

Apostles of Christ, Nos. 1 & 2.

THE  
MINISTRY OF PETER,  
AND THE  
TEACHINGS OF PAUL.

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REDEMPTION:  
OR THE  
MINISTRY OF PETER  
AND THE  
CONVERSION OF SAUL.

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BY MRS. E. G. WHITE.

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1878.

TO THE READER.

To all who are interested in the service of God, and the progress of the church on earth, the history of the work of the apostles furnishes a chapter of peculiar attractions. History, it is said, repeats itself. So the experience of the church repeats itself; and in the experiences of the apostles we read, in many particulars, our own. To those who have read the series of pamphlets on the Life of Christ, by the same author, we need say nothing about the chaste and impressive style in which the matter is presented, nor the new and striking thoughts which by the casual thinker would be unperceived. We commend this to the reader as a valuable help in understanding the lessons the Scriptures would teach us in what they have recorded of the lives and experiences of these servants of God.

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THE  
APOSTLES OF CHRIST.

THE PENTECOST.

WHEN Jesus opened the understanding of the disciples to the meaning of the prophecies concerning himself, he assured them that all power was given him in Heaven and on earth, and bade them go preach the gospel to every creature. The disciples, with a sudden revival of their old hope that Jesus would take his place upon the throne of David at Jerusalem, inquired, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The Saviour threw an uncertainty over their minds in regard to the subject, by replying that it was not for them "to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

The disciples began to hope that the wonderful descent of the Holy Ghost would influence the Jewish people to accept Jesus. The Saviour forbore to farther explain, for he knew that when the Holy Spirit should come upon them in full measure their minds would be illuminated and they would fully understand the work before them, and take it up just where he had left it.

The disciples assembled in the upper chamber, uniting in supplications with the believing wom-

en, with Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. These brethren, who had been unbelieving, were now fully established in their faith by the scenes attending the crucifixion, and by the resurrection and ascension of the Lord. The number assembled was about one hundred and twenty. While they were awaiting the descent of the Holy Ghost, they supplied the office left vacant by Judas. Two men were selected, who, in the careful judgment of the believers, were best qualified for the place. But the disciples, distrusting their ability to decide the question farther, referred it to One that knew all hearts. They sought the Lord in prayer to ascertain which of the two men was more suitable for the important position of trust, as an apostle of Christ. The Spirit of God selected Matthias for the office.

Both men who had been selected were considered to be persons of stern integrity, and in every way worthy of the vacant position; but notwithstanding the disciples were intimately acquainted with them, they felt that their own judgment was imperfect, and trusted the selection only to the Lord, whose eyes could read the hidden secrets of the heart. There is a lesson for our time in this occurrence. Many who are apparently well qualified to labor for God, are urged into the ministry, without a proper consideration of their case, and at length become a grievous burden to the church instead of burden-bearers. If the church of the present time would act as cautiously and wisely as did the apostles in filling the vacancy among them, much perplexity and serious injury might be saved the cause of God. The work has often suffered much by put-

ting persons forward to do that which they were not capable of doing.

After filling the vacancy in the apostolic number, the disciples gave their time to meditation and prayer, being often in the temple, testifying of Christ, and praising God. The Pentecost was a feast celebrated seven weeks after the pass-over. Upon these occasions the Jews were required to repair to the temple and to present the first-fruits of all the harvest, thus acknowledging their dependence on the great Giver of all good, and their obligation to render back to God, in gifts and offerings to sustain his cause, that which he had intrusted to them. On this day of divine appointment, the Lord graciously poured out his Spirit on the little company of believers, who were the first-fruits of the Christian church.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The Holy Ghost assuming the form of tongues of fire divided at the tips, and resting upon those assembled, was an emblem of the gift which was bestowed upon them of speaking with fluency several different languages, with which they had formerly been unacquainted; and the appearance of fire signified the fervent zeal with which they would labor, and the power which would attend their words.

Under this heavenly illumination, the scriptures which Christ had explained to them, stood forth in their minds with the vivid luster and loveliness of clear and powerful truth. The vail which had prevented them from seeing the end of that which was abolished was now removed, and the object of Christ's mission and the nature of his kingdom were comprehended with perfect clearness.

The Jews had been scattered to almost every nation, and spoke various languages. They had come long distances to Jerusalem, and had temporarily taken up their abode there, to remain through the religious festivals then in progress, and to observe their requirements. When assembled, they were of every known tongue. This diversity of languages was a great obstacle to the labors of God's servants in publishing the doctrine of Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. That God should supply the deficiency of the apostles in a miraculous manner was to the people the most perfect confirmation of the testimony of these witnesses for Christ. The Holy Spirit had done for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime; they could now spread the truth of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the language of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was the highest evidence they could present to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven.

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own

language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

The priests and rulers were greatly enraged at this wonderful manifestation, which was reported throughout all Jerusalem and its vicinity; but they dared not give way to their malice, for fear of exposing themselves to the hatred of the people. They had put the Master to death, but here were his servants, unlearned men of Galilee, tracing out the wonderful fulfillment of prophecy, and teaching the doctrine of Jesus in all the languages then spoken. They spoke with power of the wonderful works of the Saviour, and unfolded to their hearers the plan of salvation in the mercy and sacrifice of the Son of God. Their words convicted and converted thousands who listened. The traditions and superstitions inculcated by the priests were swept away from their minds, and they accepted the pure teachings of the Word of God.

The priests and rulers, determined to account for the miraculous power of the disciples in some natural way, declared that they were simply drunken from partaking largely of the new wine prepared for the feast. Some of the most ignorant seized this suggestion as the truth; but the more intelligent knew that it was false; and those speaking the different languages testified to the accuracy with which they were used by the disciples. And Peter, in answer to the vile accusation of the priests, addressed the assembly in these words:—

"Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at

Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words; for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But 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."

The effect of Peter's words was very marked; and many who had ridiculed the religion of Jesus were now convinced of its truth. It was certainly unreasonable to suppose that more than one hundred persons should become intoxicated at that unseasonable hour of the day, and on the occasion of a solemn religious festival. This wonderful demonstration was before the customary meal at which wine was taken. Peter showed them that this manifestation was the direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, wherein he foretold that such power would come upon men of God to fit them for a special work.

Peter traced back the lineage of Christ in a direct line to the honorable house of David. He did not use any of the teachings of Jesus to prove his true position, because he knew their prejudices were so great that it would be of no effect. But he referred them to David, whom the Jews regarded as a venerable patriarch of their nation.

On that memorable occasion, large numbers who had heretofore ridiculed the idea of so unpretending a person as Jesus being the Son of God, became thoroughly convinced of the truth, and acknowledged him as their Saviour. Three

thousand souls were added to the church. The apostles spoke by the power of the Holy Ghost; and their words could not be controverted, for they were confirmed by mighty miracles, wrought by them through the outpouring of the Spirit of God. The disciples were themselves astonished at the results of this visitation, and the quick and abundant harvest of souls. All the people were filled with amazement. Those who did not yield their prejudice and bigotry were so overawed that they dared not by voice or violence attempt to stay the mighty work, and, for the time being, their opposition ceased.

This testimony in regard to the establishment of the Christian church is given us, not only as an important portion of sacred history, but also as a lesson. All who profess the name of Christ should be waiting, watching, and praying with one heart. All differences should be put away, and unity and tender love one for another pervade the whole. Then our prayers may go up together to our Heavenly Father with strong, earnest faith. Then we may wait with patience and hope the fulfillment of the promise.

The answer may come with sudden velocity and overpowering might; or it may be delayed for days and weeks, and our faith receive a trial. But God knows how and when to answer our prayer. It is *our* part of the work to put ourselves in connection with the divine channel. God is responsible for *his* part of the work. He is faithful who hath promised. The great and important matter with us is to be of one heart and mind, putting aside all envy and malice, and, as humble supplicants, to watch and wait. Jesus, our Representative and Head, is ready to

do for us what he did for the praying, watching ones on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus is as willing to impart courage and grace to his followers to-day as he was to the disciples of the early church. None should rashly invite an opportunity to battle with the principalities and powers of darkness. When God bids them engage in the conflict it will be time enough; he will then give the weak and hesitating boldness and utterance beyond their hope or expectation.

The same scorn and hatred that was manifested against Christ may be seen now to exist against those whom he has evidently chosen to be his co-workers. Those whose spirits rise up against the doctrines of truth make hard work for the servants of Christ. But God will make their wrath to praise him; they accomplish his purpose by stirring up minds to investigate the truth. God may allow men to follow their own wicked inclinations for a time, in opposing him; but when he sees it is for his glory, and the good of his people, he will arrest the scorers, expose their presumptive course, and give triumph to his truth.

The arguments of the apostles alone, although clear and convincing, would not have removed the prejudice of the Jews which had withstood so much evidence. But the Holy Ghost sent those arguments home with divine power to their hearts. They were as sharp arrows of the Almighty, convicting them of their terrible guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus

Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

The disciples and apostles of Christ had a deep sense of their own inefficiency, and with humiliation and prayer they joined their weakness to his strength, their ignorance to his wisdom, their unworthiness to his righteousness, their poverty to his inexhaustible wealth. Thus strengthened and equipped they hesitated not in the service of their Master.

Peter urged home upon the convicted people the fact that they had rejected Christ because they had been deceived by the priests and rulers; and if they continued to look to them for counsel, and waited for those leaders to acknowledge Christ before they dared to do so, they would never accept him. Those powerful men, although they made a profession of sanctity, were ambitious, and zealous for riches and earthly glory. They would never come to Christ to receive light. Jesus had foretold a terrible retribution to come upon that people for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding the most powerful evidences given them that Jesus was the Son of God.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles."

From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate in word and accent, whether they spoke their native tongue or a foreign language. These humble men, who

had never learned in the school of the prophets, presented truths so elevated and pure as to astonish those who heard them. They could not go personally to the uttermost parts of the earth; but there were men at the feast from every quarter of the world, and the truths received by them were carried to their various homes, and published among their people, winning souls to Christ.

#### THE CRIPPLE HEALED.

A SHORT time after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and immediately after a season of fervent prayer, Peter and John, going up to the temple to worship, saw a distressed and poverty-stricken cripple, forty years of age, who had known no other life than one of pain and infirmity. This unfortunate man had long desired to go to Jesus and be healed; but he was almost helpless, and was removed far from the scene of the great Physician's labors. Finally his earnest pleadings induced some kind persons to bear him to the gate of the temple. But upon arriving there he discovered that the Healer, upon whom his hopes were centered, had been put to a cruel death.

His disappointment excited the pity of those who knew how long he had eagerly hoped and expected to be healed by Jesus, and they daily brought him to the temple, that the passers-by might be moved to give him a trifle to relieve his present wants. As Peter and John passed, he begged charity from them. The disciples regarded him with compassion. "And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us." "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."

The poor man's countenance had fallen when Peter declared his own poverty, but grew bright with hope and faith as the disciple continued. "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. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."

The Jews were astonished that the disciples could perform miracles similar to those of Jesus. He, they supposed, was dead, and they had expected all such wonderful manifestations to cease with him. Yet here was this man who had been a helpless cripple for forty years, now rejoicing in the full use of his limbs, free from pain, and happy in believing upon Jesus.

The apostles saw the amazement of the people, and questioned them why they should be astonished at the miracle which they had witnessed, and regard them with awe as though it were through their own power they had done this thing. Peter assured them it was done through the merits of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected and crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead the third day. "And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect

soundness in the presence of you all. And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

The manner of Jesus in working his miracles was very different from that of his apostles. His language was that of one who possessed power in himself: "Be thou clean." "Peace, be still." Neither did he hesitate to accept the honor offered him on these occasions, nor seek to divert the minds of the people from himself, as though his miracles were not wrought by his own power, for his own glory. But the apostles wrought miracles only in the name of Jesus, and refused to receive the least honor to themselves. They claimed to be only instruments of that Jesus whom the Jews had crucified, but whom God had raised and elevated to his right hand. He was to receive all the honor and praise.

After the performance of this miracle, the people flocked together in the temple, and Peter addressed them in one part of the temple, while John spoke to them in another part. The apostles, having spoken plainly of the great crime of the Jews, in rejecting and putting to death the Prince of Life, were careful not to drive them to madness or despair. Peter was willing to lessen the atrocity of their guilt as much as possible, by presuming that they did the deed ignorantly. He declared to them that the Holy Ghost was calling for them to repent of their sins and to be converted; that there was no hope for them except through the mercy of that Christ whom

they had crucified; through faith in him only could their sins be canceled by his blood.

