutation.

How differently it went with him at Antioch. There he "spent some time." There he was welcomed warmly, as he was every time he returned. That was his spiritual home, his headquarters on earth.

Thus, Paul's second Gospel tour was ended. The assembly in Antioch had recommended him and Silas to the grace of God several years before (Acts 15:40). Their believing prayers had followed them and sustained them during his absence. It speaks well for the apostle that he never lost the confidence of the saints whom the Holy Spirit used to launch him on his career (Chapter 13:1 -4). He began his ministry in a gale of victory by the direct appointment and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and he continued in the same fiery, intrepid, energetic manner through another successful journey.

There is not one lapse, or hint of failure recorded of Paul. We never read of him being sick, or daunted, or discouraged. Even in prison, he was the same buoyant, victorious soul as he was on the missionary field, as his letter indicated. Paul wrote both letters to the Thessalonians from Corinth after Silas and Timothy returned from them (I Thessalonians 2:17).

PAUL'S THIRD GOSPEL TOUR CHAPTERS 19 AND 20

"And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (18:23). Paul's father-heart longed to have his children grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. He knew that they were weak and had many heathen practices to be delivered from. He knew that Satan and self-seeking religious men would endeavor to ruin them. Therefore, he visited the churches with words of comfort and instruction. On this trip, he met the accursed heresy of the religion of works. He resolved to correct and safeguard the saints of Galatia against that destructive teaching. Hence, he wrote the masterpiece - Grace versus Law - to the Galatians. The phrase in Galatians 1:2, "all the brethren which are with me," together with Acts 20:2-4, where those seven brethren were named, indicate that the apostle wrote that epistle from Corinth on this journey. Thank the Lord for that letter, for the most of us were once in Galatia in experience. All Christendom has needed it greatly; for all Christendom has been and is still in bondage, in some measure, to legality.

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus" (18:24). If the Holy Spirit eulogizes a person, who dare object? but we should not seek eulogy from men. These five verses about Apollos, which close out Chapter 18, are rather parenthetical. They are necessary, however, because that certain Jew was to perform an important part on the divine program with Brother Paul. The Holy Spirit omits no necessary links and permits no superfluous ones.

Was that eloquent Jew saved before the tent makers met him? Can a man be saved, "knowing only the baptism of John"? Can all the other things recorded here of him be said of an unsaved man? Let the Word answer. Chapter 19:4 declares that "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus." By submitting to baptism in water, they acknowledged their sins and deserving death, and their faith in the coming One. What was the result? Did they thus become saved?

Zacharias, filled with the Spirit, said to his baby, John, "And thou, child ... shalt give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:76-77). According to that language, Apollos enjoyed the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of salvation, if he believed on the One coming. No marvel then, that "he had been instructed in the way of the Lord" and was "fervent in the

spirit" and "spoke and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus," though he knew only the baptism of John. Remember that he was not in experience where Saul of Tarsus was when Jesus met him. Saul had not accepted the baptism of John, for he was still self-righteous and self-sufficient.

Apollos had heard of and accepted John's glad tidings but had not heard of the death and resurrection of Christ and of the descent of the Holy Spirit until he met Aquilla and Priscilla in Ephesus. Do you see now why the Holy Spirit led Paul to leave them there while he went up to Jerusalem?

How unlike the fanatical stand of some folks, who insist that no one is saved until he speaks in tongues. Aquilla and his wife gladly recognized what the young prophet enjoyed, and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." If they had been sectarian, they would have refused his fellowship until they had converted him and induced him to join their sect. There is a vast difference between pounding error into a man and expounding truth to him. Where is the modern enthusiast who will retire to a lowly tent shop and sit at the feet of those that are commonly called "laymen"?

Most workers are content only when sitting at their own feet. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," is always true. That was the beginning of days for the eloquent Jew from Alexandria. Henceforth, we read only good of Apollos. He was associated with Paul in writing his epistles on church order (I Corinthians 3:4; 4:6) and desired his companionship in visiting other saints (I Corinthians 16:12).

"He powerfully confuted the Jews, showing publicly by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ," or Anointed One. These last two verses indicate that Apollos accepted the tent builders' wise instruction and was anointed with the Spirit while with them. Only those who have experienced the Pentecostal fulness can pass it on Scripturally and effectively to others. No one can tell the difference between the taste of a sun-kissed orange and a Jonathan apple if he has not eaten both.

It is laughable how learnedly un-anointed Bible students speak and write of Pentecost and its accompaniments and condemn it as fanaticism or satanic. Poor fellows! What they miss! And what their followers also miss because of their learned ignorance.

PAUL IN EPHEBUS

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (19:1-2). Paul was in Corinth 52 to 54 A.D. and in Ephesus, 54 to 57 A.D.

The "about twelve" disciples whom Paul met in Ephesus, were evidently the fruit of Apollos's ministry there before he had received the Spirit under the tent makers' added light. By some means, Paul perceived that they were saved, but there was a doubt in his mind as to them having received the Spirit. Therefore, he said unto them, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Paul knew that people did not receive Christ and the Holy Spirit by one act of faith, as many claim, otherwise, his question is impertinent. The Authorized Version expresses the apostle's meaning exactly: "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" That those twelve had believed on Jesus unto salvation, there can be no doubt. Their answer proved that they had not yet received the Spirit. They said, "Nay we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given." The Greek word, "ei" translated "when" (R.V. and "since" A.V.), is translated "whether" in the same verse. Let the critic consider. Like all believing Jews, they knew that the Spirit had been promised in the Old Testament and should be sent sometime, but they had not learned that the promised had been so graciously and wonderfully fulfilled. They had not heard that Pentecost had come. Beyond doubt, they were thirsting for the fulness of the Spirit, as newborn babes in Christ usually are. Therefore, as soon as they heard from Paul's lips that the promised Messiah and Holy Spirit had come, they gladly "were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus" (19:5). There is no hint here that those today, who have been baptized under the formula of Matthew 28:19, must be baptized again. The value of water baptism to the candidate does not depend on the words

used by the baptizer, but upon what baptism means to the one being baptized. Those twelve had been baptized into John's baptism only, which pointed forward to Christ. Now that He had come, it was most proper that they should acknowledge their belief in that fact, and express their faith in His death, burial and resurrection in their behalf. Would they say an eternal goodbye to Judaism with all its forms and ceremonies and accept the despised Nazarene as their Savior and Lord forever? If so, they would be baptized in this new name, and so they were. It is sad how ignorant teachers bewilder ignorant saints on this subject. They think to undo one baptism by being baptized under another formula. It is all child's play. Baptism into Christ did not contradict or undo John's baptism. Nay, it supplemented and confirmed it. Sectarianism and man-rule are the roots from which spring modern modes of baptism. Men itch to be leaders and make a vain show. They seek their own glory, and not the glory of God.

TWELVE ANOINTED ONES

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve" (19:6-7). This agrees with Chapter 8, where Peter and John prayed that the Samaritan converts might receive the Holy Spirit. In neither case did they pray for the Spirit to come from heaven; for He had come already. They laid on hands and prayed that the saints might receive Him. And it is our privilege to do the same. Observe also, that here as in Chapter 8, the Spirit did not come on sinners, but on believers, or disciples.

Children only have a right to the Father's gifts. Our heavenly Father never promised the Comforter to sinners, but to His own dear children. This is the fifth instance of the Gift of the Spirit recorded in our study book, and in every case, they were consciously saved prior to receiving the Spirit. Who received the Holy Spirit? Were they sinners? Or had they believed beforehand? We ask and answer these queries because many ministers teach that all who believe on Jesus unto salvation, receive the Holy Spirit also at the same time. This is both unscriptural and un-experimental. The four Gospel Records show clearly that the 120 apostles and disciples were whole-hearted believers long before Pentecost came. They had been with Jesus and were taught by Him. To the twelve, Judas Iscariot excepted, He said: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). His prayer to the Father (John 17) bristles with a dozen or more positive proofs that the eleven were all saved men before Pentecost. The women and the seventy were no less devoted to Him. Furthermore, all the other recorded instances of the anointing with the Spirit teach the same satisfying truth - they had believed unto salvation as a definite experience, then received the Holy Spirit afterwards as a distinct experience. In Samaria, they had "received the Word," which resulted in "great joy in that city" (Chapter 8:5). Peter and John went and prayed for them, not that they might be saved, but "that they might receive the Holy Spirit." Ananias was sent to Saul, not that he might be saved, but that he might receive his sight and "be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Chapter 9:17). We saw other evidence of Saul's two distinct experiences that Cornelius was a true believer before Peter visited him and the Spirit came upon him.

This plain interpretation offsets another error, akin to the above, namely, that no one is saved until he is filled or baptized with the Spirit, as they term it. Bible teachers should understand that sinners cannot receive the Spirit, for He is not the Savior. Nowhere is it written (except in some people's minds) "believe on the Holy Spirit or receive the Holy Spirit and thou shalt be saved." No! Jesus is the Savior. He died for sinners. He is God's unspeakable Gift to a lost world (John 3:16; II Corinthians 9:15). But the Holy Spirit is "the Promise of the Father (Chapter 1:4, Luke 24:49) and the distinctive Gift of the Father to His own people (John 14:16). Peter's words in Chapter 2:39 declare the same truth - "The promise is unto you (that is, to Israel) and to your children (Israel's offspring who would believe on Christ), and to all that are afar off," the promise was extended to Gentiles. Israel were "nigh" because of God's promise to Abraham, but the Gentiles were afar off until they were "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians

2:13, 17). All men were brought near to God provisionally by the death of Christ on the Cross. God gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him, and people must be saved before they can obey Him. "And they spoke with tongues." Shall we pass over this statement because speaking in tongues is not popular? When we become small enough and weak and needy enough to be willing to be anointed with the Holy Spirit as were the saints in the beginning, we do not disdain and belittle the Scriptural sign of other tongues. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Brainy men claim to have the Spirit, but the strong rebuttal of their own spirit against the Holy Spirit's invariable sign proves that they have never even tasted the Pentecostal pudding. The Holy Spirit in one fellow cannot be against the same Holy Spirit in another.

Did Peter and John speak in tongues when the Spirit fell on them? Did those in Cornelius' house speak in tongues? (Chapter 10:46). Did Paul speak in tongues" (I Corinthians 14: 18). Is there any recorded instance of learned opposition to speaking in new tongues in the beginning? There is no honest way out of the perplexity, but to acknowledge that the Bible anointing with the Spirit requires the sign of speaking in new tongues. The writer wanted the Holy Spirit, but his little head (not The Head) wanted him to believe that he could be filled without the Bible evidence of speaking in tongues. However, faith finally ascended the throne, ruled reason out, and the dear Comforter, the mighty Holy Spirit, the Dove Divine, came in to abide forever as Jesus promised. Yes, and I spoke in a tongue and magnified God with a glory, a depth and height and rapture of glory, altogether unknown to me before. Truly I ate of the pudding and was filled. And I am still eating and speaking in new tongues.

"And they were in all about twelve men." What does Luke mean? Were they all bachelors? Were there no women in that company anointed with the Spirit? The verse does not say that all who were filled were about twelve men, but all the men (who were filled) were about twelve. Why is Luke not specific in this instance as he is usually? Quite likely there were more than twelve, or he may not have been certain as to the number. The Holy Spirit was leading Luke and controlling his pen. The answer to these queries is suggested by Revelation 21:12, 14. The holy city will have a great high wall, having 12 gates and upon them 12 angels, and the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel inscribed thereon. That wall will have also 12 foundations and in them the names of the 12 apostles. This shows that the foundations and wall of the holy city will be and tongue and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9), "neither Jew, nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male, nor female" (Galatians 3:29).