This preaching the resurrection of Christ, and that through his death and resurrection he would finally bring up all the dead from their graves, deeply stirred the Sadducees. They felt that their favorite doctrine was in danger, and their reputation at stake. Some of the officials of the temple, and the captain of the temple, were Sadducees. The captain, with the help of a number of Sadducees, arrested the two apostles, and put them in prison, as it was too late for their cases to be examined that night.

These opponents of Christ and of the doctrines of the apostles, could but believe, although they refused to acknowledge, that Jesus had risen from the dead and remained on the earth for forty days afterward; the evidence was too convincing for them to doubt it. Yet, nevertheless, their hearts did not soften, nor their consciences smite them for the terrible deed they had committed in putting him to death. When the power from Heaven came upon the apostles in so remarkable a manner, fear held them from violence, but their bitterness and malice were unchanged. Five thousand had already embraced the new doctrine taught by the apostles, and both Pharisees and Sadducees decided among themselves that if those teachers were suffered to go unchecked, their own influence would be in greater danger than when Jesus was upon earth. If one or two discourses from the disciples could accomplish such marvelous results, the world would soon believe on Christ if they were left free, and the influence of priests and potentates would be lost.

The following day Annas and Caiaphas, with

the other dignitaries of the temple, met together for the trial of the prisoners, who were then brought before them. In that very room, and before those very men, Peter had shamefully denied his Lord. All this came distinctly before the mind of the disciple, as he now appeared for his own trial. He had now an opportunity of redeeming his former wicked cowardice.

The company present remembered the part Peter had acted at the trial of his Master, and they flattered themselves that he could be intimidated by the threat of imprisonment and death. But the Peter who denied Christ in the hour of his greatest need, was the impulsive, self-confident disciple, differing widely from the Peter who was before the Sanhedrim for examination that day. He had been converted; he was distrustful of self, and no longer a proud boaster. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and through its power he had become firm as a rock, courageous, yet modest, in magnifying Christ. He was ready to remove the stain of his apostasy by honoring the name he had once disowned.

Hitherto the priests had avoided having the crucifixion or resurrection of Jesus mentioned; but now, in fulfillment of their purpose, they were forced to inquire of the accused by what power they had accomplished the remarkable cure of the impotent man. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, addressed the priests and elders respectfully, and declared: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you build-

ers, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

The seal of Christ was on the words of Peter, and his countenance was illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Close beside him, as a convincing witness, stood the man who had been so miraculously cured. The appearance of this man, who but a few hours before was a helpless cripple, now restored to soundness of body, and being enlightened concerning Jesus of Nazareth, added a weight of testimony to the words of Peter. Priests, rulers, and people were silent. The rulers had no power to refute his statement. They had been obliged to hear that which they most desired not to hear,—the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his power in Heaven to perform miracles through the medium of his apostles on earth.

The crowning miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead had sealed the determination of the priests to rid the world of Jesus and his wonderful works, which were fast destroying their own influence with the people. But here was a convincing proof that the death of Jesus had not put a stop to the working of miracles in his name, nor to the promulgation of the doctrine he had taught. Already the news of the miracle, and the preaching of the apostles, had filled all Jerusalem with excitement.

The defense of Peter, in which he boldly avowed from whence his strength was obtained, appalled them. He had referred to the stone set at naught by the builders which had become the head of the corner. These builders were the au-

thorities of the Jewish church, who should have perceived the value of Him whom they rejected. In those words he directly referred to Christ, who was the foundation-stone of the church.

The people were amazed at the boldness of the disciples. They supposed, because they were ignorant fishermen, they would be overcome with embarrassment when confronted by the priests, scribes, and elders. But they took knowledge that they had been with Jesus. The apostles spoke as he had spoken, with a convincing power that silenced their adversaries. In order to conceal their perplexity, the priests and rulers ordered the apostles to be taken away, that they might counsel among themselves.

They all agreed that it would be useless to deny that the man had been healed through power given the apostles in the name of the crucified Jesus. They would gladly have covered up the miracle by falsehoods; but the work was done in the full light of day and before a crowd of people, and had already come to the knowledge of thousands. They felt that the work must be immediately stopped, or Jesus would gain many believers, their own disgrace would follow, and they would be held guilty of the murder of the Son of God.

But notwithstanding their disposition to destroy the disciples, they dared not do worse than threaten them with the severest punishment if they continued to teach or work in the name of Jesus. Thereupon Peter and John boldly declared that their work had been given them of God, and they could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard. The priests would gladly have punished these noble men for

their unswerving fidelity to their sacred calling, but they feared the people, "for all men glorified God for that which was done." So, with repeated threats and injunctions, the apostles were set at liberty.

While Peter and John were prisoners, the other disciples, knowing the malignity of the Jews, had prayed for them unceasingly, fearing that the cruelty exercised upon Christ would be repeated upon their brethren. As soon as the apostles were released they sought their anxious brethren and reported to them the result of the examination. Great was the joy of the believers, and they again betook themselves to prayer, that greater strength might be imparted to them in the work of the ministry, which they saw would meet the same determined opposition which Christ encountered when upon earth. The disciples had no desire to glorify themselves, but sought to exalt Jesus, and to rescue souls through his saving message.

While their united prayers were ascending in faith to Heaven, the answer came. The place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. They went forth to their work, speaking the Word of God with convincing power, and there were daily large additions to the church. Great numbers had collected at Jerusalem to observe the sacred feast. The exciting scenes of the crucifixion and resurrection had called out a much larger number than usual. When the truth taught by the apostles was brought suddenly and with convincing power before them, thousands were converted in a day.

These early believers were most of them imme-

diately cut off from family and friends by the zealous bigotry of the Jews. Many of the converts were thrown out of business, and exiled from their homes because they followed the convictions of their consciences, and espoused the cause of Christ. It was necessary to provide this large number, congregated at Jerusalem, with homes and sustenance. Those having money and possessions cheerfully sacrificed them to the existing emergency. Their means were laid at the feet of the apostles, who made distribution to every man according as he had need; and there were none among them who lacked.

One example of noble benevolence is particularly mentioned in the Scriptures: "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." This was the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the believers. It made them of one heart and soul. They had one common interest,—the success of the mission intrusted to them. Their love for their brethren, and the cause which they had espoused, was far greater than their love for money and possessions. They acted out their faith, and by their works testified that they accounted the souls of men of far greater value than any earthly heritage.

When selfish love of the world enters the heart, spirituality dies. The very best antidote for love of the world is the outpouring of the Spirit of God. When the love of Christ takes full possession of the heart, we shall strive to follow the example of Him who for our sakes became

poor, that through his poverty we might be made rich. When it becomes apparent that the Spirit of truth weakens the affections of its disciples from the world, and renders them self-sacrificing and benevolent, in order to save their fellow-men, the advocates of the truth will have a powerful influence upon their hearers.

As a contrast to the example which has been cited, another case has been recorded by the inspired pen which leaves a dark stain upon the first church: "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet." This couple had noted the fact that those who had parted with their possessions to supply the wants of their poorer brethren were held in high esteem among the believers. They therefore, upon consulting together, decided to sell their property, and affect to give all the proceeds into the general fund, but really to retain a large share for themselves. They thus designed to receive their living, which they intended to estimate much higher than it really was, from the common stock, and to secure the high esteem of their brethren.

But a holy God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. The apostles were impressed by a sense of the true state of the case, and when Ananias presented himself with his offering, representing it as the entire proceeds of the sale of his property, Peter said to him, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While 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 hast 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."

Peter asked, "Was it not thine own?" thus showing that no undue influence had been brought to bear upon Ananias and Sapphira to compel them to sacrifice their possessions to the general good. They had acted from choice. But in pretending to be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, and attempting to deceive the apostles, they had lied to the Almighty.

"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; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."

This signal manifestation of the wrath of God upon the dissemblers was a check which Infinite Wisdom knew was needed. The church would have been disgraced, if, in the rapid increase of professed Christians, there were persons professing to serve God, but worshiping mammon. There are many Ananiases and Sapphiras in our day, whom Satan tempts to dissemble, because of their love of money. By various plans and ex-

causes they withhold from the treasury of God the means intrusted to them for the advancement of the cause of God. Should the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira be visited upon this class, there would be many dead bodies in our churches requiring burial.

This marked judgment upon two avaricious hypocrites, whose sin had been detected by the evidence of the Spirit of God to the apostles, excited the reverential awe of all the new converts. From that time there was greater caution manifested by them, and a more thorough self-examination, testing the motives of their actions. In any great religious movement there is always a class who are carried away by the current of feeling, but who soon reveal selfishness and vanity. Such persons can never be an honor to the cause they advocate.

The discernment of the apostles in detecting hidden sin added to the confidence of their brethren in them and the message which they preached. The apostles continued their work of mercy, in healing the afflicted and in proclaiming a crucified and risen Saviour, with great power. Numbers were continually added to the church by baptism, but none dared join them who were not united heart and mind with the believers in Christ. Multitudes flocked to Jerusalem, bringing their sick, and those who were vexed by unclean spirits. Many sufferers were laid in the streets as Peter and John passed by, that their shadows might fall upon and heal them. The power of the risen Saviour had indeed fallen upon the apostles, and they worked signs and miracles that daily increased the number of believers.

These things greatly perplexed the priests and

rulers, especially those among them who were Sadducees. They saw that if the apostles were allowed to preach a resurrected Saviour, and to do miracles in his name, their doctrine that there was no resurrection of the dead would be rejected by all, and their sect would soon become extinct. The Pharisees saw that the tendency of their preaching would be to undermine the Jewish ceremonies, and make the sacrificial offerings of none effect. Their former efforts to suppress these preachers had been in vain; but they now felt determined to put down the excitement.

The apostles were accordingly arrested and imprisoned, and the Sanhedrim was called to try their case. A large number of learned men, in addition to the council, were summoned, and they counseled together what should be done with these disturbers of the peace. "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught."

When the apostles appeared among the believers, and recounted how the angel had led them directly through the band of soldiers guarding the prison, and bade them resume the work which had been interrupted by the priests and rulers, the brethren were filled with joy and amazement.

The priests and rulers in council had decided to fix upon them the charge of insurrection, and accuse them of murdering Ananias and Sapphira, and of conspiring to deprive the priests of their authority and put them to death. They trusted

that the mob would then be excited to take the matter in hand, and to deal by the apostles as they had dealt by Jesus. They were aware that many who did not accept the doctrine of Christ were weary of the arbitrary rule of the Jewish authorities, and were anxious for some decided change. If these persons became interested in and embraced the belief of the apostles, acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, they feared the anger of the entire people would be raised against the priests, who would be made to answer for the murder of Christ. They decided to take strong measures to prevent this. They finally sent for the supposed prisoners to be brought before them. Great was their amazement when the report was brought back that the prison doors were found securely bolted, and the guard stationed before them, but that the prisoners were nowhere to be found.

Soon the report was brought: "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people." Although the apostles were miraculously delivered from prison, they were not saved from examination and punishment. Christ had said when he was with them, "Take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils." God had given them a token of his care, and an assurance of his presence, by sending the angel to them; it was now their part to suffer for the sake of that Jesus whom they preached. The people were so wrought upon by what they had seen and heard that the priests and rulers knew it would be impossible to excite them against the apostles.

"Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence; for they feared

the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council; and the high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." They were not as willing to bear the blame of slaying Jesus as when they swelled the cry with the debased mob: "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Peter, with the other apostles, took up the same line of defense he had followed at his former trial: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." It was the angel sent by God who delivered them from prison, and who commanded them to teach in the temple. In following his directions they were obeying the divine command, which they must continue to do at any cost to themselves. Peter continued: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

The spirit of inspiration was upon the apostles, and the accused became the accusers, charging the murder of Christ upon the priests and rulers who composed the council. The Jews were so enraged at this that they decided, without any further trial, and without authority from the Roman officers, to take the law into their own hands, and put the prisoners to death. Already guilty

of the blood of Christ, they were now eager to imbrue their hands in the blood of his apostles. But there was one man of learning and high position whose clear intellect saw that this violent step would lead to terrible consequences. God raised up a man of their own council to stay the violence of the priests and rulers.

Gamaliel, the learned Pharisee and doctor, a man of great reputation, was a person of extreme caution, who, before speaking in behalf of the prisoners, requested them to be removed. He then spoke with great deliberation and calmness: "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him; he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

The priests could not but see the reasonableness of his views; they were obliged to agree with him, and very reluctantly released the prisoners, after beating them with rods, and charging them again and again to preach no more in the name of Jesus, or their lives would pay the penalty of their boldness. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that

they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

#### THE SEVEN DEACONS.

"AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." These Grecians were residents of other countries, where the Greek language was spoken. By far the larger number of converts were Jews who spoke Hebrew; but these had lived in the Roman Empire, and spoke only Greek. Murmuring began to rise among them that the Grecian widows were not so liberally supplied as the needy among the Hebrews. Any partiality of this kind would have been grievous to God; and prompt measures were taken to restore peace and harmony to the believers.

The Holy Spirit suggested a method whereby the apostles might be relieved from the task of apportioning to the poor, and similar burdens, so that they could be left free to preach Christ. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

The church accordingly selected seven men full

of faith and the wisdom of the Spirit of God, to attend to the business pertaining to the cause. Stephen was chosen first; he was a Jew by birth and religion, but spoke the Greek language, and was conversant with the customs and manners of the Greeks. He was therefore considered the most proper person to stand at the head, and have supervision of the disbursement of the funds appropriated to the widows, orphans, and the worthy poor. This selection met the minds of all, and the dissatisfaction and murmuring were quieted.

The seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties by prayer and the laying on of hands. Those who were thus ordained, were not thereby excluded from teaching the faith. On the contrary, it is recorded that "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." They were fully qualified to instruct in the truth. They were also men of calm judgment and discretion, well calculated to deal with difficult cases of trial, of murmuring or jealousy.

This choosing of men to transact the business of the church, so that the apostles could be left free for their special work of teaching the truth, was greatly blessed of God. The church advanced in numbers and strength. "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

It is necessary that the same order and system should be maintained in the church now as in the days of the apostles. The prosperity of the cause depends very largely upon its various de-

partments being conducted by men of ability, who are qualified for their positions. Those who are chosen of God to be leaders in the cause of truth, having the general oversight of the spiritual interest of the church, should be relieved, as far as possible, from cares and perplexities of a temporal nature. Those whom God has called to minister in word and doctrine should have time for meditation, prayer, and study of the Scriptures. Their clear spiritual discernment is dimmed by entering into the lesser details of business, and dealing with the various temperaments of those who meet together in church capacity. It is proper for all matters of a temporal nature to come before the proper officers, and be by them adjusted. But if they are of so difficult a character as to baffle their wisdom, they should be carried into the council of those who have the oversight of the entire church.

Stephen was very active in the cause of God, and declared his faith boldly. "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 were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." These students of the great Rabbis had felt confident that in a public discussion they could obtain a complete victory over Stephen, because of his supposed ignorance. But he not only spoke with the power of the Holy Ghost, but it was plain to all the vast assembly that he was also a student of the prophecies, and learned in all matters of the law. He ably defended the truths he advocated, and utterly defeated his opponents.

The priests and rulers who witnessed the wonderful manifestation of the power that attended the ministration of Stephen, were filled with bitter hatred. Instead of yielding to the weight of evidence he presented, they determined to silence his voice by putting him to death. They had on several occasions bribed the Roman authorities to pass over without comment instances where the Jews had taken the law into their own hands, and tried, condemned, and executed prisoners according to their national custom. The enemies of Stephen did not doubt that they could pursue such a course without danger to themselves. They determined to risk the consequences at all events, and therefore seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrim council for trial.

Learned Jews from the surrounding countries were summoned for the purpose of refuting the arguments of the accused. Saul, who had distinguished himself as a zealous opponent of the doctrine of Christ, and a persecutor of all who believed on him, was also present. This learned man took a leading part against Stephen. He brought the weight of eloquence and the logic of the Rabbis to bear upon the case, to convince the people that Stephen was preaching delusive and dangerous doctrines.

But Saul met in Stephen one as highly educated as himself, and one who had a full understanding of the purpose of God in the spreading of the gospel to other nations. He believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was fully established in regard to the privileges of the Jews; but his faith was broad, and he knew the time had come when the true believers should

worship not alone in temples made with hands; but, throughout the world, they might worship God in Spirit and in truth. The veil had dropped from the eyes of Stephen, and he discerned to the end of that which was abolished by the death of Christ.

The priests and rulers prevailed nothing against his clear, calm wisdom, though they were vehement in their opposition. They determined to make an example of Stephen, and, while they thus satisfied their revengeful hatred, prevent others, through fear, from adopting his belief. Charges were preferred against him in a most imposing manner. False witnesses were hired to testify that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against the temple and the law. Said they, "For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

As Stephen stood face to face with his judges, to answer to the crime of blasphemy, a holy radiance shone upon his countenance. "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Those who exalted Moses might have seen in the face of the prisoner the same holy light which radiated the face of that ancient prophet. The shekinah was a spectacle which they would never again witness in the temple whose glory had departed forever. Many who beheld the lighted countenance of Stephen trembled and veiled their faces; but stubborn unbelief and prejudice never faltered.

Stephen was questioned as to the truth of the charges against him, and took up his defense in a

clear, thrilling voice that rang through the council hall. He proceeded to rehearse the history of the chosen people of God, in words that held the assembly spell-bound. He showed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish economy, and the spiritual interpretation of it now made manifest through Christ. He began with Abraham, and traced down through history from generation to generation, going through all the national records of Israel to Solomon, and taking up the most impressive points to vindicate his cause.

He showed that God commended the faith of Abraham, which claimed the land of promise, though he owned no foot of land. He dwelt especially upon Moses, who received the law by the dispensation of angels. He repeated the words of Moses which foretold of Christ: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear." He presented distinctly before them that the sin of Israel was in not heeding the voice of the angel, who was Christ himself. Said he, "This is He that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us."

He made plain his own loyalty to God and to the Jewish faith, while he showed that the law in which they trusted for salvation had not been able to preserve Israel from idolatry. He connected Jesus Christ with all the Jewish history. He referred to the building of the temple by Solomon, and to the words of both Solomon and Isaiah: "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." "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?" The place of God's highest worship was in Heaven.

When Stephen had reached this point there was a tumult among the people. The prisoner read his fate in the countenances before him. He perceived the resistance that met his words, which were spoken at the dictation of the Holy Ghost. He knew that he was giving his last testimony. Few who read this address of Stephen properly appreciate it. The occasion, the time and place should be borne in mind to make his words convey their full significance.

When he connected Jesus Christ with the prophecies, and spoke of the temple as he did, the priest, affecting to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. This act was to Stephen a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. Although he was just in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it by suddenly breaking away from the chain of history, and, turning upon his infuriated judges, said, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

At this the priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. They were more like wild beasts of prey than like human beings. They rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. But he was not intimidated; he had expected this.

His face was calm, and shone with an angelic light. The infuriated priests and the excited mob had no terrors for him. "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

The scene about him faded from his vision; the gates of Heaven were ajar, and Stephen, looking in, saw the glory of the courts of God, and Christ, as if just risen from his throne, standing ready to sustain his servant, who was about to suffer martyrdom for his name. When Stephen proclaimed the glorious scene opened before him, it was more than his persecutors could endure. They stopped their ears, that they might not hear his words, and uttering loud cries ran furiously upon him with one accord. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep." [3] Amid the agonies of this most cruel death, the faithful martyr, like his divine Master, prayed for his murderers. The witnesses who had accused Stephen were required to cast the first stones. These persons laid down their clothes at the feet of Saul, who had taken an active part in the disputation, and had consented to the prisoner's death.

The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. It was a sore trial to the church, but resulted in the conversion of Saul. The faith, constancy, and glorification of the martyr could not be effaced from

his memory. The signet of God upon his face, his words, that reached to the very soul of all who heard them, except those who were hardened by resisting the light, remained in the memory of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed.

There had been no legal sentence passed upon Stephen; but the Roman authorities were bribed by large sums of money to make no investigation of the case. Saul seemed to be imbued with a frenzied zeal at the scene of Stephen's trial and death. He seemed to be angered at his own secret convictions that Stephen was honored of God, at the very period when he was dishonored of men. He continued to persecute the church of God, hunting them down, seizing them in their houses, and delivering them up to the priests and rulers for imprisonment and death. His zeal in carrying forward the persecution was a terror to the Christians in Jerusalem. The Roman authorities made no special effort to stay the cruel work, and secretly aided the Jews, in order to conciliate them, and to secure their favor.

After the death of Stephen the disciples were restrained in their active ministry, and many of the believers who had temporarily resided in Jerusalem now retired to their distant homes because of the violent persecution against them. But the apostles dared not leave Jerusalem till the Spirit of God indicated it to be their duty to do so; for Christ had bidden them to first work in that field. Although the priests and rulers bitterly persecuted the new converts, they did not venture for a time to arrest the apostles, being overawed by the dying testimony of Stephen, and realizing that their course with him had in-

jured their own cause in the minds of the people.

Christ had commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations; but the previous teachings which they had received from the Jews made it difficult for them to fully comprehend the words of their Master, and therefore they were slow to act upon them. They called themselves the children of Abraham, and regarded themselves as the heirs of divine promise. It was not until several years after the Lord's ascension that their minds were sufficiently expanded to clearly understand the intent of Christ's words, that they were to labor for the conversion of the Gentiles as well as that of the Jews.

#### CONVERSION OF SAUL.

THE mind of Saul was greatly stirred by the triumphant death of Stephen. He was shaken in his prejudice; but the opinions and arguments of the priests and rulers finally convinced him that Stephen was a blasphemer; that Jesus Christ whom he preached was an impostor, and that those ministering in holy offices must be right. Being a man of decided mind, and strong purpose, he became very bitter in his opposition to Christianity, after having once entirely settled in his mind that the views of the priests and scribes were right. His zeal led him to voluntarily engage in persecuting the believers. He caused holy men to be dragged before the councils, and to be imprisoned or condemned to death without evidence of any offense, save their faith in Jesus. Of a similar character, though in a different direction, was the zeal of James and John, when they would have called

down fire from heaven to consume those who slighted and scorned their Master.

Saul was about to journey to Damascus upon his own business; but he was determined to accomplish a double purpose, by searching out, as he went, all the believers in Christ. For this purpose he obtained letters from the high priest to read in the synagogues, which authorized him to seize all those who were suspected of being believers in Jesus, and to send them by messengers to Jerusalem, there to be tried and punished. He set out upon his way, full of the strength and vigor of manhood, and the fire of a mistaken zeal.

As the weary travelers neared Damascus, the eyes of Saul rested with pleasure upon the fertile land, the beautiful gardens, the fruitful orchards, and the cool streams that ran murmuring amid the fresh green shrubbery. It was very refreshing to look upon such a scene after a long, wearisome journey over a desolate waste. While Saul, with his companions, was gazing and admiring, suddenly a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him, "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."

The scene was one of the greatest confusion. The companions of Saul were stricken with terror, and almost blinded by the intensity of the light. They heard the voice, but saw no one, and to them all was unintelligible and mysterious. But Saul, lying prostrate upon the ground, understood the words that were spoken, and saw

clearly before him the Son of God. One look upon that glorious Being, imprinted his image forever upon the soul of the stricken Jew. The words struck home to his heart with appalling force. A flood of light poured in upon the darkened chambers of his mind, revealing his ignorance and error. He saw that, while imagining himself to be zealously serving God in persecuting the followers of Christ, he had in reality been doing the work of Satan.

He saw his folly in resting his faith upon the assurances of the priests and rulers, whose sacred office had given them great influence over his mind, and caused him to believe that the story of the resurrection was an artful fabrication of the disciples of Jesus. Now that Christ was revealed to Saul, the sermon of Stephen was brought forcibly to his mind. Those words which the priests had pronounced blasphemy, now appeared to him as truth and verity. In that time of wonderful illumination, his mind acted with remarkable rapidity. He traced down through prophetic history, and saw that the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension had been foretold by the prophets, and proved him to be the promised Messiah. He remembered the words of Stephen: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God;" and he knew that the dying saint had looked upon the kingdom of glory.

What a revelation was all this to the persecutor of the believers. Clear, but terrible light had broken in upon his soul. Christ was revealed to him as having come to earth in fulfillment of his mission, having been rejected,

condemned, and crucified by those whom he came to save, and as having risen from the dead, and ascended into the heavens. In that terrible moment he remembered that the holy Stephen had been sacrificed by his consent; and that through his instrumentality many worthy saints had met their death by cruel persecution.

"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." No doubt entered the mind of Saul that this was the veritable Jesus of Nazareth who spoke to him, and that he was indeed the long-looked-for Messiah, the Consolation and Redeemer of Israel. And now this Jesus, who had, while teaching upon earth, spoken in parables to his hearers, using familiar objects to illustrate his meaning, likened the work of Saul, in persecuting the followers of Christ, to kicking against the pricks. Those forcible words illustrated the fact that it would be impossible for any man to stay the onward progress of the truth of Christ. It would march on to triumph and victory, while every effort to stay it would result in injury to the opposer. The persecutor, in the end, would suffer a thousand-fold more than those whom he had persecuted. Sooner or later his own mind and heart would condemn him; he would find that he had indeed been kicking against the pricks.