The number of the bride company, or city, is not given. The kingdom, or Israelitish number is 12, or a multiple of 12. Now consider that the church in Ephesus was designed to be the model. Therefore, in Paul's letter to her, we find outlined her calling, her wealth, her bridal qualifications, her warfare, her armor. Ephesus 5:24-33 is entirely bridal teaching, informing us as to who will compose the holy city. If the "saints at Ephesus" are the fore-gleam of the holy city, then the foundation of that church should be of Israel as the fore-gleam of the foundation of the holy city. Remember always in studying the Acts, that we are not studying history and biography only, but prophecy and types also.

The basis of the church in Ephesus was of the stock of Israel, but the assembly as a whole was of Gentile stock. Note Ephesians 1:12-13; 2:11, 3:1.

COMPENSATION

What tho' the sky be overcast with gray,
What tho' the thorns be thick along the way --
If only I have faith to watch and pray.
What tho' the tasks of life unpleasant be,
What tho' some friend has disappointed me --

If, thru it all, the face of Christ I see.
Who tho' the years so quickly come and go,
What tho' they leave my hair as white as snow,
If the years but teach me things I ought to know.
What difference whether all my dreams come true,
If years be many, or if years be few --
If someone else is blessed by what I do.
-- Author Unknown

FIERCE PERSECUTION WAGED

The city of Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor. It was its greatest city and the chief point of trade for that country. Ephesus and Smyrna were termed the eyes of Asia. It was under the Roman Government, but a free city, and was ruled by its own magistrates.

That was the city, which Paul chose as the center of a very effective ministry. History records that the assembly in Ephesus was a very influential one. It is said that Asia Minor became the stronghold of Christianity. The heathen temples were deserted. The animals of sacrifice could not be sold.

Apparently, all the people became Christians. We need not marvel then that Luke says, "So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed."

Five times, Paul speaks of the Gospel of Grace, as contrasted with the Gospel of the Kingdom, preached by Peter and his co-workers, and calls it "My Gospel," or "Our Gospel." To the Church in Rome, he wrote, "God is able to establish you according to my Gospel." He said also to them: "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25). How can believers slip lightly over such solemn statements? He said to the Thessalonians: "God called you (to salvation) by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," reminding them also that "our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance" (I Thessalonians 1:5). To the Corinthians the same faithful Paul wrote: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are perishing, in whom the god of this age (the religious god – the devil), hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

Therefore, we need not marvel at his self-sacrificing language in Acts 20:24. And God must have some unflinching heralds of "our Gospel" in these end time days. Shall brother Paul be the only one to say, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself"? Shall not we too, "finish our course with joy and the ministry, received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God"? What higher honor can one have? What nobler purpose, than to believe and declare the glad tidings which he proclaimed? What greater reward for service can be expected than for making known the full Gospel of Divine Grace and of heavenly Glory? Certainly, it must be recorded again, even with the culmination of this evil age, that "so mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed!" "And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. "(19:23-25)

Paul was looking toward Rome; however, he desired to see the saints again in Jerusalem before going thither. Therefore, he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, by which way he intended to reach Palestine. After those brethren had gone, Demetrius began his mob raid against the apostle and his friends. Paul's untiring service in the Gospel was affecting the most lucrative enterprise in the city and country. Demetrius and others might soon be minus a job. Observe by verses 35-41 that the city officials

were not the aggressors in the opposition, but the craftsmen were alarmed. The disciples were seized by mob violence. And as is always the case in such gatherings, the crowd was in confusion, for the more part knew not wherefore they were come together (19:32). How blessed of the Holy Spirit that He restrained the apostle from leaving Ephesus any earlier. He was greatly needed just then to comfort and strengthen the saints. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," was the frenzied whoop of the angry worshipers of their goddess Artemis, or Diana. The craftsmen, however, were not so much concerned about the goddess as about their pocketbooks. "Our wealth, our trade" was being severely interfered with, something like the swine raisers in Jesus' time, who bid Him leave their coasts. The burning of the books of magic no doubt caused the first note of alarm. The following statements indicate somewhat of the greatness of their business.

The shrines ("naous," Greek) were the cells, or inner part of a temple in which the image of the god was placed. It is said that those shrines were models of various sizes of the temple of Diana and had on them her image. They were made either of terra-cotta, or marble, and also bronze and silver. Many of the cheaper kind are still found in that region. The shrines were worn on the body as charms or set up in the house and worshiped. They were supposed to ward off sickness and trouble. History records that the Apostle John and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, spent their last days in Ephesus. The shrines were dedicated as offerings to the goddess Diana and put into her temple. Today, in some parts of the East, offerings are placed about the image of the virgin Mary as thank offerings for her favors, or as peace offerings which are supposed to obtain answers to prayer. Is it any more idolatrous in God's sight to worship Diana than to make a goddess of Mary? The name Diana is the Latin of the Greek Artemis. It is said that the Ephesian Diana was a distinct goddess from the Greek version. The latter was a virgin, a huntress, and was a personification of the moon, even as Apollo was of the sun. The former was an erect idol, the upper part of the front of the body was covered with rows of breasts, symbolizing her as the universal mother of all life. The lower part was rarely an upright block, rudely representing robes, covered with symbols and figures of animals. The worship of the goddess was abominable. Farrar says: "Many a time must Paul have heard from the Jewish quarter the piercing shrillness of their flutes and the harsh jangling of their timbrels. Many a time must he have caught glimpses of their detestable dances and Corybantic processions, as with streaming hair and wild cries and shaking torches of pine, they strove to madden the multitude into sympathy with their drunken worship, which was but too closely connected with the vilest debaucheries."

The temple of Diana was considered the crowning glory of Ephesus. It was known worldwide as one of the seven wonders of the world. Her influence was far-reaching. Many people came from distant points to behold her shrine and to do her homage. Of course, they purchased the portable shrines which occasioned a large manufacturing enterprise.

"They rushed with one accord into the theater, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel" (19:29). Concerning the two companions, see notes on Chapter 20:4. The Greek word "theatron," rendered "theater," occurs only here and in I Corinthians 4:9, where it is translated "spectacle." It means either the performers or the place where the actors perform. That theater was the great Colosseum, which held 50,000. It was built for men to have combats with wild beasts or other men. It was also used for public meetings of various kinds. Let us consider I Corinthians 4:9 in this connection. "I think, God has set forth us (Paul and Apollos) the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death, for we are made a spectacle (theater) unto the world, both to angels and to men." The Diagiott offers the following interesting note on this and the succeeding verses. It suggests that Paul is alluding to those who appeared last in the theater, to fight with wild beasts, or with one another, and who were devoted to certain destruction. The "atimoi" (despised ones, V. 10), were held to be outlaws, and might be slain as well as ill-treated with impunity.

The words (Verse 13), *perekatharmata* ("filth") and *peripseema* ("off-scourings") are thought to allude to those human expiatory sacrifices which were offered to infernal deities among the Greeks and Romans, selected from the lowest of the people and loaded with curses, affronts and injuries. "I fought with beasts at Ephesus" (I Corinthians 15:32), doubtless refers to the combats in the arena to which he likens his contests with Satan in the form of wicked men.

WORSHIP OF THE IMAGE FORECAST

"The city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter." "Whom all Asia and the world worshipped" (19:27, 35). What a contrast! In Ephesus lived the highest type of believers, who had learned from Paul the deepest New Testament teaching. The Ephesian Assembly was the model assembly. But Ephesus also had the shameful dishonor of being a great center for devil-worship. Verses 23 to 41 foreshadow the seven years of national and ecclesiastical rebellious usurpation, commonly called "the last week of Daniel" (Daniel 9:27). The anti-Christ and false prophet of Revelation 13 are intimidated by "the beasts at Ephesus." Who is Jupiter but Satan himself? The heathen named their gods after the planets in heaven. And those Ephesian citizens believed Jupiter to be somewhere in heaven. The devil is there now (Revelation 12). And the image which they worshiped supposedly had fallen from heaven. All Asia (Asia Minor) and the world did homage to that image. John informs us that an image of anti-Christ will be set up by Satan's authority and power (Revelation 13:14-15). That will be "the abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place," of which Daniel and Jesus spoke (Matthew 24:15). All the world will wonder after the beast, the anti-Christ, and worship his image, or be slain. History informs us that in Rome there is a full-length and complete image of the goddess Diana. What a forecast of that seven years of a counterfeit, or mock millennium. How remarkable that the devil should have a forerunner of the coming image of the beast and false prophet. Oh, let us "flee the wrath to come!" Let us look up and rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

PAUL PLOWING AND PROSPERING

"And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God" (19:8).

That was God's order and the apostle's custom, He continued three months, for that was sufficient time for a clean-cut ministry of the Word to decide the attitude of the Jews. The Word of God spoken in the wisdom and power of the Spirit softens the hearts of those who believe but hardens those who believe not. Thus, Paul separated the disciples from those who boldly opposed the truth. Too often, saints make a mistake in remaining where the truth is not wanted, because the professed people of God assemble there. Because of their name and profession, they entertain an unscriptural regard for them, and generally become ensnared, cool off, and compromise with error, or with the flesh. "From such turn away," saith the Lord (II Timothy 3:5). We may learn from the conduct of the apostles what to do and what not to do and how to do. The phrase, "concerning the kingdom of God," is quite significant. Paul spoke first to Jews, the kingdom people. He sought to assure them that their promised Messiah and King had come. He could not speak in the synagogue of the Jews about Church truth. A church must first be planted. Many workers unwisely talk to sinners about an overcoming life and the Bride of Christ. You cannot approach nominal Christians as a rule in this way. They will not understand you, much less the unsaved. Always find where your listener stands, then address him accordingly. "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves," "In the School of Tyrannus." Those twelve disciples, with Aquila and Priscilla and doubtless others, were standing by Paul as he proclaimed the truth for three months in the synagogue. When some of the Jews spoke "evil of the way before the multitude," he accepted the invitation of Tyrannus to conduct his meetings in his school building. Tyrannus is a Greek name, which means "prince, Lord." Our English words tyrant, tyranny, etc., are derived from it. It is not likely that he was a Jew, but a Greek, hence not one of the 12. Tyrannus had a private school evidently

in which he taught rhetoric and kindred studies. The Holy Spirit opened his heart to the glad tidings and led him to open his schoolhouse to Paul's ministry for two years. We may infer that he became one of the faithful and useful members of that assembly. From that place, "all they which dwelt in Asia (the Roman province) heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (19:10).

Ephesus was the most prominent city of that province and the center of its trade. The apostle likewise made it the center of his operations for Christ. That assembly is a type of the most fully developed believers; therefore, Paul wrote to them as he did, and they are the first on the list of the seven representative churches to which John wrote. Reader, have you studied the two letters addressed to that congregation?

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body ("skin," chrotos, Greek) handkerchiefs, or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out" (19:12). Ephesus was the center of witchcraft and magic, by which the sorcerers claimed to work miracles. The Lord proved Himself to be the real miracle worker by delegating to His servant, Paul, special power against sickness and demons. The devil had such mighty entrenchments there through magic arts and the moon god, Diana, and her temples, that extraordinary Divine Dynamics were necessary to awaken the people. And be it remembered that such a ministry was granted to the "chief speaker" of the matchless message of Divine Grace.