The Saviour had spoken to Saul through Stephen, whose clear reasoning from the Scriptures could not be controverted. The learned Jew had seen the face of the martyr reflecting the light of Christ's glory, and looking like the face of an angel. He had witnessed his forbear-

ance toward his enemies, and his forgiveness of them. He had further witnessed the fortitude and cheerful resignation of other believers in Jesus while tormented and afflicted, some of whom had yielded up their lives with rejoicing for their faith's sake.

All this testimony had appealed loudly to Saul, and thrust conviction upon his mind; but his education and prejudices, his respect for priests and rulers, and his pride of popularity, braced him to rebel against the voice of conscience, and the grace of God. He had struggled entire nights against conviction, and had always ended the matter by avowing his belief that Jesus was not the Messiah, that he was an impostor, and his followers were deluded fanatics.

Now Christ had spoken to Saul with his own voice: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" was answered by the same voice, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Here Christ identifies himself with his suffering people. Saul, in persecuting the followers of Jesus, had struck directly against the Lord of Heaven. Jesus declares that in afflicting his brethren upon earth, Saul had struck against their Head and Representative in Heaven. In falsely accusing and testifying against them, he had falsely accused and testified against the Saviour of the world. Here it is plainly seen that Christ suffers in the person of his saints.

When the effulgent glory was withdrawn, and Saul arose from the earth, he found himself totally deprived of sight. The brightness of Christ's glory had been too intense for his mortal

sight, and when it was removed the blackness of night settled upon his vision. He believed that this blindness was the punishment of God for his cruel persecution of the followers of Jesus. He grieved about in terrible darkness, and his companions, in fear and amazement, led him by the hand into Damascus.

How different from what he had anticipated was his entrance into that city! In proud satisfaction he had neared Damascus, expecting on his arrival to be greeted with ostentation and applause because of the honor conferred upon him by the high priest, and the great zeal and penetration he had manifested in searching out the believers, to carry them as captives to Jerusalem, there to be condemned, and punished without mercy. He had determined that his journey should be crowned with success; and his courageous and persevering spirit quailed at no difficulties nor dangers in the pursuance of his object. He had determined that no Christian should escape his vigilance; he would inquire of men, women, and children concerning their faith, and that of these with whom they were connected; he would enter houses, with power to seize their inmates, and to send them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

But how changed was the scene from that which he had anticipated! Instead of wielding power, and receiving honor, he was himself virtually a prisoner, being deprived of sight, and dependent upon the guidance of his companions. Helpless, and tortured by remorse, he felt himself to be under sentence of death, and knew not what farther disposition the Lord would make of him.

He was taken to the house of the disciple Judas, and there he remained, solitary and alone, studying upon the strange revelation that had broken up all his plans, and changed the entire current of his life. He passed three days in perfect blindness, occupying that terrible time with reflection, repentance, and earnest prayer, neither eating nor drinking during the entire period. With bitterness he remembered Stephen, and the evidence he had given of being sustained in his martyrdom, by a power higher than that of earth. He thought with horror of his own guilt in being carried away by the malice and prejudice of the priests and rulers, closing his eyes and ears against the most striking evidence, and relentlessly leading the van in the persecution of the believers in Christ.

He was in lonely seclusion; he had no communication with the church, for they had been warned of the purpose of his journey to Damascus by the believers in Jerusalem; and they believed that he was acting a part, the better to carry out his design of persecuting them. He had no desire to appeal to the unconverted Jews; for he knew they would not listen to or heed his statements. He seemed to be utterly shut out from human sympathy; and he reflected, and prayed with a thoroughly broken and repentant spirit.

Those three days were like three years to the blind and conscience-smitten Jew. He was no novice in the Scriptures, and in his darkness and solitude he recalled the passages which referred to the Messiah, and traced down the prophecies, with a memory sharpened by the convic-

tion that had taken possession of his mind. He became astonished at his former blindness of understanding, and at the blindness of the Jews in general, in rejecting Jesus as the promised Messiah. All now seemed plain to him, and he knew that it was prejudice and unbelief which had clouded his perceptions, and prevented him from discerning in Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah of prophecy.

This wonderful conversion of Saul demonstrates in a startling manner the miraculous power of Christ in convicting the mind and heart of man. Saul had verily believed that to have faith in Jesus was virtually to repudiate the law of God, and the service of sacrificial offerings. He had believed that Jesus had himself disregarded the law, and had taught his disciples that it was now of no effect. He believed it to be his duty to strive with his utmost power to exterminate the alarming doctrine that Jesus was the Prince of life; and with conscientious zeal he had become a persevering persecutor of the church of Christ.

But Jesus, whose name of all others he most hated and despised, had revealed himself to Saul, for the purpose of arresting him in his mad career, and of making, from this most unpromising subject, an instrument by which to bear the gospel to the Gentiles. Saul was overwhelmed by this revelation, and perceived that in opposing Jesus of Nazareth, he had arrayed himself against the Redeemer of the world. Overcome by a sense of his guilt he cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Jesus did not then and there inform him of the work he had assigned him,

but sent him for instruction to the very disciples whom he had so bitterly persecuted.

The marvelous light that illuminated the darkness of Saul was the work of the Lord; but there was also a work that was to be done for him by the disciples of Christ. The answer to Saul's question is, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Jesus sends the inquiring Jew to his church, to obtain from them a knowledge of his duty. Christ performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn of those whom God had ordained to teach his truth. Thus Jesus gave sanction to the authority of his organized church, and placed Saul in connection with his representatives on earth. The light of heavenly illumination deprived Saul of sight; but Jesus, the great Healer, did not at once restore it. All blessings flow from Christ, but he had now established a church as his representative on earth, and to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life. The very men whom Saul had purposed to destroy were to be his instructors in the religion which he had despised and persecuted.

The faith of Saul was severely tested during his three days of fasting and prayer at the house of Judas, in Damascus. He was totally blind, and in utter darkness of mind as to what was required of him. He had been directed to go to Damascus, where it would be told him what he was to do. In his uncertainty and distress he cried earnestly to God. "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And

he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him; that he might receive his sight."

Ananias could hardly credit the words of the angel messenger, for Saul's bitter persecution of the saints at Jerusalem had spread far and near. He presumed to expostulate, and said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." But the command to Ananias was imperative: "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."

The disciple, obedient to the direction of the angel, sought out the man who had but recently breathed out threatenings against all who believed on the name of Jesus. He addressed him: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost; and immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized."

Christ here gives an example of his manner of working for the salvation of men. He might have done all this work directly for Saul; but this was not in accordance with his plan. His

blessings were to come through the agencies which he had ordained. Saul had something to do in the line of confession to those whose destruction he had meditated; and God had a responsible work for the men to do whom he had authorized to act in his stead.

Saul becomes a learner of the disciples. In the light of the law he sees himself a sinner. He sees that Jesus, whom in his ignorance he had considered an impostor, is the author and foundation of the religion of God's people from the days of Adam, and the finisher of the faith now so clear to his enlightened vision, the vindicator of the truth, and the fulfiller of the prophecies. He had regarded Jesus as making of none effect the law of God; but when his spiritual vision was touched by the finger of God, he learned that Christ was the originator of the entire Jewish system of sacrifices; that he came into the world for the express purpose of vindicating his Father's law; and that in his death the typical law had met its antitype. By the light of the moral law, which he had believed himself to be zealously keeping, Saul saw himself a sinner of sinners. He repented, that is died to sin, became obedient to the law of God, had faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, was baptized, and preached Jesus as earnestly and zealously as he had once denounced him.

The Redeemer of the world does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters independent of his organized and acknowledged church. Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of his recognized followers

on earth. But in the history of the conversion of Saul, important principles are given us, which we should ever bear in mind. Saul was brought directly into the presence of Christ. He was one whom Christ intended for a most important work, one who was to be "a chosen vessel" unto him; yet he does not personally impart to him the lessons of truth. He arrests his course and convicts him; but when asked by him, "What wilt thou have me to do?" the Saviour places him in connection with his church, and lets them direct him what to do.

Jesus is the Friend of sinners; his heart is touched by their woe; he has all power, both in Heaven and upon earth; but he respects the means which he has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; he directs sinners to the church, which he has made a channel of light to the world.

Saul was a learned teacher in Israel; but, while in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Christ reveals himself to him, and then places him in communication with his church, which is the light of the world. In this case Ananias represents Christ, and also represents Christ's ministers upon earth, who are appointed to act in his stead. In Christ's stead, Ananias touches the eyes of Saul that they may receive sight. In Christ's stead, he places his hands upon him, and, praying in Christ's name, Saul receives the Holy Ghost. All is done in the name and by the authority of Christ; but the church is the channel of communication.

## PAUL COMMENCES HIS MINISTRY.

PAUL was baptized by Ananias in the river of Damascus. He was then strengthened by food, and immediately began to preach Jesus to the believers in the city, the very ones whom he had set out from Jerusalem with the purpose of destroying. He also taught in the synagogues that Jesus who had been put to death was indeed the Son of God. His arguments from prophecy were so conclusive, and his efforts were so attended by the power of God, that the opposing Jews were confounded and unable to answer him. Paul's Rabbinical and Pharisaic education was now to be used to good account in preaching the gospel, and in sustaining the cause he had once used every effort to destroy.

The Jews were thoroughly surprised and confounded by the conversion of Paul. They were aware of his position at Jerusalem, and knew what was his principal errand to Damascus, and that he was armed with a commission from the high priest that authorized him to take the believers in Jesus, and to send them as prisoners to Jerusalem; yet now they beheld him preaching the gospel of Jesus, strengthening those who were already its disciples, and continually making new converts to the faith he had once so zealously opposed. Paul demonstrated to all who heard him that his change of faith was not from impulse nor fanaticism, but was brought about by overwhelming evidence.

As he labored in the synagogues his faith grew stronger; his zeal in maintaining that Jesus was

the Son of God increased in the face of the fierce opposition of the Jews. He could not remain long in Damascus, for after the Jews had recovered from their surprise at his wonderful conversion, and subsequent labors, they turned resolutely from the overwhelming evidence thus brought to bear in favor of the doctrine of Christ. Their astonishment at the conversion of Paul was changed into an intense hatred of him like unto that which they had manifested against Jesus.

Paul's life was in peril, and he received a commission from God to leave Damascus for a time. He went into Arabia, and there, in comparative solitude, he had ample opportunity for communion with God, and for contemplation. He wished to be alone with God, to search his own heart, to deepen his repentance, and to prepare himself by prayer and study to engage in a work which appeared to him too great and too important for him to undertake. He was an apostle, not chosen of men, but chosen of God, and his work was plainly stated to be among the Gentiles.

While in Arabia he did not communicate with the apostles; he sought God earnestly with all his heart, determining not to rest till he knew for a certainty that his repentance was accepted, and his great sin pardoned. He would not give up the conflict until he had the assurance that Jesus would be with him in his coming ministry. He was ever to carry about with him in the body the marks of Christ's glory, in his eyes, which had been blinded by the heavenly light, and he desired also to bear with him constantly

the assurance of Christ's sustaining grace. Paul came in close connection with Heaven, and Jesus communed with him, and established him in his faith, bestowing upon him his wisdom and grace.

Paul now returned to Damascus, and preached boldly in the name of Jesus. The Jews could not withstand the wisdom of his arguments, and they therefore counseled together to silence his voice by force—the only argument left to a sinking cause. They decided to assassinate him. The apostle was made acquainted with their purpose. The gates of the city were vigilantly guarded, day and night, to cut off his escape. The anxiety of the disciples drew them to God in prayer; there was little sleeping among them, as they were busy in devising ways and means for the escape of the chosen apostle. Finally they conceived a plan by which he was let down from a window, and lowered over the wall in a basket at night. In this humiliating manner Paul made his escape from Damascus.

He now proceeded to Jerusalem, wishing to become acquainted with the apostles there, and especially with Peter. He was very anxious to meet the Galilean fishermen who had lived, and prayed, and conversed with Christ upon earth. It was with a yearning heart that he desired to meet the chief of apostles. As Paul entered Jerusalem, he regarded with changed views the city and the temple. He now knew that the retributive judgment of God was hanging over them.