Our own assembly took hold of this same power, being followers of Paul as he bid us to be (I Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:17), and many people have been delivered from Satan's power through the laying on of kerchiefs sent to different points, near and far. Oh, no! Paul did not cease to work miracles when he became spiritual and was teaching the deep things of God, as some erroneously claim. If men knew the Scriptures with the heart and the power of God by experience, they would not speak so silly. The age of miracles is past only to those who do not avail themselves of Divine miracle-working power. What a joy it is to lay our hands on a kerchief and pray over it, and then send it through the mail, believing with the suffering one that he shall be healed. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

COUNTERFEIT MIRACLES

Then certain of the vagabond (strolling) Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth" (19:13). Satan seeks to counterfeit the work and power of the Lord, and he uses duped men to do so. Apparently, it is the flesh imitating the Holy Spirit. These were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, whom the devil employed at that time. This narrative is a fulfillment of Jesus' words, "a house divided against itself cannot stand." If those would-be devil-drivers had succeeded against the demon-possessed man, Satan would have had occasion to crow. The evil spirit was wiser than the priest's sons. He said: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" (19:15). What a rebuke, to the professed religious people! Yes, the devil and his imps know indeed who has the real genuine spiritual goods. That is why our wrestling is as described in Ephesians 6:12.

Let us learn a lesson here - not to attempt by our own strength to repulse demons or cast out sickness. Let us not make a fleshly use of the Name of Jesus. Yelling at demons with multiplied words of apparent authority, stamping the floor vehemently, gesticulating as in a frenzy, is not necessarily the power of God. That only provokes a grin from evil spirits. Spiritual forces must be met with spiritual weapons. "Faith is the victory," faith in God's Word; faith employing the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," defeats the foe. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds" (II Corinthians 10:4). Therefore, we need to "walk in the Spirit," lest we attack the enemy at the wrong time, or in a wrong manner. Paul waited and did not grapple with the spirit of divination until the Holy Spirit led him (Chapter 16:16-18). Let us learn also not to

have anything to do with the occult religions which claim to have power over sickness. Christian Science, Unity, Spiritism, Theosophy, (New Age mind-over-matter), are all of the devil. Their deliverances glorify the devil, not the Lord. Some people innocently and ignorantly fall in with these cults and obtain healing, but not by the cult. Their faith in God's promise, which the evil system often quotes, brings the victory. Sooner, or later, such honest hearts are made to understand that they are in the wrong atmosphere and walk out. They get deliverance from devilish doctrine and false prophets as well as from disease. Let us not condone these, evil systems by saying, "Well, they do lots of good." No! They do great harm. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" (19:20). The defeat of the sons of Sceva was very significant. It was a great victory for the truth among both Jews and Greeks. "Fear fell upon them all and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." Many who had practiced magic made a bonfire of their curious books, valued at 50,000 pieces of silver. The Greek word "argurion," a piece of silver, was the common term for money. In a number of citations (for instance, Matthew 25:18), it is translated money. The phrase, "pieces of silver," occurs very many times in the Old Testament, and agrees with the same phrase in the New Testament. This is evident by comparing Zechariah 11:11-12 with Matthew 27:9. In Hebrew, it was sometimes called a "shekel," whose value was equal to about 55 cents U.S. money. Consider Abraham's purchase of a burying ground (Genesis 23:15-16). If that is correct, then \$27,400.00 went up in smoke that day.

What a financial loss to the flesh, but what a financial triumph to the Holy Spirit and the truth. Is that not a little material picture of the gigantic spiritual bonfire which will roll up as a monument of religious folly when the building of wood and hay and stubble shall be burned by the fire of God's Word? (I Corinthians 3:12-16). Over against that conflagration will stand "a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21), made up of "living stones," each one "a building from God," a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1), even the holy city, a majestic monument proving that "the Word of the Lord has prevailed." OH, GLORY!

Observe three interesting statements concerning the progress of the truth as recorded in this book.

About the beginning of Stephen's ministry (35-40 A.D.) "the Word of God increased" (6:7). That was under the powerful ministry of Peter, James, John and Stephen, and others working with them.

During the next nine years, great persecution arose against the disciples, who were scattered in various directions. Stephen was stoned by the Jews. James, one of the 12 apostles, was slain by Herod. "But the Word of God grew and multiplied," says our historian (Chapter 12:24). Saul of Tarsus was saved and trained for his life work, which began about 45 A.D. After a dozen years of pioneering with the Gospel of Grace amidst the most adverse conditions, Luke chronicles that "So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed." From increase to growth, from growth and triumph was the astounding power and progress of the Word. Note that the last citation declares that it was "The Word of the Lord," rather than the Word of God. That is, the Church message, the Gospel as revealed to Paul, was the one which especially grew and prevailed. And his Gospel must again grow mightily and prevail in these closing days; because thereby the saints are built up and obtain an inheritance (Chapter 20:32).

CHAPTER 20

PAUL AIMING FOR ROME

"And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia." (20:1) The Holy Spirit was pulling the indefatigable soldier of Christ on toward the capital city of the Roman Empire. However, before going thither, he must see once more his dear children in the Lord in various parts, and once more witness to his own nation in Jerusalem. Concerning his kinsmen he said, "I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart ... for my kinsmen

according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-2). Another good reason for his trip to Jerusalem is given in Chapter 24:17. "Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings." After visiting different points, he returned and sailed by Miletus, a seaport town of Ephesus, where the elders came out to bid him a last farewell. That was approximately 58 A.D.

Of course, the apostle visited the choice assembly in Philippi, the chief city of that state. To them he wrote a sweet and comforting epistle afterward from Rome. He called on other saints in those parts also. He loved them all and "gave them much exhortation," or comfort," as in I Thessalonians 4:18. Then he went to Greece where he spent three months. His purpose to sail directly east, then southeast toward Tyre, where he arrived later, but because the Jews laid a plot against him, he turned north. Their bitter hatred for the dear Messiah had not subsided. Oh, what a glorious day for the Jews who accept their Messiah, is just about to dawn!

"And there accompanied him as far as Asia, Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus, and Secundus and Gaius (See Chapter 19:29); and of Derbe, Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus" (20:4). These were seven faithful men who had received the Gospel message from Paul and loved him dearly.

While in Corinth, Greece, Paul evidently wrote that valuable and needful letter to the churches in Galatia. During his three years in Ephesus, he either visited them from there, or learned otherwise of them falling into the snare of legality. Or he may have called on them on this last trip into those parts. We have strong suspicion, if not proof, that he wrote to them from the house of Gaius in Corinth, for in Romans 16:23, he said, "Gaius mine host." And the clause in Galatians 1:2 - "all the brethren which are with me," that is, those who were with him when he was writing that splendid letter, must mean the seven men with him in Corinth who went with him to Asia. At that same time also, he wrote that unique epistle to the church in Rome, announcing his coming thither. How do we know? We gather it from the names of those who send greetings to Rome with Paul's epistle - Romans 16:21-23: First, Gaius, whom Paul baptized in Corinth (I Corinthians 1:14; this Gaius was not one of the seven named above).

Second, Erastus, who abode in Corinth - II Timothy 4:20. Third, Lucius, or Luke, who joined Paul in Philippi when he came into Macedonia as stated in Acts 20:1. Fourth, Timothy was one of the seven named above. Fifth, Jason was of Thessalonica, though not named with the other two from there.

Sixth, Sosipater was the Sopater of Berea. Seven, Quartus was doubtless also of Corinth.

A further word about Luke and Gaius: The last mention we had of Luke was in Chapter 16:11-17.

Note the change of pronouns. In those seven verses, we find "we" and "us." After that it is "they" and "them" until chapter 20:5-6, where again we read the pronouns "us" and "we." We infer therefore that Luke remained in Philippi, possibly as shepherd of that young flock during that time, about six years.

They were highly favored indeed by having him with them, whose name means "Light." Gaius is given in our text as from Derbe, but I Corinthians 1:14 and Romans 16:23 indicate a Gaius from Corinth, whence those seven men started for Syria. Timothy is the only one of the seven in Verse 4, whose home is not mentioned. The Greek construction of that verse admits us to read of those two men in direct connection with the two preceding, thus - "Of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus and Gaius, and of Derbe, Timothy." Thereby the Gaius of Macedonia (Chapter 19:29) who was rushed with Aristarchus into the theater, becomes this same Gaius of Verse Four. Furthermore, why should we assign Gaius to Derbe and find no nativity for Timothy, when we know that he was from Derbe, or nearby Lystra? (Chapter 16:1). This Gaius traveled with Paul. The Gaius who resided in Corinth was Paul's host while he tarried there three months. He probably did not travel. He joined the apostle in sending greetings to Rome, but the other Gaius was one of the seven brethren with him, when he wrote to the

Galatians. The Gaius of 3 John is evidently Paul's host in Corinth. Verses 6-8 of that epistle suggest that he was hospitable to God's servants.

THE APOSTLES ON THE WING

"And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days, where we tarried seven days" (20:6). The seven brethren of Verse Four went ahead and waited at Troas for Paul and Luke. The time of the year of their visit was the Spring of 58 A. D. That visit to Corinth was the fulfillment of Paul's hope expressed in II Corinthians 12:14; 13:1. What an unselfish and fatherly spirit all his writings breathe. Pity those who read them without deep delight and great profit!

This narrative of their stay in Troas is especially interesting and instructive. Should one day be regarded as more sacred than another? If the custom of the disciples settled the question, we might think that the first day of the week demanded the preference, rather than the seventh day, for "upon the first day of the week, they were gathered together to break bread." However, in Romans 14, we learn that the days are esteemed alike to those who know the truth and have grown up in Christ. Do you remember that Christ arose from the day on the first day of the week? Do you know that the Holy Spirit descended upon the waiting ones in Jerusalem on the first day of the week?

Study Acts 2:42 with I Corinthians 16:2.

The first day of the week, being the resurrection day, thus became the eighth, or new creation day. The new creation was begotten on the first day of the week. Eternity will be the eighth dispensational day. "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). It is therefore fitting that the first day of the week be observed as a special day of worship, but that does not make it more sacred than other days. Is it proper to call Sunday, or the first day of the week, "The Lord's Day"? By no means! Call it Sunday, even as we call the day before it, Saturday, and the day after, Monday. The "Lord's Day" is 1000 years long. Study II Peter 3:8. See our notes on Revelation. The apostle's brief ministry in Troas that time, is a beautiful pen-picture of his whole ministry throughout this age.

Knowing that he would not again pass that way in person, he seems to have endeavored to crowd much truth and service into a small compass. Consider the following statements: "ready to depart on the morrow;" "Continued his speech until midnight;" "talked a long while, even till break of day." He yearned to give them as much truth as possible in the limited time allotted to him. That was all typical of the perpetuation of his message, which came down to the midnight of this age, the beginning of the dark ages - 500 to 1500 A. D. The age began in the upper room (Chapter 2:1-4). Paul lived in the higher upper room, the "heavenlies in Christ." Eutychus, meaning "fortunate, well to do," sat in a window and sank down in deep sleep. Yes, as Peter declared, this Gospel of Paul is "hard to be understood." People become drowsy when reading, or hearing it, because they do not believe it. If they believed with all the heart that it is God's Word, they would keep wide awake. While asleep, Eutychus fell from the third loft. And Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing him, said, "Make ye no ado; for his life is in him" (20:10). The Church fell from her exalted position in the heavenlies in Christ. The Lord said that the Ephesus church "left her first love." Four movements downward from Paul's doctrine is seen - drowsiness, sleep, a fall, then death (fellowship severed). But Paul was not asleep. He seized the opportunity of displaying God's mighty grace. He went down with intent to raise the lad from the dead but found that his life was still in him. He did not lie about him, nor even exaggerate in view of a big headline in the papers. Grace is never ambitious for numbers. Grace never pronounces men unsaved, or on the way to perdition in order to swell her report. NEVER! Grace falls in pity over them who are fallen and embraces them in mercy. Grace recognizes life, if there is any, or seeks to impart life to those dead in trespasses and sins. Grace greatly blesses but boasts not in the least.

As the apostle presented the fallen lad alive to the joy of the saints in Troas, just so his message of grace aroused the slumbering life in the Church about 1400 A. D. In 1500, Martin Luther began to proclaim justification by faith alone, wholly independent of works. Eutychus was alive. The real Church was "not a little comforted." The very message, whose rejection brought a sleepy condition, descends to the deepest need of the lowest and weakest, and presents them alive. Truly, the fruits of divine grace are alive! What men hope, and vainly hope to do by their own efforts, the announcement of wonderful grace actually does.

The meanings of the names of the six points touched from Troas to Ephesus may be of profit to the Bible student. Assos means "approaching." Mitylene means "Purity." Chios "opening." Samos - "sandy bluff, full of gravel." Miletus scarlet." The association of these names holds in its grasp some beautiful spiritual lessons. Luke says: "Wherein he (Paul) met us at "approaching", we took him in, and came to "purity." Grace is on the lookout for hearts who are coming near to the right way. Instantly such hearts take grace on board, and they are brought to purity of doctrine and on to purity of practice and power.

"And the following day" - how short the journey - they arrived "over against Chios," an opening into vast areas of truth and divine riches. No marvel that the next day after that, Samos, a sandy, gravelly bluff should loom before them, but they only touched that point, because it is no stopping place for the spiritually minded. Trogyllium, meaning a hole in the ground for preserving food, was considered too insignificant by the Revisers, so they pushed it into the margin. But saints pass along the way of such enticements and have to get the victory over the receptacles of earth's treasures. And many a person has been snared by the contents of an outdoor cellar. Of course, those Gospel soldiers "tarried at Trogyllium," long enough only to get their supper and breakfast, present necessities for these bodies of humiliation. Their objective was Miletus, the place of safety and plenty, purchased by the "scarlet line, or blood of the Lamb." They were there before, for they all started by faith in the Cross.

INTERVIEW WITH EPHESIAN ELDERS

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. " (20:17-18)

Miletus was a seaport town of Ephesus. There the apostle had his last conference with those representatives of the Ephesian Assembly, which he loved so deeply. The record of that conference is full of interest and profound instruction. It falls nicely into seven divisions:

- (1) Paul's past career in Ephesus --Verses 18-21, 27, 33-35.
- (2) Paul's objective -- Verses 22-23.
- (3) Paul's fortitude under trial -- Verse 24.
- (4) Paul's forecasts -- Verses 25, 29-30.
- (5) Paul's exhortation to the elders -- Verses 28, 31.
- (6) Paul's committal of the elders -- Verse 32.
- (7) The parting moments -- Verses 36-38.

One. The apostle must have been an overcomer in his walk and proficient in his work. Else how could he so boldly remind the elders of his past life in their midst? He calls attention to 12 telling items of his conduct and toil, and fairly challenges them to gainsay them. The preface to his review gives a gist thereof - "After what manner I was with you all the time." The first time is rare - "Serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind," a trait that ministers should covet as an absolute prerequisite for usefulness in God's work. The "many tears" indicate the reality and depth of the apostle's humility.

He barely mentions the fact of "the trials which beset him by the plots of the Jews." How few men dare say, "I kept back nothing that was profitable." Truth was truth with him, and he wished only

to know the mind of the Spirit, and he obeyed, whatever the consequences. "The whole counsel of God" had to be proclaimed (Verse 27). We cannot doubt that Paul did in his own person "teach publicly and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks," and not simply by means of others. He did literally what he exhorted others to do, and thus he could say, "Be ye imitators of me, as I imitate God."

We must not overlook Verses 33-55. "I coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor apparel." Let no one chide the Jews for their thirst after wealth. What Gentile Gospel herald is free from the "love of money"? What means the bleating of the sheep? The herald insists on having his bread and butter, and also up-to-date furnishings, whether his sheep have sufficient of the bread of life - well buttered - or not. Who can exclaim, "I have not coveted"? Point out a Gospel minister who dares say, "Ye yourselves know that these hands (holding them up, no doubt) ministered unto my necessities." Most ministers are unwilling to do that, but they want to speak and teach only, then only to large crowds. Where is their humility of mind? But Paul's own hands ministered also "to them that were with me." "As in the natural, a father and mother work for the children, so Paul did for his helpers. He became servant of all. "In all things, I gave you an example," he added, and exemplified the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Did Paul hear Jesus utter those words when he was teaching? (II Corinthians 5:16). Did the Holy Spirit reveal them to him as the Master's sayings?

Not only did the elders from Ephesus hear those words of reminiscence, but the eight itinerants, were with him. Not one could gainsay any of them.

Two. Paul's objective. "And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there."

In the next chapter, we learn that he was warned of coming trouble. Also, he knew by past experience and by the witness of the Holy Spirit, that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him in every city. But did anything daunt him?

Three. Paul's fortitude. "But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, in comparison with accomplishing my course and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." Oh, Reader, let these words speak deeply to our hearts. "Go, and do likewise," Jesus said.

Four. Paul's two forecasts. First, he announced to the elders that they were looking upon him for the last time. God had made him to know that fact, though not all the future was revealed to him.

One of the missions of the Holy Spirit was "to show us things to come." Second, He gave a shuddering warning - "Grievous wolves, shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock." The Nicolaitans thrust in their deeds (Revelation 2:6). They were self-appointed religious rulers of the people. Pretending to come in as shepherds, they lorded over the flock. Instead of feeding them, they fleeced them. Did the "grievous wolves, the Nicolaitanes" all die in the first century? No! They abound all around today. Assemblies should be very cautious about receiving strangers. Better go on without a pastor, having simple prayer meetings and Bible readings alone, than be torn and left bleeding by unprincipled religious runabouts.

"And from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (20:30). Were those perverters before him then? Or were there others in the assembly? In either case, how can men, knowing Paul's self-sacrificing life and his wonderful Gospel of grace and glory with its attendant rewards, stoop to the groveling plane of turning saints from known truth, even acknowledged and proclaimed, for the one purpose of personal gain or advantage?

Echo answers, HOW! Of Course, such workers do not count the old man dead and out. Christ is not practically their life. They have no scruples of conscience before men and no fear before God.

Five. The apostle's counsel to the Ephesian elders is of special value. Let us not pass over it lightly.

"Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood" (20:28). The failure of God's servants, whether bishops or evangelists, is due chiefly to not hearkening to the first part of this entreaty. They do not take heed to themselves in the proper way. They consult their own feelings, seek their own comfort, follow their own reasoning, or that of some other brainy fellow. As ministers, whether local or general, we should take heed to ourselves in several basic particulars:

First. We need to learn the way of victory over the world and sin, else we cannot help others over hard places.

"Flee youthful lusts" (II Timothy 2:22) has a ministerial meaning as well as a physical meaning. Some who have been on the way for years still yield to carnal clerical desires. Sometimes the temptations are stronger in later years than at the beginning. Note that Paul wrote those words in his second epistle to Timothy.

Second. We need to learn the Word of God as to doctrine and practice, so as to make full proof of our ministry. Most brethren are criminally careless about their knowledge of the Truth. Study is hard work; hence, they yield to laziness, preferring to give to the people the opinions of others, without investigating closely whether their teachings or interpretations are correct or not. Paul could say, "We are not ignorant"; therefore, half a dozen times he exclaimed, "I would not have you ignorant." And we should be able to say the same things.

Third. We should exemplify the Gospel we preach and demonstrate the doctrine we teach by our own holy walk, even by "walking in the Spirit." Some men and women are accomplished speakers in public.

They can gather and hold a crowd, but their daily walk contradicts their Sunday talk. They teach the power and joy of the Holy Spirit boldly in public, but in private they fail to walk in the Spirit, but rather "walk after the flesh." The Holy Spirit is not only to be yielded to in meeting, but He is to be trusted and yielded to out of meeting also. He is a practical Guide and an everyday Comforter. We bishops and evangelists must walk with Him in a practical way in our everyday shoes. "Be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12). If we teach Divine healing to the people, they ought to rebuke us if we go around the corner to a drug store for a drug. A gospel which is not practical is a weak gospel. A gospel that is not sufficient for the dispenser of it, is not worth dispensing. While the barber was shaving a customer, he waxed eloquent in praises of a hair remedy which he had for sale. Suddenly, the customer saw that the barber was bald. He exclaimed, "Why don't you use some of it on your own head?"

WHEN HARVEST IS PAST
When harvest is past
And the summer is ended, Will you with God's wheat
In His barns have been stored?
When tares are cast out
From the wheat that once blended,
Will you be found safe
With the wheat of the Lord?
The season of mercy
Will not last forever --

God's Spirit forever
With man will not strive --We
cannot be saved Through
human endeavor --
Christ Jesus, eternally,
Makes us alive.
-- Frank Roberts
(Jeremiah 8:20; Amos 8-1-2)

THE PURPOSE AND PLACE OF SERVICE

"To feed the flock of the Lord." Oh yes! That is the supreme purpose. Jesus said to Peter, "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." A smooth tongue, a bold front, an attractive air, a smiling, flattering face, are all that is needed to entertain the masses, especially in this shallow time. But to "feed" hungry hearts of the new creation, to nurture and foster and build them up, requires a heart full of unselfish love and truth on the part of God's servant. There is a cry from every direction for real soul food. It is a burning shame that men dare to claim to preach the Gospel and be shepherds of flocks, and yet have little, or nothing to bring them from God's Word. Why is it? Are they never impressed with the exhortations of Jesus and of Paul? Or have they never read them? And whose flock, is it? It is the "flock of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood." Jesus said, "My lambs, my sheep." He died to redeem them.

He poured out His life in their behalf. Surely, if men would only take it to heart, who their people are, and what infinite price purchased them, they would seek with all their heart and soul to feed and care for them. "The Holy Spirit hath made you bishops." The word "bishop," or "overseer," is "episkopos" in Greek. It occurs seven times in the New Testament. Once it is applied to Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:28). In Luke 19:44 it is translated "visitation." The word means an "overseer, a watcher, a guardian," especially a public officer sent as inspector, or overseer of a subject state. Observe the close relationship between the elders or presbyters ("presbuteros," Greek) and the bishops. Verse 18 records that the elders were summoned from Ephesus and this verse states that the Holy Spirit had made them bishops, or overseers. The term "presbuteros" (elders) was borrowed from the Jewish synagogue. It was in common use under both the Old and New covenants. Etymologically it implied that, as a rule, the person so designated was pretty well advanced in life. The term, "episkopos" was borrowed from the polity of the Grecian States and indicated the responsibility of the elder to look after the spiritual welfare of the Church. Peter expressed the gravity of the office in calling Jesus the "Bishop of your souls."