The grief and anger of the Jews because of the conversion of Paul knew no bounds. But he was

firm as a rock, and flattered himself that when he related his wonderful experience to his friends, they would change their faith as he had done, and believe on Jesus. He had been strictly conscientious in his opposition to Christ and his followers, therefore when arrested and convicted of his sin, he immediately forsook his evil ways, and professed the faith of Jesus. He now fully believed that when his friends and former associates heard the circumstances of his marvelous conversion, and saw how changed he was from the proud Pharisee who persecuted and delivered unto death those who believed in Jesus as the Son of God, they would also become convicted of their error, and join the ranks of the believers.

He attempted to join himself to his brethren, the disciples; but great was his grief and disappointment when he found that they would not receive him as one of their number. They remembered his former persecutions, and suspected him of acting a part to deceive and destroy them. True, they had heard of his wonderful conversion, but as he had immediately retired into Arabia, and they had heard nothing definite of him farther, they had not credited the rumor of his great change.

Barnabas, who had liberally contributed his money to sustain the cause of Christ, and to relieve the necessities of the poor, had been acquainted with Paul when he opposed the believers. He now came forward and renewed that acquaintance, heard the testimony of Paul in regard to his miraculous conversion, and his experience from that time. He fully believed and

received Paul, took him by the hand and led him into the presence of the apostles. He related his experience which he had just heard—that Jesus had personally appeared to Paul while on his way to Damascus; that he had talked with him; that Paul had recovered his sight in answer to the prayers of Ananias, and had afterward maintained that Jesus was the Son of God in the synagogues of the city.

The apostles no longer hesitated; they could not withstand God. Peter and James, who at that time were the only apostles in Jerusalem, gave the right hand of fellowship to the once fierce persecutor of their faith; and he was now as much beloved and respected as he had formerly been feared and avoided. Here the two grand characters of the new faith met—Peter, one of the chosen companions of Christ while he was upon earth, and Paul, a Pharisee, who, since the ascension of Jesus, had met him face to face, and had talked with him, and had also seen him in vision, and the nature of his work in Heaven.

This first interview was of great consequence to both these apostles, but it was of short duration, for Paul was eager to get about his Master's business. Soon the voice which had so earnestly disputed with Stephen was heard in the same synagogue fearlessly proclaiming that Jesus was the Son of God—advocating the same cause that Stephen had died to vindicate. He related his own wonderful experience, and with a heart filled with yearning for his brethren and former associates, presented the evidences from prophecy, as Stephen had done, that Jesus, who had been crucified, was the Son of God.

But Paul had miscalculated the spirit of his Jewish brethren. The same fury that had burst forth upon Stephen was visited upon himself. He saw that he must separate from his brethren, and sorrow filled his heart. He would willingly have yielded up his life, if by that means they might have been brought to a knowledge of the truth. The Jews began to lay plans to take his life, and the disciples urged him to leave Jerusalem; but he lingered, unwilling to leave the place, and anxious to labor a little longer for his Jewish brethren. He had taken so active a part in the martyrdom of Stephen that he was deeply anxious to wipe out the stain by boldly vindicating the truth which had cost Stephen his life. It looked to him like cowardice to flee from Jerusalem.

While Paul, braving all the consequences of such a step, was praying earnestly to God in the temple, the Saviour appeared to him in vision, saying, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Paul even then hesitated to leave Jerusalem without convincing the obstinate Jews of the truth of his faith; he thought that, even if his life should be sacrificed for the truth, it would not more than settle the fearful account which he held against himself for the death of Stephen. He answered, "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogæ them that believed on thee. And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." But the reply was more decided than before: "Depart;

for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

When the brethren learned of the vision of Paul, and the care which God had over him, their anxiety on his behalf was increased; for they realized that he was indeed a chosen vessel of the Lord, to bear the truth to the Gentiles. They hastened his secret escape from Jerusalem, for fear of his assassination by the Jews. The departure of Paul suspended for a time the violent opposition of the Jews, and the church had a period of rest, in which many were added to the number of believers.

#### THE MINISTRY OF PETER.

PETER, in pursuance of his work, visited the saints at Lydda. There he healed Æneas, who had been confined to his bed for eight years with the palsy. "And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord."

Joppa was near Lydda, and at that time Tabitha—called Dorcas by interpretation—lay there dead. She had been a worthy disciple of Jesus Christ, and her life had been characterized by deeds of charity and kindness to the poor and sorrowful, and by zeal in the cause of truth. Her death was a great loss; the infant church could not well spare her noble efforts. When the believers heard of the marvelous cures which Peter had performed in Lydda, they greatly desired him to come to Joppa. Messengers were sent to him to solicit his presence there.

"Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them." Peter had the weeping and wailing friends sent from the room. He then kneeled down, and prayed fervently to God to restore life and health to the pulseless body of Dorcas; "and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive." This great work of raising the dead to life was the means of converting many in Joppa to the faith of Jesus.

"There was a certain man in Cesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." Though Cornelius was a Roman, he had become acquainted with the true God, and had renounced idolatry. He was obedient to the will of God, and worshiped him with a true heart. He had not connected himself with the Jews, but was acquainted with, and obedient to, the moral law. He had not been circumcised, nor did he take part in the sacrificial offerings; he was therefore accounted by the Jews as unclean. He, however, sustained the Jewish cause by liberal donations, and was known far and near for his deeds of charity and benevolence. His righteous life made him of good repute, among both Jews and Gentiles.

Cornelius had not an understanding faith in Christ, although he believed the prophecies, and was looking for Messiah to come. Through his love and obedience to God, he was brought nigh unto him, and was prepared to receive the Saviour when he should be revealed to him. Condemnation comes by rejecting the light given. The centurion was a man of noble family, and held a position of high trust and honor; but these circumstances had not tended to subvert the noble attributes of his character. True goodness and greatness united to make him a man of moral worth. His influence was beneficial to all with whom he was brought in contact.

He believed in the one God, the Creator of Heaven and earth. He revered him, acknowledged his authority, and sought counsel of him in all the business of his life. He was faithful in his home duties as well as in his official responsibilities, and had erected the altar of God in his family. He dared not venture to carry out his plans, and bear the burden of his weighty responsibilities, without the help of God; therefore he prayed much and earnestly for that help. Faith marked all his works, and God regarded him for the purity of his actions, and his liberalities, and came near to him in word and Spirit.

While Cornelius was praying, God sent a celestial messenger to him, and "he saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius." He was afraid, yet knew that the angel was sent of God to instruct him, and said, "What is it, Lord? And he said

Apos. of Christ.

unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side. He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

Here again God showed his regard for the gospel ministry, and for his organized church. His angel was not the one to tell the story of the cross to Cornelius. A man, subject as himself to human frailties and temptations, was to instruct him concerning the crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. The heavenly messenger was sent for the express purpose of putting Cornelius in connection with the minister of God, who would teach him how he and his house could be saved.

Cornelius was gladly obedient to the message. "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa." The explicitness of these directions, in which was even named the occupation of the man with whom Peter was then making his home, evidences that Heaven is well acquainted with the history and business of men in every grade of life. God is cognizant of the daily employment of the humble laborer, as well as of that of the king upon his throne. And the avarice, cruelty, secret crimes, and selfishness of men are known to him, as well as their good deeds, charity, liberality, and kindness. Nothing is hidden from God.

Immediately after this interview with Cornelius, the angel went to Peter, who was praying upon the housetop. While praying he was shown a vision, "and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven."

Here we may perceive the workings of God's plan to set the machinery in motion, whereby his will may be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. Peter had not yet preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Many of them had been interested listeners to the truths which he taught; but the middle wall of partition, which the death of Christ had broken down, still existed in the minds of the apostles, and excluded the Gentiles from the privileges of the gospel. The Greek Jews had received the labors of the apostles, and many of them had responded to those efforts by embracing the faith of Jesus; but the conversion of Cornelius was to be the first one of importance among the Gentiles.

By the vision of the sheet and its contents, let down from heaven, Peter was to be divested of his settled prejudices against the Gentiles; to understand that, through Christ, heathen nations

were made partakers of the blessings and privileges of the Jews, and were to be thus benefited equally with them. Some have urged that this vision was to signify that God had removed his prohibition from the use of the flesh of animals which he had formerly pronounced unclean; and that therefore swines' flesh was fit for food. This is a very narrow, and altogether erroneous interpretation, and is plainly contradicted in the scriptural account of the vision and its consequences.

The vision of all manner of live beasts, which the sheet contained, and of which Peter was commanded to kill and eat, being assured that what God had cleansed should not be called common or unclean by him, was simply an illustration presenting to his mind the true position of the Gentiles; that by the death of Christ they were made fellow-heirs with the Israel of God. It conveyed to Peter both reproof and instruction. His labors had heretofore been confined entirely to the Jews; and he had looked upon the Gentiles as an unclean race, and excluded from the promises of God. His mind was now being led to comprehend the world-wide extent of the plan of God.

Even while he pondered over the vision, it was explained to him. "Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him,

Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

It was a trying command to Peter; but he dared not act according to his own feelings, and therefore "went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them." Thus they communicated their singular errand to the apostle, and, according to the direction he had just received from God, he at once agreed to accompany them on the morrow. He courteously entertained them that night, and in the morning set out with them for Cesarea, accompanied by six of his brethren, who were to be witnesses of all he should say or do while visiting the Gentiles; for he knew that he should be called to account for so direct an opposition to the Jewish faith and teachings.

It was nearly two days before the journey was ended and Cornelius had the glad privilege of opening his doors to a gospel minister, who, according to the assurance of God, should teach him and his house how they might be saved. While the messengers were upon their errand, the centurion had gathered together as many of his relatives as were accessible, that they, as well as he, might be instructed in the truth. When

Peter arrived, a large company were gathered, eagerly waiting to listen to his words.

As Peter entered the house of the Gentile, Cornelius did not salute him as an ordinary visitor, but as one honored of Heaven, and sent to him by God. It is an Eastern custom to bow before a prince or other high dignitary, and for children to bow before their parents who are honored with positions of trust. But Cornelius, overwhelmed with reverence for the apostle who had been delegated by God, fell at his feet and worshipped him. Peter shrank with horror from this act of the centurion, and lifted him to his feet, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." He then commenced to converse with him familiarly, in order to remove the sense of awe and extreme reverence with which the centurion regarded him.

Had Peter been invested with the authority and position accorded to him by the Roman Catholic Church, he would have encouraged, rather than have checked, the veneration of Cornelius. The so-called successors of Peter require kings and emperors to bow at their feet; but Peter himself claimed to be only an erring and fallible man.

Peter spoke with Cornelius and those assembled in his house, concerning the custom of the Jews; that it was considered unlawful for them to mingle socially with Gentiles, and involved ceremonial defilement. It was not prohibited by the law of God, but the tradition of men had made it a binding custom. Said he, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another

nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for; I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me."

Cornelius thereupon related his experience, and the words of the angel that had appeared to him in vision: "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon, a tanner, by the sea-side; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Although God had favored the Jews above all other nations, yet if they rejected light, and did not live up to their profession, they were no more exalted in his esteem than other nations. Those among the Gentiles who, like Cornelius, feared God, and worked righteousness, living up to what light they had, were kindly regarded by God, and their sincere service was accepted.

But the faith and righteousness of Cornelius could not be perfect without a knowledge of

Christ; therefore God sent that light and knowledge to him for the farther development of his righteous character. Many refuse to receive the light which the providence of God sends them, and, as an excuse for so doing, quote the words of Peter to Cornelius and his friends: "But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." They maintain that it is of no consequence what men believe, so long as their works are good. Such ones are wrong; faith must unite with their works. They should advance with the light that is given them. If God brings them in connection with his servants who have received new truth, substantiated by the Word of God, they should accept it with joy. Truth is onward. Truth is upward. On the other hand, those who claim that their faith alone will save them, are trusting to a rope of sand; for faith is strengthened and made perfect by works only.

Peter preached Jesus to that company of attentive hearers; his life, ministry, miracles, betrayal, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and his work in Heaven, as man's Representative and Advocate, to plead in the sinner's behalf. As the apostle spoke, his heart glowed with the Spirit of God's truth which he was presenting to the people. His hearers were charmed by the doctrine they heard, for their hearts had been prepared to receive the truth. The apostle was interrupted by the descent of the Holy Ghost, as was manifested on the day of Pentecost. "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. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."

The descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentiles was not an equivalent for baptism. The requisite steps in conversion, in all cases, are faith, repentance, and baptism. Thus the true Christian church are united in one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Diverse temperaments are modified by sanctifying grace, and the same distinguishing principles regulate the lives of all. Peter yielded to the entreaties of the believing Gentiles, and remained with them for a time, preaching Jesus to all the Gentiles thereabout.

When the brethren in Judea heard that Peter had preached to the Gentiles, and had met with them, and eaten with them in their houses, they were surprised and offended by such strange movements on his part. They feared that such a course, which looked presumptuous to them, would tend to contradict his own teachings. As soon as Peter visited them, they met him with severe censure, saying, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

Then "Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me. Upon the which when I had fas-

tened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord; for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times; and all were drawn up again into heaven. And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me. And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house. And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." He pleaded that the vision admonished him no longer to keep up the ceremonial distinction of circumcision and uncircumcision, nor to look upon the Gentiles as unclean, for God was not a respecter of persons. His caution was made manifest to his brethren from the fact that, although commanded by God to go to the Gentile's house, he had taken with him six of the disciples then present, as witnesses of all he should say or do while there.

He recounted the events of this first meeting with the Gentiles, saying, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of

the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?"

The disciples, upon hearing this account, were silenced, and convinced that Peter's course was in direct fulfillment of the plan of God, and that their old prejudices and exclusiveness were to be utterly destroyed by the gospel of Christ. "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

#### DELIVERANCE OF PETER.

HEROD was professedly a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and apparently very zealous in perpetuating the ceremonies of the law. The government of Judea was in his hands, subject to Claudius, the Roman emperor; he also held the position of tetrarch of Galilee. Herod was anxious to obtain the favor of the Jews, hoping thus to make secure his offices and honors. He therefore proceeded to carry out the desires of the Jews in persecuting the church of Christ. He began his work by spoiling the houses and goods of the believers; he then began to imprison the leading ones. He seized upon James and cast him into prison, and there sent an executioner to kill him with a sword, as another Herod had caused the prophet John to be beheaded. He then became bolder, seeing that the Jews were well pleased with his acts, and imprisoned Peter. These cru-

elties were performed during the sacred occasion of the passover.

James was one of the three favored disciples who had been brought into the closest relationship with Christ. James, John, and Peter were his chief witnesses after his death. They saw the transfiguration of the Saviour, and beheld him glorified. They were in the garden with him during the night of his agony. James and John were the sons of Zebedee, the ones whom Jesus had asked, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" When James was rudely thrust into prison, and unceremoniously summoned to execution, he understood more fully than ever before, the words of his Lord upon that occasion.

There was great grief and consternation at the death of James. When Peter was also imprisoned, the entire church engaged in fasting and prayer. While the Jews were celebrating the memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, and pretending great zeal for the law, they were at the same time persecuting and murdering the believers in Christ, thus transgressing every principle of that law. At these great religious gatherings they stirred one another up against the Christians, till they were united in a bitter hatred of them.

The people applauded the act of Herod in causing the death of James, though some of them complained of the private manner in which it was accomplished, maintaining that a public execution would have had the effect to more thoroughly intimidate all believers and sympa-

thizers. Herod therefore held Peter in custody for the purpose of gratifying the Jews by the public spectacle of his death. But it was suggested to the ruler that it would not be safe to bring the veteran apostle out for execution before all the people who were assembled in Jerusalem for the passover. It was feared that his venerable appearance might excite their pity and respect; they also dreaded lest he should make one of those powerful appeals which had frequently roused the people to investigate the life and character of Jesus Christ, and which they, with all their artifice, were totally unable to controvert. In such a case, the Jews apprehended that his release would be demanded at the hands of the king.

Peter's ardent zeal in vindicating himself, and in advocating the cause of Christ, had lost to the Jews many of their brethren, and they stood in great dread of his having an opportunity to lift up his voice in the presence of all the nations and people that had come to the city to worship. Therefore the apostle was placed under charge of sixteen soldiers, who alternated in guarding him day and night. But it was in vain that the puny arm of man was lifted against the Lord. He, by the putting forth of his might, was about to stay the precious blood which the Jews would have been emboldened to shed, had not divine power interposed.

While the execution of Peter was being delayed, upon various pretexts, until after the passover, the church of Christ had time for deep searching of heart, and earnest prayer. Strong petitions, tears, and fasting were mingled to-

gether. They prayed without ceasing for Peter; they felt that he could not be spared from the Christian work; and they felt that they had arrived at a point, where, without the special help of God, the church of Christ would become extinct.

Meanwhile worshipers of every nation sought the temple which had been dedicated to the service of God, and which remained, to all appearance, the same as when the shekinah had glorified it, with the exception of additional embellishment. But God was no longer to be found in that palace of loveliness, glittering with gold and precious stones, and presenting a spectacle of grandeur and beauty to all beholders.

The day of Peter's execution was at last appointed; but still the prayers of the believers ascended to Heaven. And while all their energies and sympathies were called out in fervent appeals, angels of God were guarding the imprisoned apostle. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Peter was placed between two soldiers, and was bound by two chains, each chain being fastened to the wrist of one of his guard. He was therefore unable to move without their knowledge. The prison doors were securely fastened, and a strong guard was placed before them. All chance of rescue or escape, by human means, was thus cut off.

The apostle was not intimidated by his situation. Since his re-instatement after his denial of Christ, he had unflinchingly braved danger, and manifested a noble courage and boldness in preaching a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. He now called to mind the words of Jesus ad-

dressed to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." He believed the time had now come when he was to yield up his life for Christ's sake.

The night before his appointed execution, Peter, bound with chains, slept between the two soldiers, as usual. Herod, remembering the escape of Peter and John from prison, where they had been confined because of their faith, took double precautions on this occasion. The soldiers on guard, in order to secure their extra vigilance, were made answerable for the safe-keeping of the prisoner. He was bound, as has been described, in a cell of massive rock, the doors of which were bolted and barred. Sixteen men were detailed to guard this cell, relieving each other at regular intervals. Four comprised the watch at one time. But the bolts and bars, and Roman guard, which effectually cut off from the prisoner a possibility of human aid, were only to result in making the triumph of God more complete in Peter's deliverance from prison. Herod was lifting his hand against Omnipotence, and he was to be utterly humiliated and defeated in his attempt upon the life of the servant of God.

On this last night before the execution, a mighty angel, commissioned from Heaven, descended to rescue him. The strong gates which shut in the saint of God, open without the aid of human hands; the angel of the Most High enters,

and they close again noiselessly behind him. He enters the cell, hewn from the solid rock, and there lies Peter, sleeping the blessed peaceful sleep of innocence and perfect trust in God while chained to a powerful guard on either side of him. The light which enveloped the angel illuminated the prison, but did not waken the sleeping apostle. His was the sound repose that invigorates and renews, and that comes of a good conscience.

Peter is not awakened until he feels the stroke of the angel's hand, and hears his voice saying, "Arise up quickly." He sees his cell, which had never been blessed by a ray of sunshine, illuminated by the light of Heaven, and an angel of great glory standing before him. He mechanically obeys the voice of the angel; and in rising lifts his hands, and finds that the chains have been broken from his wrists. Again the voice of the angel is heard: "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals."

Again Peter mechanically obeys, keeping his wondering gaze riveted upon his heavenly visitant, and believing himself to be dreaming, or in a vision. The armed soldiers are passive as if chiseled from marble, as the angel again commands, "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me." Thereupon the heavenly being moves toward the door, and the usually talkative Peter follows, dumb from amazement. They step over the motionless guard, and reach the heavily bolted and barred door, which swings open of its own accord, and closes again immediately, while the guard within and outside the door are motionless at their posts.

The second gate, which is also guarded within and without, is reached; it opens as did the first, with no creaking of hinges, or rattling of iron bolts; they pass without, and it closes again as noiselessly. They pass through the third gateway in the same manner, and at last find themselves in the open street. No word is spoken; there is no sound of footstep; the angel glides on before, encircled by a light of dazzling brightness, and Peter follows his deliverer, bewildered, and believing himself to be in a dream. Street after street is threaded thus, and then, the mission of the angel being completed, he suddenly disappears.

As the heavenly light faded away, Peter felt himself to be in profound darkness; but gradually the darkness seemed to decrease, as he became accustomed to it, and he found himself alone in the silent street, with the cool night air upon his brow. He now realized that it was no dream or vision that had visited him. He was free, in a familiar part of the city; he recognized the place as one which he had often frequented, and had expected to pass for the last time on the morrow, when upon the way to the scene of his prospective death. He tried to recall the events of the last few moments. He remembered falling asleep, bound between the two soldiers, with his sandals and outer garment removed. He examined his person, and found himself fully dressed, and girded.

His wrists, swollen from wearing the cruel irons, were now free from the manacles, and he realized that his freedom was no delusion, but a blessed reality. On the morrow he was to have

been led forth to die; but lo, an angel had delivered him from prison and from death. "And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

The apostle made his way direct to the house where his brethren were assembled together for prayer; he found them engaged in earnest prayer for him at that moment. "And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place."

Joy and praise filled the hearts of the fasting, praying believers, that God had heard and answered their prayers, and delivered Peter from the hand of Herod. In the morning the people gathered together to witness the execution of the apostle. Herod sent officers to bring Peter from prison with great display of arms and guard, in order to insure against his escape, to intimidate all sympathizers, and to exhibit his own power.

Meanwhile terror and mortification had seized the Roman guard at the prison, when they found that the prisoner was gone. It had been expressly stated to them that their lives would be answerable for the life of their charge, and for that reason they had been specially vigilant. But the God of Heaven had thwarted the purpose of wicked Herod. There was the guard at the door of the prison, the bolts and bars of the door still fast and strong, the guard inside, the chains attached to the wrists of the two soldiers; but the prisoner was gone.

When the report of these things was brought to Herod, he was exasperated, and charged the keepers of the prison with unfaithfulness. They were accordingly put to death for the alleged crime of sleeping at their post. At the same time, Herod knew that no human power had rescued Peter. But he was determined not to acknowledge that a divine power had been at work to thwart his base designs. He would not humiliate himself thus, but set himself boldly in defiance of God.

Herod, not long after Peter's deliverance from prison, went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode. He there made a grand festival, designed to excite the admiration and applause of the people. Pleasure-lovers from all quarters were assembled together, and there was much feasting and wine-drinking. Herod made a most gorgeous appearance before the people. He was clad in a robe, sparkling with silver and gold, that caught the rays of the sun in its glittering folds, and dazzled the eyes of the beholders. With great pomp and ceremony he stood

before the multitude, and addressed them in an eloquent oration.

The majesty of his appearance, and the power of his well-chosen language, swayed the assembly with a mighty influence. Their senses were already perverted by feasting and wine; they were dazzled by his glittering decorations, and charmed by his grand deportment and eloquent words; and, wild with enthusiasm, they showered upon him adulation, and proclaimed him a god, declaring that mortal man could not present such an appearance, or command such startling eloquence of language. They farther declared that they had ever respected him as a ruler, but from henceforth they should worship him as a god.

These people had refused to acknowledge Christ, whose coarse and often travel-stained garments were worn over a heart of divine love, rich with that inward adorning, a meek and gentle spirit. Their eyes, blinded by sin, refused to see, beneath that humble exterior, the Lord of life and glory, though his mercy and divine power were revealed before them in works that no man could do. But they were ready to bow down and worship, as a god, the haughty king, whose splendid garments of silver and gold were worn over a corrupt and cruel heart. They did not attempt to penetrate his vain display, and read the depravity and deceit of his character, and the wickedness of his daily life.

Herod knew that he deserved none of this praise and homage; yet he did not rebuke the idolatry of the people, but accepted it as his due. The glow of gratified pride was on his countenance as he heard the shout ascend: It is the

voice of a god, and not of man! The same voices which now glorified a vile sinner, had, but a few years before, raised the frenzied cry of, Away with Jesus! Crucify him, crucify him! Herod received this flattery and homage with great pleasure, and his heart bounded with triumph; but suddenly a swift and terrible change came over him. His countenance became pallid as death, and distorted with agony; great drops of sweat started from his pores. He stood a moment as if transfixed with pain and terror, then, turning his blanched and livid face to his horror-stricken friends, he cried in hollow, despairing tones, He whom you have exalted as a god is struck with death!

He was borne in a state of the most excruciating anguish from the scene of wicked revelry, the mirth, and pomp, and display of which he now loathed in his soul. A moment before, he had been the proud recipient of the praise and worship of that vast throng—now he felt himself in the hands of a Ruler mightier than himself. Remorse seized him; he remembered his cruel command to slay the innocent James; he remembered his relentless persecution of the followers of Christ, and his design to put to death the apostle Peter, whom God had delivered out of his hand; he remembered how, in his mortification and disappointed rage, he had wreaked his unreasoning revenge upon the keepers of the prisoner, and executed them without mercy. He felt that God, who had rescued the apostle from death, was now dealing with him, the relentless persecutor. He found no relief from pain of body or anguish of mind, and he expected none. Herod

was acquainted with the law of God, which says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and he knew that in accepting the worship of the people he had filled up the measure of his iniquity, and had brought upon him the just wrath of God.