The office of bishop, or overseer, was no doubt, either local or general. The bishoprick of the apostles was general (Chapter 1:20). Their office was not limited to one place; hence, Peter and John were called to Samaria to pray that Philip's converts might receive the Holy Spirit (Chapter 8). Peter was used of the Lord to introduce Pentecost among the Gentiles (Chapter 10). Paul never named himself an overseer by that term, but he really did so by announcing himself as a steward ("oikonomos," Greek), or housekeeper of Divine things (I Corinthians 4:12). His words to Titus (1:7) conveys the same meaning - "The bishop must be blameless as God's steward." The overseership of those elders in Ephesus was probably local; Paul's and Titus' were general. Consider also the "bishops and deacons" of Philippians 1:1.

Not all who are called bishops hold that office by Divine appointment. The sacred office has been made an instrument of carnal authority and even wicked lordship. It was never God's purpose that men be ecclesiastical overseers. Organization is sure to develop lords, who exalt themselves at the

expense of their weaker fellows. This is just as certain in religious organizations as in those of the world. What a precious caution Peter gave to the elders over whom his apostleship extended. "Tend the flock of God, which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock" (I Peter 5:3). With such profound and solemn entreaties from those who had laid down their lives for the people and verified them by their unselfish conduct, we marvel that verses 29 and 30 could ever come to pass. But if the old man in preachers is not judged, he becomes the meanest old man of all, capable of doing the greatest harm.

Sixth. How tender and loving was the apostle's committal of those elders. "And now I commend you to God and to the Word of His Grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (20:32). To my mind, this is one of the most powerful portions of Holy Writ. Its huge importance is magnified by the criminal oversight and vaunting neglect thereof by the brethren. Paul did not flatter those elders because they were made overseers by the Holy Spirit.

He did not make them feel that they were full-grown, but he put them back on the only means of edification - even the sure Word of Grace. One is surprised at how much is said about being built up in Christ. Nine citations mention the word "building" as referring to the saints. Twenty times the same Greek word is translated, "edify, edification." Either exhortations to edification are given, or warnings as to how men should not build on the sure foundation. Being built up, or edified by the blessed Word of God is absolutely necessary in order to obtain the promised inheritance.

SALVATION NOT AN INHERITANCE

There is an inheritance for believers. Salvation from sin is not the inheritance. Salvation is God's free gift to undeserving guilty men, when they repent and believe the Gospel. A rich young ruler came to Jesus thinking to inherit eternal life by doing something (Luke 18). The Lord showed him at once what he would have to do if he would gain it by his own works. He was very sorrowful, for he was very rich. He would not trade his wealth for the lasting riches of eternal life. No, he would not if he could - "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2).

He could not if he would - "for by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus proceeded to show him and the disciples that salvation is not obtained by inheritance, but by faith in Himself, the world's Sin bearer. By faith in Jesus, we become children of God (John 1:12-13) and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). Children justly inherit their parents' riches. Likewise, God's children are His rightful, inheritors, but parents divide their possessions to their children usually upon certain deserving conditions, as good behavior. Likewise, God's children will come into the divine inheritance upon certain prescribed scriptural conditions. Sinners are saved by faith in the merit of Christ, but believers will obtain an inheritance because of their own merit (by divine enabling, of course). If this is not the truth, why Paul's exhortation to give heed to the Word of grace? If eternal life is the inheritance; if believers shall all obtain an inheritance by the fact only of being saved, there is no meaning to the apostle's words here. Observe closely that the joint heirship with Christ hereafter depends upon joint-suffering with Him here. Being glorified together with Jesus, depends upon our suffering and groaning in fellowship with Him on earth. Romans 8:17-39 teaches that, or nothing at all. Study also II Timothy 2:9-14.

Let no Christian worker imagine that he will inherit alike with others and be rewarded on a part with others, no matter how he lives, or labors, or what he teaches. Let no believer think that he can live after the flesh and expect an inheritance and a reward. Impossible! Unreasonable! Unjust! Unscriptural! Children cannot remain spiritual dwarfs and receive an inheritance. They would not appreciate and

enjoy it if they did receive it. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever any man soweth, that shall he also reap."

WHAT IS THE INHERITANCE?

Revelation 21:7 answers the question in a comprehensive way, giving also the chief condition upon which, the inheritance is obtained. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." There is a present inheritance for those who are born again. All that the death of Christ has purchased, as for, divine healing for the body and the anointing with the Spirit. The latter is the earnest of our inheritance in its fulness (Ephesians 1:14). Through faith and patience, saints inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12). Now if you wish to know what the full inheritance of the Church is, study Paul's epistles. If you would know the rewards of the saints, study also the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2 and 3). In those various writings, we learn also upon what conditions both will be obtained.

Seven. The parting scene. These last three verses scarcely need any comment. They are self-explanatory.

A praying apostle produced a love-bound eldership in hope of a self-denying office. That was the last time that Paul prayed with them, but it was not the last time that he prayed for them. Whoever interceded on behalf of a flock as did dear Paul? "The care of all the churches" always bore heavily upon his father heart (II Corinthians 1:28). Let us as deacons, elders, pastors, and bishops be imitators of him. Such was the finale of the third and last evangelistic tour of the heroic herald and pioneer of the invincible Gospel of grace and glory. We have barely touched the narration of events which we may ponder with profit all our days. We have glanced at the sample missionary and at his modes of operations. May we walk in Paul's steps in our surrender to Christ and in our love for the truth and in our unselfish devotion to the edifying and nurturing of God's people.

THINK ...

"Of passing from storm and tempest to a calm harbor,
Of stepping on shore, and finding it Heaven,
Of taking hold of a hand, and finding it God's hand,
Of breathing a new atmosphere, and finding it celestial air,
Of feeling invigorated, and finding immortality,
Of an awakening, and finding it Home!

CHAPTERS 21 - 23 PAUL IN JERUSALEM

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following, Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present" (21:17-18).

The date of these events was the Spring of 58 A. D. Luke, the recorder of these thrilling happenings, was with the apostle all of those days. No delay was allowed enroute from Miletus to Jerusalem. His purpose to visit Jerusalem once more and then to see Rome (Chapter 19:21) was burning in his bones. He was glad to find a freight ship, heading for the country of Phoenicia, which landed them in Tyre.

There certain disciples sought to hinder him from going up to Jerusalem, but he and his crew pressed on their way. At Caesarea, they met evangelist Philip and his four gifted daughters. Who dare say that women may not proclaim the Word of grace? Did Paul rebuke them? There is no account of it, if he did. Why has the Spirit recorded the fact of their public ministry, if they were out of divine order?

Ah, they simply fulfilled the prophecy of Joel 2:28. condemn them who dare. The prophet Agabus (meaning "grasshopper") leaped down from Jerusalem and showed the apostle how he would be bound if he went thither. His fellow-journeymen and the disciples there sought to dissuade him from going to the city, but he would not be hindered. Does Verse 4 contradict Verse 14? Apparently, it does: "And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Sometimes the Lord seems to set before us two objects of choice, informing us of the outcome of both. He lets us take either one, not condemning us, whichever one we choose. In either case, we would move in God's will. Paul would have been in God's will if he had yielded to the pulling back of the Spirit through the disciples in Tyre. He would have reached Rome, no doubt, without the two years' imprisonment in Caesarea. But who dare arise and condemn Paul? Sometimes God speaks through abject silence. Moreover, God's word to Ananias was thus fulfilled: "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my Name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my Name's sake" (Chapter 9:15). Neither did the Lord condemn, nor censure the apostle for his visit to Jerusalem and for his conduct there, but he comforted him (Chapter 23:11).

The attitude of Luke and the other workers who traveled with Paul is a fine example for us. They said, "The will of the Lord be done." Agabus signified what suffering and persecution Paul would have to endure if he persisted in going to Jerusalem, but Paul knew that for greater suffering and for hotter persecution, he would obtain a greater reward; therefore, he would not be dissuaded from going thither. When we do not understand; when we cannot quite agree, let us say as did they, "The will of the Lord be done." We might be wrong; how much trouble and strife will then be avoided.

PAULS RECEPTION IN JERUSALEM

There were some brethren in Jerusalem who received Paul and his message concerning "the mystery of God." When he interviewed James, all the elders were present. Were Peter and John there also? It is not so recorded. When Barnabas and Paul were there eight years before to discuss whether salvation is by law, or by grace, "they were received of the church and the apostles and elders" (Chapter 15:4). Had the Jerusalem saints thrown off the yoke of legality at that time and discarded the shadows, Paul would not have had such a fearful fight on his last visit there. We are confronted here with a most powerful and conclusive demonstration of legality. How unconquerable it is! James was the pastor of the assembly there. He is the James who wrote the epistle of James.

He was one of the 120 filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, and a very prominent participant in the conference just referred to above (Chapter 15). He then agreed that salvation is by grace alone, apart from works, yet he seems to be swayed more, or less by law-keepers. Oh, the daring subtlety and binding power of that religious witchcraft, legalism, and that hydra-headed ghost, self-righteousness!

Is it any wonder that Martin Luther wrote a book of 1000 pages against it in his notes on Galatians?

Can we blame the Apostle Paul for shouting out, "I am set for the defense of the Gospel"? (Philippians 1:17)

"And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly (one by one) what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry" (21:19). He taught the same Gospel of grace which had been his theme before the former meeting, the conference. He could report the same wonderful results.

Indeed, he could say, as Luke wrote, that God had wrought special miracles by his hands (Chapter 19:12). When they, James and the elders, heard it, they "glorified God." What else could they

do? But they also had a report. Do you ever hear people say, "Yes, but"? They admit your testimony is true, but in the same breath, add, "Yes, but." Beware of the "Yes, but" folk. They will entangle you and get you into dire trouble, if possible.

"Many thousands there are among the Jews of them which have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." The same thing can be said today of the Gentiles. How strange! What a conglomeration!

Men believe on Jesus, who is the embodiment of grace, who saves by grace, the absolute fulfillment of the Mosaic code, but are zealous for the very law, of which Christ is the end "for righteousness to them that believe" (Romans 10:4). Oh, how ignorance and self-righteousness rob Christ of His dearly bought glory! Paul did not teach, either Jews or Gentiles, to forsake Moses, but he taught everywhere that Christ was the living Substance of which Moses' letter was only a shadow. Why go on with a type, a shadow, when the real satisfying Substance had come? Cold, cruel legality habitually carries a pail of paint and a brush, seeking to blacken the pure, white truth of divine grace. We are often accused of saying, or writing things which are absolutely false. Christ is our theme, from whom we never deviate, but seek to glorify Him to the uttermost.

Today, people do not continue the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but they continue the spirit of the types and shadows. Some insist on water baptism, sabbath keeping, feet washing, etc., as necessary to salvation. Others insist that after we are born again through faith in Jesus, we must keep the law of Moses, or be damned at last. Reader, how often have you broken the law since you were saved? And did you mend that break by keeping the law afterward? Or did you come to the Father through the "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One"? (I John 2:1) Do you know that if you break God's law, you must be forgiven of Him, and no keeping of it afterward can atone for, nor pardon that offence? Why not rest forever on Hebrews 7:24-25? "But He (Christ) because He abideth forever, hath His priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Oh, thank God for the efficacy of the death of Christ and for the constancy and sufficiency of His intercession in our behalf! That is grace, needed grace, abounding grace.

PAUL IN THE TEMPLE

Paul stemmed the tide of legality, "the enemy of the cross," at the expense of his life. He died daily for the Gospel of grace. Peter had declared boldly for it eight years before, saying, "Now why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we were able to bear?" But afterwards, when in Antioch, he compromised this statement and Paul had to reprove him (Galatians 2:11-14) James advised at the conference that no one should trouble the Gentile converts with legal requirements, but here he too fail, and compromises. They who "seemed to be pillars" of the truth, weakened and cringed in that crucial hour. That James and the Jewish elders still observed the Mosaic rites is evident. They besought Paul to prove to the multitude that he practiced circumcision, walked orderly after the customs and kept the law of Moses. They knew that he did not but practiced what he preached. If he had been doing so, he would have been building again the things which once he destroyed. Thus, he would have been making himself a transgressor and Christ the minister of sin (Galatians 2:17-18).

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them" (21:26). This verse stumbles many Bible students. How could Paul permit an offering to be given for him after announcing Christ as the one only real sin offering, for over 20 years? Had he not preached Him as the "Lamb of God"? Indeed, he had! How then could he go back to the shadows?

We must note the apostle's motive, for God looks on the heart. Abraham's offering Isaac was apparently an act of murder, but it was actually an act of worship, because God bid him do it. "What is not of faith, is sin." Likewise, Paul "went up to Jerusalem to worship," and to bring alms and offerings to his nation (Chapter 24:11, 17). He purified himself, because he sought to "become all things to all men that he might by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22). For a similar reason, he had Timothy circumcised because of the Jews in those parts (Chapter 16:3). He did those outward shadowy things, not as a compromise, not because he feared the Jews (as Peter did, Galatians 2:12), but that he might explain them and give their spiritual application.

NO COMPROMISE IN PAUL

It is very evident that the apostle was unswerving for the truth. His address before Felix 12 days later proves it. The inference is that he waxed bold near the end of the seven days in declaring the resurrection of Christ. To Felix he said, "This I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law and which are written in the prophets, having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." He must have declared to them that Christ had come and had died and been raised from the dead. What did he tell the governor that had stirred the Jews? Simply that he stood and cried, saying, "Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question this day" (Chapter 24:14-21).

His remarks about the resurrection would not have aroused their hatred if he had not shown them that there could be no resurrection except through the death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, which he declared was Jesus Christ. Felix afterward said to Agrippa concerning Paul, that the accusers "had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of one Jesus, who was dead, who Paul affirmed to be alive." Finally, Paul's own words before Agrippa are unanswerable evidence that he never flinched, nor swerved from the truth for one moment: "Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that Christ must suffer, and how that he first, by the resurrection from the dead, should proclaim light both to the people (Israel) and to the Gentiles" (Chapter 25:19; 26:22-23, R. V.).

Do you think for one moment that the fiery Apostle Paul, with the vision of Christ and fellowship he had with Him, could spend seven days in the temple without defining his position? Unthinkable! And the sequel proves that, for whatever reason he purified himself in the temple, he was firm for the truth. Study the shameful treatment the Jews gave him, similar to that they gave to Christ. If he had compromised, would they not have hailed him with wild delight? Would they not have announced it far and near? And would not the Holy Spirit have recorded divine censure against him somewhere? Nay, there is not even a hint of it, nor an intimation that Paul ever regretted his visit to Jerusalem, or his conduct in the temple. Indeed, we have the positive proof of divine approval - And the night following the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness in Rome" (Chapter 23:11). This ought to place his integrity and conduct beyond all dispute. After reaching Rome, he wrote that invaluable letter to the Hebrews and sent a copy to them in Jerusalem. Compare Hebrews 10:32-34; 13:23-24 with II Peter 3:15-16.

Furthermore, after Jesus returns and the Jews receive Him, they will again offer sacrifices, not in unbelief as if He had not come, but as a memorial of faith that He did come (Isaiah 60:6-8; Zechariah 14:21). It will be even as it is today as we observe the memorials of water baptism and the Lord's supper. Most conscientiously could Paul allow those sacrifices to be offered for him, as a type of how the Jews will offer them as a memorial of Him who had come. Study the seemingly ridiculous things that God

required of His prophets to symbolize the condition of His people and His dealings with them (Ezekiel 4 and Hosea 1-2).

PAUL ARRESTED AND TRIED

"And all the city was moved, and the people ran together, and they laid hold on Paul and dragged him out of the temple; and straightway the doors were shut" (21:30). It was the last offer of mercy to the Jews. It was their last opportunity to accept Paul's message of grace. In rejecting that, they rejected Christ Himself. Any wonder that immediately the doors were shut? They thought to close the doors of the temple to Paul, but in so doing, they shut themselves out from Jehovah. Oh, how sad that men either walk away from the light or chase the light away from them! The Jews gave Paul the same treatment they had given his Lord nearly 30 years before, when the multitude cried, "Away with him!"

CHAPTER 22

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE MOB

"Men, brethren, and fathers, bear ye my defense which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day" (22:1-3).

At the apostle's own request, the chief captain allowed him to speak to the people from the stairs leading up to the castle. Mark the respectful manner of his address - "Men, brethren and fathers." That should have softened their hearts toward him. He named the place of his birth and his early religious training. He recited his persecution of the followers of Jesus; then described the nature of his conversion. This account and also the one in Chapter 26 are his own public testimonies. Each records some items omitted by the others; hence, the importance of studying them together. Before considering the apostle's testimony here, therefore, read Luke's account in Chapter 9:17-19 with the notes thereon.

In this account we read that Ananias said, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on His name" (22:16). In Chapter 9:18 we read: "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." Do these two verses contradict each other? By no means. Some quote 22:16 to prove that water baptism is essential to salvation. It is the only Scripture that seems to teach that, but the whole tenor of Scripture teaching is against it. Salvation is by faith in the blood of Christ apart from any works, even wholly apart from the beautiful symbol of baptism in water. By comparing the three records, we find that the chief point emphasized is that God chose him to be a witness of what he saw and heard and should hear. Two of the accounts declare that Ananias came to Paul that he might receive his sight, and one that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit. Be it remembered that in this chapter, Paul is addressing his own people, the Jews. Compare Peter's words in Chapter 2:38: "Repent ye and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Observe that the exhortation "to repent" was distinctly to Israel because of their stout reluctance to accept Christ as their Messiah. Study Matthew 3, Luke 3, Acts 3 and 26:20. Baptism in water was the one bold and convincing expression of real repentance. An unwillingness to be baptized was equivalent to saying, "I do not believe in Jesus Christ; I will not have Him to be my Messiah and King." Baptism to a Jew means an eternal cutting off from the shadowy forms and ceremonies of the old covenant. It means an acknowledgement that all was fulfilled in the despised Nazarene, whom they had crucified with wicked hands. Ananias' question implies that Saul of Tarsus hesitated to be baptized, not because he had not yet believed on Jesus, but because he knew what persecution would follow his baptism in water. He shrank from the suffering.

The moment he settled that point, saying, "Yes" to whatever consequences, "he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized" (9:18). Note that his sight came before he was baptized, as God's witness to his full surrender and wholehearted acceptance of His Son. His baptism was his own witness thereto and his bold confession of faith. Study Paul's own interpretation of baptism (Chapter 19:4). Let us look at the exact grammar of 22:16, as given in the Diaglott: "And now why dost thou delay? Having arisen, be thou dipped and wash thyself from the sins of thee, having invoked the name of Him." Ananias exhorted Saul to do two things: "be baptized" and "wash." The participial phrase, "having invoked," of necessity modifies the verb "wash," which immediately precedes it. Observe also that the invoking, or calling on the Lord, is in the past perfect tense. That means, that Saul had called fully on the Name of the Lord before he was exhorted to be baptized. His sins were really washed away when he called on the Lord, not when he was baptized. This same Saul, afterward called Paul, taught this doctrine, saying, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Paul also wrote that we are "cleansed by the washing (laver) of water with the Word" (Ephesians 5:26), "saved through the washing (laver) of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). He does not once intimate baptism as a means of salvation. Instead, he speaks positively against it (I Corinthians 1:17), saying, "Christ sent me NOT to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

Elsewhere he writes of baptism in water as a "baptism of repentance" (Chapter 19:4), a "baptism into Christ, into death, a burial into death" (Romans 6:3-5). It follows, therefore, that Ananias meant nothing more by his entreaty than that Saul should symbolize the washing away of his sins by being baptized in water, and boldly and publicly confess that he believed his sins to have been cleansed away when he before invoked the Name of the Lord. Peter wrote of baptism as a "figure" (I Peter 3:21).

Furthermore, if the above view is not correct, and if water is essential to salvation, then the Holy Spirit must have been unwise in coming upon the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius before they were baptized (Chapter 10). And Peter was unscriptural in endorsing it. How unworthy of the blessed Comforter is such a thought, and how unkind toward the apostle to whom were given the keys of the kingdom.

But such is the inevitable conclusion to which undue stress of baptism brings us. Every truth is precious when held in right relation to all other truth, but any truth is weakened and brought into ill repute, when it is pushed beyond its proper limits. Saints become confused; divisions arise; the Spirit is grieved, and Christ is robbed of His glory. And then, error never travels alone. Unspeakable harm has been done through magnifying water baptism out of its beautiful place as a symbol and exalting it as a savior. If Christ by Himself alone could not save a sinner, He would be a puny savior indeed. It is a deplorable fact that not one person in five hundred understands the import of water baptism, because the ministers themselves do not understand it. Very often the common people, in their simplicity, grasp its meaning, but some fanatical ignoramus turns them away from the plain truth. When believers clearly and fully see the purpose and meaning of this beautiful memorial, they will suffer no one to put them under the water three and four times. They will not be confused as to whether they should be dipped face foremost, or backwards, whether dipped once or thrice. And their faith will not be in the formula, which the baptizer may pronounce, but in the Savior who saves by grace and not by water.

PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL

"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (23:1)

After Paul recited the details of his conversion, he related a vision in which the Lord gave him a call to minister to the Gentiles. The enraged mob cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." Then the chief captain ordered him to be brought into the castle and be examined by scourging, an experience similar to our Lord's experience in the same place about 25

years earlier. When they learned that he was a Roman citizen, they left off the scourging and gave him permission to speak. (22:22-29)

The satanic hatred of the Jewish leaders was terrific. Paul began his address by saying that he had lived in all good conscience before God, which they knew that they surely had not done. Then the high priest commanded him to be smitten on the mouth, whereupon Paul exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." The bystanders called out, "Revilest thou God's high priest?" Then Paul with ironical courtesy replied, I knew not, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." The apostle no longer recognized Ananias as the high priest, because his priesthood had ended when Christ's priesthood began. Jesus Christ was the only real High Priest. They were speaking evil of Him, God's acknowledged Ruler of the people. Smiting Paul was equivalent to smiting Christ, for Paul was His representative.

"But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (23:6). Then a division arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, because of Paul's declaration of his hope of the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, though they were supposed to be orthodox Jews. Of course, there arose a great clamor.