The same angel who had left the royal courts of Heaven to rescue Peter from the power of his persecutor, had been the messenger of wrath and judgment to Herod. The angel smote Peter to arouse him from slumber; but it was with a different stroke that he smote the wicked king, bringing mortal disease upon him. God poured contempt upon Herod's pride, and his person, which he had exhibited decked in shining apparel before the admiring gaze of the people, was eaten by worms, and putrefied while yet alive. Herod died in great agony of mind and body, under the retributive justice of God.

This demonstration of divine judgment had a mighty influence upon the people. While the apostle of Christ had been miraculously delivered from prison and death, his persecutor had been stricken down by the curse of God. The news was borne to all lands, and was the means of bringing many to believe on Christ.

REDEMPTION:

OR THE

TEACHINGS OF PAUL,

AND HIS

MISSION TO THE GENTILES.

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BY MRS. E. G. WHITE.

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TO THE READER.

NEXT to the two chief characters of the Old and New Testaments, Moses and Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, through his labors and writings, has had more influence upon the world than any other person. The call of this remarkable man, and his being commissioned to go to the Gentiles, marked an era in the progress of the gospel. The reader will be pleased to read the following thoughts upon this subject, from one so well qualified to write upon it, as the author of this work.

PUBLISHERS.

THE  
TEACHINGS OF PAUL.

ORDINATION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS.

THE apostles and disciples who left Jerusalem during the fierce persecution that raged there after the martyrdom of Stephen, preached Christ in the cities round about, confining their labors to the Hebrew and Greek Jews. "And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." When the believers in Jerusalem heard the good tidings they rejoiced; and Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," was sent to Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, to help the church there. He labored there with great success. As the work increased, he solicited and obtained the help of Paul; and the two disciples labored together in that city for a year, teaching the people, and adding to the numbers of the church of Christ.

Antioch had both a large Jewish and Gentile population; it was a great resort for lovers of ease and pleasure, because of the healthfulness of its situation, its beautiful scenery, and the wealth, culture, and refinement that centered there. Its extensive commerce made it a place of great importance, where people of all nationalities were

found. It was therefore a city of luxury and vice. The retribution of God finally came upon Antioch, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

It was here that the disciples were first called Christians. This name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, teaching, and conversation. They were continually recounting the incidents of his life, during the time in which his disciples were blessed with his personal company. They dwelt untiringly upon his teachings, his miracles of healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead to life. With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of his agony in the garden, his betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which he endured the contumely and torture imposed upon him by his enemies, and the Godlike pity with which he prayed for those who persecuted him. His resurrection and ascension, and his work in Heaven as a Mediator for fallen man, were joyful topics with them. The heathen might well call them Christians, since they preached of Christ, and addressed their prayers to God through him.

Paul found, in the populous city of Antioch, an excellent field of labor, where his great learning, wisdom, and zeal, combined, wielded a powerful influence over the inhabitants and frequenters of that city of culture.

Meanwhile the work of the apostles was centered at Jerusalem, where Jews of all tongues and countries came to worship at the temple during the stated festivals. At such times the apostles preached Christ with unflinching courage, though they knew that in so doing their lives

were in constant jeopardy. Many converts to the faith were made, and these, scattering to their homes in different parts of the country, dispersed the seeds of truth throughout all nations, and among all classes of society.

Peter, James, and John felt confident that God had appointed them to preach Christ among their own countrymen at home. But Paul had received his commission from God, while praying in the temple, and his broad missionary field had been presented before him with remarkable distinctness. To prepare him for his extensive and important work, God had brought him into close connection with himself, and had opened before his enraptured vision a glimpse of the beauty and glory of Heaven.

God communicated with the devout prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." These apostles were therefore dedicated to God in a most solemn manner by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands; and they were sent forth to their field of labor among the Gentiles.

Both Paul and Barnabas had been laboring as ministers of Christ, and God had abundantly blessed their efforts; but neither of them had previously been formally ordained to the gospel ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands. They were now authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to baptize, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority. This was an important era for the church. Though the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken

down by the death of Christ, letting the Gentiles into the full privileges of the gospel, yet the veil had not yet been torn away from the eyes of many of the believing Jews, and they could not clearly discern to the end of that which was abolished by the Son of God. The work was now to be prosecuted with vigor among the Gentiles, and was to result in strengthening the church by a great ingathering of souls.

The apostles, in this, their special work, were to be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. As a natural consequence of their departure from the exclusiveness of the Jews, their doctrine and views would be subject to the charge of heresy; and their credentials as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews. God foresaw all these difficulties which his servants would undergo, and, in his wise providence, caused them to be invested with unquestionable authority from the established church of God, that their work should be above challenge.

The brethren in Jerusalem and in Antioch were made thoroughly acquainted with all the particulars of this divine appointment, and the specific work of teaching the Gentiles, which the Lord had given to these apostles. Their ordination was an open recognition of their divine mission, as messengers specially chosen by the Holy Ghost for a special work. Paul witnesses, in his Epistle to the Romans, that he considered this sacred appointment as a new and important epoch in his life; he names himself, "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."

The ordination by the laying on of hands, was,

at a later date, greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as though a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work, as though virtue lay in the act of laying on of hands. We have, in the history of these two apostles, only a simple record of the laying on of hands, and its bearing upon their work. Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God himself; and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was merely setting the seal of the church upon the work of God—an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office.

This form was a significant one to the Jews. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads. When an animal was devoted to sacrifice, the hand of the one invested with priestly authority was laid upon the head of the victim. Therefore, when the ministers of Antioch laid their hands upon the apostles, they, by that action, asked God to bestow his blessing upon them, in their devotion to the specific work which God had chosen them to do.

The apostles started out upon their mission, taking with them Mark. They went into Seleucia, and from thence sailed to Cyprus. At Salamis they preached in the synagogues of the Jews. "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus; which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the

word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."

The deputy being a man of repute and influence, the sorcerer Elymas, who was under the control of Satan, sought by false reports, and various specious deceptions, to turn him against the apostles and destroy their influence over him. As the magicians in Pharaoh's court withstood Moses and Aaron, so did this sorcerer withstand the apostles. When the deputy sent for the apostles, that he might be instructed in the truth, Satan was on hand with his servant, seeking to thwart the purpose of God, and prevent this influential man from embracing the faith of Christ. This agent of Satan greatly hindered the work of the apostles. Thus does the fallen foe ever work in a special manner to prevent persons of influence, who could be of great service to the cause, from embracing the truth of God.

But Paul, in the Spirit and power of the Holy Ghost, rebuked the wicked deceiver. He "set his eyes upon him, and said, O full of all subtilty 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? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

The sorcerer had closed his eyes to the evidences of truth, and the light of the gospel, therefore the Lord, in his righteous anger, caused his

natural eyes to be closed, shutting out from him the light of day. This blindness was not permanent, but only for a season, to warn him to repent, and to seek pardon of God whom he had so offended. The confusion into which this man was brought, with all his boasted power, made all his subtle arts against the doctrine of Christ of none effect. The fact of his being obliged to grope about in blindness, proved to all beholders that the miracles which the apostles had performed, and which Elymas had denounced as being produced by sleight of hand, were in truth wrought by the power of God. The deputy was convinced of the truth of the doctrine taught by the apostles, and embraced the gospel of Christ.

Elymas was not a man of education, yet he was peculiarly fitted to do the work of Satan. Those who preach the truth of God will be obliged to meet the wily foe in many different shapes. Sometimes it is in the person of learned, and often in the person of ignorant, men, whom Satan has educated to be his successful instruments in deceiving souls, and in working iniquity. It is the duty of the minister of Christ to stand faithfully at his post, in the fear of God, and in the power of his strength. Thus he may put to confusion the hosts of Satan, and triumph in the name of the Lord.

Paul and his company now continued their journey, going into Perga, in Pamphylia. Their way was toilsome, they encountered hardships and privations, and were beset by dangers on every side, which intimidated Mark, who was unused to hardships. As still greater difficulties were apprehended, he became disheartened, and refused to go farther, just at the time when his

services were most needed. He accordingly returned to Jerusalem, and to the peace and comfort of his home.

Mark did not apostatize from the faith of Christianity; but, like many young ministers, he shrank from hardships, and preferred the comfort and safety of home to the travels, labors, and dangers of the missionary field. This desertion caused Paul to judge him unfavorably and severely for a long time. He distrusted his steadiness of character, and his devotion to the cause of Christ. The mother of Mark was a convert to the Christian religion; and her home was an asylum for the disciples. There they were always sure of a welcome, and a season of rest, in which they could rally from the effect of the fierce persecutions that everywhere assailed them in their labors.

It was during one of these visits of the apostles to his mother's that Mark proposed to Paul and Barnabas that he should accompany them on their missionary tour. He had witnessed the wonderful power attending their ministry; he had felt the favor of God in his own heart; he had seen the faith of his mother tested and tried without wavering; he had witnessed the miracles performed by the apostles, and which set the seal of God upon their work; he had himself preached the Christian faith, and had longed to enter more fully into the work, and entirely devote himself to it. He had, as the companion of the apostles, rejoiced in the success of their mission; but fear and discouragement overwhelmed him in the face of privation, persecution, and danger; and he sought the attractions of home at

a time when his services were most needful to the apostles.

At a future period there was a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas concerning Mark, who was still anxious to devote himself to the work of the ministry. Paul could not, at that time, excuse in any degree the weakness of Mark in deserting them and the work upon which they had entered, for the ease and quiet of home; and he urged that one with so little stamina was unfit for the gospel ministry, which required patience, self-denial, bravery, and faith, with a willingness to sacrifice even life if need be.

Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse Mark, who was his nephew, because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that he should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications for a useful laborer in the field of Christ. This contention caused Paul and Barnabas to separate, the latter following out his convictions, and taking Mark with him in his work.

Mark, therefore, accompanied Barnabas to Cyprus, and assisted him there. Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark, and received him as a fellow-laborer. He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a "fellow-worker unto the kingdom of God," and a personal comfort to him, Paul. Again, not long prior to his death, he spoke of him as profitable to him in the ministry.

Paul and Barnabas next visited Antioch in Pisidia, and on the Sabbath went into the synagogue, and sat down; "and after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the

people, say on." Being thus invited to speak, "Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." He then proceeded to give a history of the manner in which the Lord had dealt with the Jews from the time of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and how a Saviour had been promised of the seed of David. He then preached Jesus as the Saviour of men, the Messiah of prophecy.

When he had finished, and the Jews had left the synagogue, the Gentiles still lingered, and entreated that the same words might be spoken unto them the next Sabbath day. The apostles created a great interest in the place, among both Jews and Gentiles. They encouraged the believers and converts to stand fast in their faith, and to continue in the grace of God. The interest to hear the words of the apostles was so great that the whole city came together on the next Sabbath day. But now, as in the days of Christ, when the Jewish priests and rulers saw the multitudes that had assembled to hear the new doctrine, they were moved by envy and jealousy, and contradicted the words of the apostles with blasphemy. Their old bigotry and prejudice were also aroused, when they perceived great numbers of Gentiles mingling with the Jews in the congregation. They could not endure that the Gentiles should enjoy religious privileges on an equality with themselves, but clung tenaciously to the idea that the blessing of God was reserved exclusively for them. This had ever been the great sin of the Jews, which Christ, on several occasions, had rebuked.

They listened, on one Sabbath day, with in-

tense interest to the teachings of Paul and Barnabas, who preached Jesus as the promised Messiah; and upon the next Sabbath day, because of the multitude of Gentiles who assembled also to hear them, they were excited to a frenzy of indignation, the words of the apostles were distorted in their minds, and they were unfitted to weigh the evidence presented by them. When they learned that the Messiah preached by the apostles was to be a light to the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel, they were beside themselves with rage, and used the most insulting language to the apostles.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, rejoiced exceedingly that Christ recognized them as the children of God, and with grateful hearts they listened to the word preached. The apostles now clearly discerned their duty, and the work which God would have them do. They turned without hesitation to the Gentiles, preaching Christ to them, and leaving the Jews to their bigotry, blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. The mind of Paul had been well prepared to make this decision, by the circumstances attending his conversion, his vision in the temple at Jerusalem, his appointment by God to preach to the Gentiles, and the success which had already crowned his efforts among them.