And the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (23:11). This verse proves God's pleasure toward Paul while in Jerusalem. This dear persecuted warrior of grace needed those comforting words, for the enemy was plotting his death. How good and wonderful it is that the Lord knows all that men are doing. He goes before us and is also the reward of His holy ones. Over 40 blood-thirsty foes of the cross banded together under a great curse, to eat nothing until they had slain him. Paul's nephew heard of it, and at once informed his uncle, who had him brought before the chief captain to make him know of the plot. Therefore, the captain dispatched the apostle by night to Caesarea by means of 200 soldiers, 200 spearmen and 70 cavalrymen. They conveyed him directly to Felix the governor, the captain also addressing a letter to him concerning Paul and the Jews' attitude toward him. Read Verses 26 to 35.

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the Promises of God.

-- Carter

CHAPTERS 24-26

PAUL IMPRISONED IN CAESAREA

THE APOSTLE BEFORE FELIX

"And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul." (24:1)

At this time, God's word to Ananias that Paul should witness to kings, began to be fulfilled (Chapter 9:15). He never forgets His own, nor His promises to them. Therefore, the apostle appeared before Felix, the governor. The Jews also brought with them an orator, whom they supposed, would overpower Felix with his eloquence and persuade him against Paul. He began his oratorical flight by

endeavoring to flatter the governor. He accused Paul of being a pestilent fellow and an insurrectionist and of trying to profane the temple. Paul was absolutely innocent of all those charges. Therefore, he spoke boldly in his own defense, for he had no attorney to plead his cause, save Jesus Christ, who, of course, was on his side. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, but not to make trouble. He brought alms and offerings to his suffering brothers there, even as he did before (Chapter 11:27-30). A famine was occasioned by the fact of the Jews not accepting Christ as their Messiah. When once they receive Him, the world will no longer know want and sorrow.

The apostle freely acknowledged his doctrine, showing why he was arrested, and thereby making the governor hear his wonderful Gospel. He said: "After the way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law and which are written in the prophets; having hope toward God, which these (Jews) also accept, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust." His enemies admitted those truths, but did not believe them with the heart, but Paul did. Therefore, they were bitter against him. His testimony convicted them, to which they had to yield, or walk away from, or fight against.

Paul believed the Bible with all his heart and sought only the good of his people and frankly said, "Herein do I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always" (24:16). They could accuse him of only one thing, that he "cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question this day" (24:21). Of course, that was no accusation. It seems that his fervent testimony silenced the orator and all his foes.

"But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will determine your matter" (24:22). Felix knew that Paul was innocent, but he did not have the courage to dismiss the case and release him, because he "desired to gain favor with the Jews" (24:27). We do not read that Lysias ever came, but Felix came later, bringing his wife Drusilla, and heard Paul concerning his faith in Christ Jesus. As the invincible herald "reasoned of righteousness and temperance and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified," but he did not repent and believe the Gospel. He had a number of interviews with him, not because he was interested in Paul, nor in his doctrine, but hoped that Paul would give him money to purchase his release. Paul had many friends, who doubtless visited him and brought him provisions and money. The governor was impressed with the fact that he had alms to take to his brethren in Jerusalem. But Paul rested in God's hands. He would bribe no one to obtain freedom. When in prison, he was God's free man; when free, he was God's bond slave.

CHAPTER 25

PAUL BEFORE FESTUS

"I will bear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall. And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertutfus, who informed the governor against Paul." (Acts 24:35 - 25:1) After Paul was kept imprisoned by Felix for two years, Festus became governor. He visited Jerusalem, and the principal men of the Jews brought complaints against Paul and desired that Festus bring him back to Jerusalem for a trial. But they were still lying in wait to kill him. Festus, however, said that they should appear before him in Caesarea, whence he was going in a few days. That they did.

"They stood round about him, bringing against him many grievous charges, "which they could not prove." Paul denied all the charges. Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews (no doubt they offered him large sums of money if he would deliver Paul up to them), asked Paul if he were willing to be judged before him in Jerusalem. The apostle answered frankly and firmly, saying, "I am standing before Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou

also very well knowest. If then, I am a wrong-doer and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of these things is true, whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up to them. I appear unto Caesar" Many days afterward, Felix informed king Agrippa and Bernice of Paul. Verse 19 shows how the apostle witnesses of Jesus in his presence; for he lost no opportunity to proclaim his glorious Lord. His primary purpose was not to defend himself, but he was "set for the defense of the Gospel," as he wrote later from another prison cell (Philippians 1:17). Festus said to the king that the Jews had "certain questions against him of their own religion (or, "superstition"), and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

Festus knew of Jesus and of His death, but doubted His resurrection; hence, he said that Paul affirmed Him to be alive. This testimony of Festus concerning Paul is strong evidence that the apostle was uncompromising while in the temple. He purified himself only in view of explaining to the Jews the purpose of all those Old Testament types and shadows, and that they had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he could not speak effectively of the resurrection of the dead without bringing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as stated before, the Lord God found no fault in His beloved servant, but gave him comfort again and again. So, on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and they were entered into the place of hearing with the chief captain and the principal men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in (25:23). It must have been humiliating to dear Paul to be ordered around by wicked men so many times, but he knew that he was there in His Father's will. All the time, he was fulfilling the Lord's words to Ananias (Chapter 9:15). Yes, "with great pomp," the king and wife appeared, because they were to hear the defense of a noted prisoner, of whom they had heard so many conflicting reports, and who seemed to be a very unique character. And Festus felt that he could not send him to appear before the emperor Augustus, without signifying well-grounded charges against him.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA CHAPTER 26

"And Agrippa said unto Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand and made his defense" (26:1).

Still the apostle had no human attorney. All those days of severe trial, continuing over two weary years, he had to plead his just cause himself and who could do it more effectively than he? He was filled with the Spirit, fired with the truth, strengthened by the Lord's presence, impelled by the need and ignorance of the people, and pulled on by the same eternal reward which comforted his Master, "Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 12:2). Following is Paul's masterful address.

"I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defense before thee this day, touching all the things whereof I am accused by the Jews" (26:2). How could one speak thus, after those many months of unabated cruelty against him, if he were not absolutely innocent and empowered by the comforting Holy Spirit. Again, he declared that for the very hope, which was dear to every honest Jew, he was brought to trial, that is, the hope of the resurrection of the dead. His question to the king is clear and pointed. "Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?" as if Agrippa had questioned it. Then he related how that he had once persecuted the Jesus Way. Then he gave the experience of his arrest by the Lord (26:9-18). Note his comprehensive commission: "to open their (Gentiles) eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me," that is, faith in Christ, who had spoken thus to him.

"Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance" (26:19-20).

The apostle waxed eloquent in the Spirit. He feared neither the king, nor the governor, nor the others of high estate. He was fulfilling God's Word that he should witness before kings. His testimony confirmed his former fiery witness, and proves that in Jerusalem, as well as everywhere else, he showed by the Old Testament that "Christ must suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (26:23).

Festus was stirred to the depths and accused Paul of being mad. But Paul answered, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness." The man in bonds was the real king. He was "reigning in life by One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17), as he wrote a short time before. His anointed message of grace silenced the world rulers and commanded them to extend to him the highest respect, and well-nigh converted Agrippa. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (26:28). In the council of the rulers, it was settled that God's man was innocent, and had done nothing worthy of death, or even of bonds. More than two years rolled around in which infuriated Jews had sought by every conceivable manner to wipe "the chief speaker" the giant of divine grace, the housekeeper of the mystery of God, off the map, but it was all in vain. He that does the will of God is as safe as God Himself, for his "life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). Finally, Agrippa remarked, "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar." But God had said to Paul, "So must thou bear witness also at Rome" (23:11). And the Lord made the Roman government pay Paul's traveling expenses.

CHAPTERS 27 AND 28 PAUL'S VISIT TO ROME

"And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia." (27:1-5) What humiliating means the Lord often employs to accomplish His purposes. Paul had an ignominious escape from Damascus - let down from a window in a trash basket. We do not read that God's great man ever rode first class in the latest conveyance; neither did His own well-beloved Son.

Both of them were despised and rejected of men. Satan would often have cut them off if the Father had not protected them supernaturally.

Paul's trip to Rome was an exceedingly perilous one. It was also one of the most meaning-full types in this book of Acts. It is a very prolific picture of the journey of the Church from Pentecost to the coming of Jesus. Julius, meaning "downy," at first seems to figure the Holy Spirit as a tender dove, a heavenly Porter. He gives us liberty and makes life pleasant. Our bondage to Jesus Christ is a serfdom of warmest love, through the comfort and joy of the Spirit. Rome, meaning "strength," was the capital city of the world empire; thence Paul and his friends were now embarking. However, he had embarked years before the "Rome" of the universe, the city of real strength, the throne room of Him whose Name is "Strength," Jehovah Almighty. Adramyttium, meaning "the court of death," or "not in the race," was the ship in which the apostle started for Rome. What a clear picture of ecclesiasticism, which invariably has induced spiritual decline and finally death to its passengers!

No indeed, it is not in the race for the Prize of the high calling. They who would win Christ as Bridegroom must sail in an entirely different ship. A spiritual and heavenly race demands a spiritual ship. In such a one, Paul embarked and sailed for glory. He never rode on any religious, or ecclesiastical Adramyttium. He was always and absolutely the Lord's freeman.

Luke, meaning "light," was a passenger with Paul, as the phrase "with us" indicates. He was true indeed to his name and became an accurate chronicler of two great careers - those of Jesus and of His chief follower, Paul. Aristarchus, meaning "a good prince" or "the best ruler," was another passenger and a fellow prisoner with Paul. He was one of the three Jews who were a "comfort" to him while he was imprisoned in Rome (Colossians 4: 10-11). He shared the apostle's persecutions and sorrow for Christ's sake. Will he not also share in his glory? And may we not choose a similar place of fellowship with Paul as those brethren had?

The Bible student may derive some sweet spiritual lessons by knowing the meanings of the names here. Sidon means "hunting." Cyprus means "love, blossom, fairness." Cilicia means "haircloth." Pamphylia signifies "many tribes." Myra means "myrrh, myrtle juice, I flow." Lycia signifies "wolfish."

"And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein" (27:6).

Many people have started for heaven in some religious organization, an "ecclesiastical Adramyttium," but became disappointed and dissatisfied with it and left it. Not understanding God's perfect and safe way of travel, they went aboard another organization. Some ministers have done so, taking with them their crew, or congregation. Alexander means "helper of men." Of course, religious institution promises to help and defend mankind, always appeals to people. Newly born babes in Christ readily run into a church like that. Julius, who seemed before to typify the Comforter, now proves to be simple a wise human influence, which always sets bounds around the saints of God instead of letting God Himself choose the boundary. "And he put us therein" has proved the beginning of unspeakable bondage and grief to thousands of children of God. The history of sects tells the tale of religious woes. The meanings of the various names touched on during this voyage all agree in figuring the tempestuous history of Christendom during this Church Age. Cnidus means "dedicated to Venus," hence, also "nettled." They could not reach that port because "the winds were contrary." The citizens of such a town become nettled at the very sight of a Gospel ship. Crete means "fleshly." Salmone signifies "from the surging." Lasea means "rocky, shaggy." With difficulty they come to Fair Havens where Paul advised them to stay for the winter. The Holy Spirit had shown him what would befall them if they went on toward Phoenix, or Phenice which means "palm land." The Fair Havens of Paul's Gospel is the only place of real and lasting safety, but the Church feared the waves of persecution which were splashing and surging about them. The rugged, rocky, shaggy heights did not appeal to the leaders. It is just so today. "Because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to put to sea from thence, if by any means they could reach Phoenix. And the south wind blew softly" (27:12-13). If you want to get nowhere, or to the wrong where, just vote on your movements. "The more part" will advise you contrary to the apostle every time. God has ordained that certain members of the Body of Christ should be "eyes" to the assembly and have the "word of wisdom." The Holy Spirit makes the Father's will known to the whole crew by means of one, or a very small few, who have the burden of responsibility.

PAUL, THE REAL PILOT

God appointed the Apostle Paul to be the housekeeper of the Church of Christ throughout this age.

His doctrine and practice should have been allowed to pilot the saints over the sea during the past 1900 years. His writings are pre-eminently to and for the assemblies of Christ. Alas, how foolhardy men have been to reject, or even to neglect them. The deceiving "palm lands" and the "soft south wind"

of ease and compromise with the world overcome those who fear the surging's of opposition around the shaggy cliffs of divine truth - Paul's "some things, hard to be understood" (II Peter 3:16). But oh, what revelations of grace and what experiences of peace and glory envelope those who receive his doctrine. Tongue can never tell the depth and height and breadth of the present wealth and joy which flows into the heart that accepts his Gospel and goes on with him. God rides on the billowy crest of Salmone to our help, and sits on the dizzying pinnacles of rugged Lasea, inviting us to dwell above the fog and mist of an ease-loving church and enjoy His deep, abiding fellowship.

To those who go on with Paul, there can come no real "hurt and much damage," which Christendom has actually suffered.

The "palm trees" of Phenice, or "palm land," always appeal to the carnal. One of the most subtle features of self-righteousness is an aspiration for a glorified state on earth. Some claim that their flesh is so dead that they suffer no pain, have no longer any "natural affection," but have nothing to do save to enjoy the cool, balmy shade of self-congratulation and mutual admiration. Some people become "over much righteous," too holy to serve others, or mingle with other saints. No one can actually, daily follow dear Paul and shrivel up into pusillanimous religious vanity, which has no boast except its own hard sanctity, obnoxious attire and legal tenets of doctrine, before which Grace blushes and flees away.

OUR PILOT ENCOURAGED

"But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (27:21-25). Wonderful! The so-called Christian system goes to pieces -- there is loss of the ship, but no loss of life among you. Here, in symbol, is the truth of eternal life. If God saw to it that not one of those prisoners perished, how much more will He see to it that not one who believes on His Son will ever perish forever? Brother, with whom are you sailing? And do you say, "Sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me"? Happy all those who do. How unbelieving men are, even though they are convinced by actual experience and observation that God is with Paul.

"The shipmen were about to flee out of the ship." Yes, the majority of saints keep their distance from Paul, the very man whom Jehovah has ordained to bring to us the greatest truths and the fulness of blessing. Nevertheless, here is a marvelous statement: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (27:31). There was no physical salvation from drowning that day except by obeying Paul's word; neither is there any salvation for any man save by believing Paul's Gospel. The curse rests upon those who preach any other gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Hence, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel" (Romans 2:16), said Paul. The place and power of his message is tremendous. It is incalculable, invaluable.

Oh, let us "cut off the ropes of the boat" of apostatized Christianity! "The day is coming on." Let us freely "take meat, for this is for your health." Take it from Paul's hand. Men are writing about "meat in due season;" but they either reject this man's teachings, or "wrest them to their own destruction." Beware of them. All who receive Paul's message "are all of good cheer." The calamity awaiting those who refuse it will be appalling. They "will be saved as by fire." Their works, their unsavory teaching, "will be burned" (I Corinthians 3).

The two gigantic religious seas - Catholicism and Protestantism - meet at the end of this present period. They are practically one now. The former has "stuck fast and remained unmovable." The Roman Catholic church remains undivided to this day. The latter (Protestantism) has been "broken with the

violence of the waves" or religious heresies, or unscriptural doctrines. Protestantism is divided into many sects, all claiming to be right systems. They all will perish at the hand of Divine Justice. Compare Revelation 3:16 with Chapters 17 and 18. But all believers will be saved. "Those who can swim," or who trust God absolutely, depending only upon His grace, "first get to land."

Paul was a good swimmer. He was accustomed to the water (II Corinthians 11:25). Compare Philippians 3:11, 14. Reader, do you choose to be in his rank'? "And the rest, some on boards and some on pieces of the ship," or basic fragments of the whole truth get to land.

TEACH ME TO LISTEN

Let me sit at Thy feet and listen
As they did so long ago.
But I am always busy, Lord, And
the world does press me so. When
problems overwhelm me And
there's so much to do, I
cannot pause to listen
As You would want me to.
When foolish tensions fill my day,
Teach me, Lord, to pause and pray
And Let frustrations slip away; May I
hear and then obey. Let me sit at Thy
feet and listen! -- Margaret Lowell White

CHAPTER 28

THE FINAL REVIVAL FORESHADOWED

"And when we were escaped, then we knew that the island was called Melita (Malta)." 28:1 Paul and his crew reached Melita about February 61, A.D., where they continued several months. Then they arrived in Rome in the Spring. We should expect the translation of the full overcomers to take place some year before Easter, because Jesus will take His throne in heaven just before the Passover, and the overcomers must meet Him in heaven at the time of His enthronement. The Jewish year begins at that time. (See Exodus 12) Methinks the Archangel is standing now on the veranda in heaven, polishing His trumpet and getting ready to blow. Oh, let us keep our ears clean and polished also, that we may not fail to hear the home call. Paul's arrival in Rome typifies the translation of believers.

Melita means "affording honey." How significant! Our bitter experiences in God's will are followed by sweetness. A life of hard, bitter toil now will be rewarded by sweet fellowship with God and all the holy ones in heaven, of which our fellowship on earth is only an earnest. What a glorious hope is ours in Christ! I fear that very few really appreciate it.

The apostle's experience on this island of Melita foreshadowed a revival of the truths of salvation by Grace and Pentecost at the close of this age, (during the 1900's). During his three months stay there, the Gospel went forth effectively. The signs of Mark 16:17 followed the confirmation thereof, as at the beginning of the Church Age. Thus, wherever Christ is preached, not in word only, but in the power and joy of the Holy Spirit, the whole counsel of God is made known and the fulness of Divine blessings is experienced as we read in Verses 1-9. Some modern teachers condemn Luke for emphasizing Divine healing in his record, instead of salvation. How wise the natural man poses to be

when he turns religious. It is still the "wisdom of the world," however pious it may seem to be, which the Lord abominates. Jesus Christ secured the attention of these people by the healing of their maladies. Paul and the other apostles followed in his steps. And we do well to learn God's plan and manner of ministering to the world, by studying their conduct as recorded by the Spirit. Another huge blunder is foisted against Paul by some would-be Bible teachers. They claim that he became so spiritual after reaching Rome, that he discarded Divine healing altogether. Their only evidence of such conjecture is his silence on healing in his letters written to the churches from Rome. Do they not know that those epistles were written to saints who had learned long before to trust God for their bodies and knew the truth of Divine healing? Not only had those saints learned about Divine healing, but they also learned Christ as their very life, Divine health. Of course, healing is a part of salvation.

We grow in spirituality as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Men who reject the gifts of the Spirit, and hence are not filled with the Holy Spirit, ought to blush before Jesus and Paul, if not before those who are now walking in the Spirit and living true to God's Word. No one today can be spiritual, who has not received the Spirit as did the apostles. By their own folly, such teachers put themselves in the class of the "five foolish virgins," who will miss the rapture of those that shall be caught away to be at the wedding in the air. Reader, beware, oh, beware!

PAUL REACHING ROME

"We came to Putcoli, where we found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days; and so we came to Rome" (28:14). Puteoli means "abounding in wells, or mineral springs." The natural surroundings seemed to be in harmony with the supernatural, for there they "found brethren." The brethren in Rome heard that the apostle and his company were nearing the city; hence, they came out to meet them at Appia Forum and The Three Taverns. Yes, the people who are in fellowship with God's springs of living water, always learn of Paul's coming. Here is the only mention made of the Church of Rome. Paul had written to them several years before, of his coming.

He was not the founder of that assembly, yet he desired to visit them. In his letter, he said, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (Romans 1:11).

The remainder of Chapter 28 records the apostle's instructions to the Jews concerning the Kingdom of God and the teaching of Jesus Christ. There is a typical suggestion here that Paul's Gospel must be proclaimed to Israel after the rapture of the Church. Compare Matthew 24:14 with Revelation 16:6-7. In his letter to the Church in Rome, he writes as if his chief purpose in going there was for the sake of that church, but in these closing verses in Acts, he seems to be oblivious to the Church, but instead is occupied with Israel. Of course, being in prison, he could not minister to the church there.

Paul had purposed to go to Spain after visiting Rome (Romans 15:24, 28). There is no positive proof in the Word that he ever realized that hope. Verse 28 of this chapter, however, suggests that he did. Church history testifies that he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome and reached Spain. There is abundant circumstantial evidence that Paul was delivered from prison once and went abroad to proclaim his wonderful Gospel. First, His faith expected it as expressed in Philippians 1:25; 2:23-24 and Philemon 22. His release is implied in Hebrews 13:23. Second, the epistles to Timothy and Titus do not seem to have been written during the period recorded in Acts. His language in Second Timothy concerning his imprisonment is so different from that in his other epistles. In it, he expressed no hope of release. He knew that his life's work was ended and the time of his homegoing had come. Finally, the following quotation from Plumptre about Josephus (Life c, 3) is at least suggestive and interesting. "Josephus came to Rome about the second year of Paul's confinement. He was shipwrecked on his voyage, picked up by a ship of Cyrene, landed at Puteoli and made his way to Rome. His main object in coming was, he says, to obtain the release of certain priests, who had been sent to Rome by

Felix as prisoners, and he accomplished his purpose through the influence of Poppaea." God may have used that very providence to deliver His servant. Infuriated Jews occasioned his bondage, and a Jew, Josephus, may have released him.

END OF PAUL'S JOURNEY

Is it not a significant fact, that the people of Israel, on whom the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost, came from the very regions which Peter, Paul and John visited, and where Paul founded Christian assemblies? Parthia, Mede and Elam, lying east of Palestine, and Mesopotamia northeast, were the only exceptions (Acts 2:9-11). We believe that Paul's visit to Rome is typical of his Gospel going to all Christendom, for religious Rome is the mother of Christendom. He yearned to minister to his Israelitish brethren as God yearns over His scattered people. Consider the following language: "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away; for ye are not my people and I will not be your God." Then notice the apparent contradiction that immediately follows: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered." Observe now exactly where this will occur. "And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God" (Hosea 1:6-10). The last two verses of Acts indicate the freedom with which the real Gospel will yet reach the people, though its devotees are handicapped.

Though the servants of God are bound, "The Word of God is not bound." When Paul was free, he ministered to all men. As the "prisoner of Jesus Christ," he brought to the whole Church, for all this age, the richest, deepest, and sweetest portion, even that which is necessary to prepare the Bride of the Lamb for her Bridegroom. The epistles to the assemblies in Ephesus, Philippi and Colosse; the one to Philemon and the second one to Timothy, were written by Paul while in Rome. Once more.

Note that Acts ends without a benediction. Why? Because it records the beginnings of the operations of the Spirit through His people, as samples and types for this entire age and probably the millennial age. Note the word "began," Chapters 1:1; 2:4; 8:25 and 10:37. We must wait until Revelation 21:5 for the benediction.

THE END