When Paul and Barnabas turned from the Jews who derided them, they addressed them boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gen-

tiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

This gathering in of the Gentiles to the church of God had been traced by the pen of inspiration, but had been but faintly understood. Hosea had said, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; 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." And again, "I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

During the life of Christ on earth he had sought to lead the Jews out of their exclusiveness. The conversion of the centurion, and that of the Syrophenician woman, were instances of his direct work outside of the acknowledged people of Israel. The time had now come for active and continued work among the Gentiles, of whom whole communities received the gospel gladly, and glorified God for the light of an intelligent faith. The unbelief and malice of the Jews did not turn aside the purpose of God; for a new Israel was being grafted into the old olive-tree. The synagogues were closed against the apostles; but private houses were thrown open for their use, and public buildings of the Gentiles were also used in which to preach the Word of God.

The Jews, however, were not satisfied with closing their synagogues against the apostles, but desired to banish them from that region. To effect this purpose they sought to prejudice cer-

tain devout and honorable women, who had great influence with the government, and also men of influence. This they accomplished by subtle arts, and false reports. These persons of good repute complained to the authorities against the apostles, and they were accordingly expelled from those coasts.

On this occasion the apostles followed the instruction of Christ: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for that city." The apostles were not discouraged by this expulsion; they remembered the words of their Master: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

#### PREACHING AMONG THE HEATHEN.

THE apostles next visited Iconium. This place was a great resort for pleasure-seekers, and persons who had no particular object in life. The population was composed of Romans, Greeks, and Jews. The apostles here, as at Antioch, first commenced their labors in the synagogues for their own people, the Jews. They met with marked success; numbers of both Jews and Greeks accepted the gospel of Christ. But here, as in former places where the apostles had labored, the unbelieving Jews commenced an unreason-

able opposition of those who accepted the true faith, and, as far as lay in their power, influenced the Gentiles against them.

The apostles, however, were not easily turned from their work, for many were daily embracing the doctrine of Christ. They went on faithfully in the face of opposition, envy, and prejudice. Miracles were daily wrought by the disciples through the power of God; and all whose minds were open to evidence were affected by the convincing power of these things.

This increasing popularity of the doctrine of Christ stirred the unbelieving Jews to fresh opposition. They were filled with envy and hatred, and determined to stop the labors of the apostles at once. They went to the authorities, and represented their work in the most false and exaggerated light, leading the officers to fear that the entire city was in danger of being incited to insurrection. They stated that great numbers were attaching themselves to the apostles, and suggested that it was for secret and dangerous designs.

In consequence of these charges, the disciples were repeatedly brought before the authorities; but in every case they so ably defended themselves before the people, that, although the magistrates were prejudiced against them by the false statements they had heard, they dared not condemn them. They could but acknowledge that the teachings of the apostles were calculated to make men virtuous, law-abiding citizens.

The unprejudiced Jews and Greeks took the position that the morals and good order of the city would be improved, if the apostles were allowed to remain and work there. Upon the oc-

casions when the apostles were brought before the authorities, their defense was so clear and sensible, and the statement which they gave of their doctrine was so calm and comprehensive, that a considerable influence was raised in their favor. The doctrine they preached gained great publicity, and was brought before a much larger number of unprejudiced hearers than ever before in that place.

The Jews perceived that their efforts to thwart the work of the apostles were unavailing, and only resulted in adding greater numbers to the new faith. The rage of the Jews was worked up to such a pitch on this account that they determined to compass their ends in some manner. They stirred up the worst passions of the ignorant, noisy mob, creating a tumult which they attributed to the efforts of the apostles. They then prepared to make a false charge of telling force, and to gain the help of the magistrates in carrying out their purpose. They determined that the apostles should have no opportunity to vindicate themselves; but that mob power should interfere, and put a stop to their labors by stoning them to death.

Friends of the apostles, although unbelievers, warned them of the designs of the malicious Jews, and urged them not uselessly to expose themselves to their fury, but to escape for their lives. They accordingly departed from Iconium in secret, and left the faithful and opposing parties to battle for themselves, trusting God to give victory to the doctrine of Christ. But they by no means took a final leave of Iconium; they proposed to return, after the excitement then rag-

ing had abated, and complete the work they had begun.

Those who observe and teach the binding claims of God's law frequently receive, in a degree, similar treatment to that of the apostles at Iconium. They often meet a bitter opposition from ministers and people who persistently refuse the light of God, and, by misrepresentation and falsehood, close every door by which the messenger of truth might have access to the people.

The apostles next went to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia. These were populated by a heathen, superstitious people; but among them were souls that would hear and accept the doctrine of Christ. The apostles chose to labor in those cities because they would not there meet Jewish prejudice and persecution. They now came in contact with an entirely new element,—heathen superstition and idolatry.

The apostles, in their work, met all grades of people, and all kinds of faith and religions. They were brought in opposition with Jewish bigotry and intolerance, sorcery, blasphemy, unjust magistrates who loved to exercise their power, false shepherds, superstition, and idolatry. While persecution and opposition met them on every hand, victory still crowned their efforts, and converts were daily added to the faith.

In Lystra there was no Jewish synagogue, though there were a few Jews in the place. The temple of Jupiter occupied a conspicuous position there. Paul and Barnabas appeared in the city together, teaching the doctrine of Christ with great power and eloquence. The credulous people believed them to be gods come down from Heaven. As the apostles gathered the people

about them, and explained their strange belief, the worshipers of Jupiter sought to connect these doctrines, as far as they were able, with their own superstitious faith.

Paul addressed them in the Greek language, presenting for their consideration such subjects as would lead them to a correct knowledge of Him who should be the object of their adoration. He directed their attention to the firmament of the heavens—the sun, moon, and stars—the beautiful order of the recurring seasons, the mighty mountains whose peaks were capped with snow, the lofty trees, and the varied wonders of nature, which showed a skill and exactitude almost beyond finite comprehension. Through these visible works of the Almighty, the apostle led the minds of the heathen to the contemplation of the great Mind of the universe.

He then told them of the Son of God, who came from Heaven to our world because he loved the children of men. His life and ministry were presented before them; his rejection by those whom he came to save; his trial and crucifixion by wicked men; his resurrection from the dead to finish his work on earth; and his ascension to Heaven to be man's Advocate in the presence of the Maker of the world. With the Spirit and power of God, Paul and Barnabas declared the gospel of Christ.

As Paul recounted the works of Christ in healing the afflicted, he perceived a cripple whose eyes were fastened upon him, and who received and believed his words. Paul's heart went out in sympathy toward the afflicted man, whose faith he discerned; and he eagerly grasped the hope that he might be healed by that Saviour,

who, although he had ascended to Heaven, was still man's Friend and Physician, having more power even than when he was upon earth.

In the presence of that idolatrous assembly, Paul commanded the cripple to stand upright upon his feet. Hitherto he had only been able to take a sitting posture; but he now grasped with faith the words of Paul, and instantly obeyed his command, and stood on his feet for the first time in his life. Strength came with this effort of faith; and he who had been a cripple walked and leaped as though he had never experienced an infirmity.

This work performed on the cripple was a marvel to all beholders. The subject was so well known, and the cure was so complete, that there was no room for skepticism on their part. The Lycaonians were all convinced that supernatural power attended the labors of the apostles, and cried out with great enthusiasm that the gods had come down to them from Heaven in the likeness of men. This belief was in harmony with their traditions that gods visited the earth. They conceived the idea that the great heathen deities, Jupiter and Mercury, were in their midst in the persons of Paul and Barnabas. The former they believed to be Mercury; for Paul was active, earnest, quick, and eloquent with words of warning and exhortation. Barnabas was believed to be Jupiter, the father of gods, because of his venerable appearance, his dignified bearing, and the mildness and benevolence which was expressed in his countenance.

The news of the miraculous cure of the cripple was soon noised throughout all that region, until a general excitement was aroused, and priests

from the temple of the gods prepared to do the apostles honor, as visitants from the courts of Heaven, to sacrifice beasts to them, and to bring offerings of garlands and precious things. The apostles had sought retirement and rest in a private dwelling, when their attention was attracted by the sound of music, and the enthusiastic shouting of a vast assembly, who had come to the gate of the house where they were abiding.

When these ministers of God ascertained the cause of this visit and its attendant excitement, they were filled with indignation and horror. They rent their clothing, and rushed in among the multitude to prevent farther proceedings. Paul, in a loud, ringing voice that rose above the noise of the multitude, demanded their attention; and, as the tumult was suddenly quelled, he inquired,—

“Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities 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.”

The people listened to the words of Paul with manifest impatience. Their superstition and enthusiasm had been so great in regard to the apostles that they were loth to acknowledge their error, and have their expectations and purposes thwarted. Notwithstanding the apostles positively denied the divinity attributed to them by the heathen, and Paul made a masterly effort to

direct their minds to the true God as the only object worthy of worship, it was still most difficult to turn them from their purpose.

They reasoned that they had with their own eyes beheld the miraculous power exercised by the apostles; that they had seen a cripple who had never before used his limbs, made to leap and rejoice in perfect health and strength through the exercise of the marvelous power possessed by these strangers. But, after much persuasion on the part of Paul, and explanation as to the true mission of the apostles, the people were reluctantly led to give up their purpose. They were not satisfied, however, and led the sacrificial beasts away in great disappointment, that their traditions of divine beings visiting the earth could not be strengthened by this example of their favor in coming to confer special blessings upon them, which would exalt them and their religion in the estimation of the world.

And now a strange change came upon the fickle, excitable people, because their faith was not anchored in the true God. The opposing Jews of Antioch, through whose influence the apostles were driven from that coast, united with certain Jews of Iconium, and followed upon the track of the apostles. The miracle wrought upon the cripple, and its effect upon those who witnessed it, stirred up their envy and led them to go to the scene of the apostles' labor, and put their false version upon the work. They denied that God had any part in it, and claimed that it was accomplished through the demons whom these men served.

The same class had formerly accused the Saviour of casting out devils through the power of

the prince of devils; they had denounced him as a deceiver; and they now visited the same unreasoning wrath upon his apostles. By means of falsehoods they inspired the people of Lystra with the bitterness of spirit by which they were themselves actuated. They claimed to be thoroughly acquainted with the history and faith of Paul and Barnabas, and so misrepresented their characters and work that the heathen idolaters, who had been ready to worship the apostles as divine beings, now considered them as worse than murderers, and that whoever should put them out of the world would do God and mankind good service.

Those who believe and teach the truths of God's Word in these days meet with similar opposition from unprincipled persons who will not accept the truth, and who do not hesitate to prevaricate, and even to circulate the most glaring falsehoods in order to destroy the influence and hedge up the way of those whom God has sent with a message of warning to the world. While one class make the falsehoods and circulate them, another class are so blinded by the delusions of Satan as to receive them as the words of truth. They are in the toils of the arch-enemy, while they flatter themselves that they are the children of God. "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

The disappointment experienced by the idolaters in being refused the privilege of offering sacrifices to the apostles, prepared them to turn against these ministers of God with a zeal which approached that of the enthusiasm with which they had hailed them as gods. The malicious

Jews did not hesitate to take full advantage of the superstition and credulity of this heathen people to carry out their cruel designs. They incited them to attack the apostles by force; and they charged them not to allow Paul an opportunity to speak, alleging that if they did so he would bewitch the people.

The Lystrians rushed upon the apostles with great rage and fury. They hurled stones violently; and Paul, bruised, battered, and fainting, felt that his end had come. The martyrdom of Stephen was brought vividly to his mind, and the cruel part he had acted on that occasion. He fell to the ground apparently dead, and the infuriated mob dragged his insensible body through the gates of the city, and threw it beneath the walls. The apostle mentions this occurrence in the subsequent enumeration of his sufferings for the truth's sake: "Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often; in perils of waters; in perils of robbers; in perils by mine own countrymen; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils among false brethren."

The disciples stood around the body of Paul, lamenting over him whom they supposed was dead, when he suddenly lifted his head, and arose to his feet with the praise of God upon his lips. To the disciples this seemed like a resurrection from the dead, a miracle of God to preserve the life of his faithful servant. They rejoiced with inexpressible gladness over his restoration, and praised God with renewed faith in the doctrine preached by the apostles.

These disciples had been newly converted to the faith through the teachings of Paul, and had stood steadfast notwithstanding the misrepresentation and malignant persecution of the Jews. In fact, the unreasoning opposition of those wicked men had only confirmed these devoted brethren in the faith of Christ; and the restoration to life of Paul seemed to set the signet of God upon their belief.

Timothy had been converted through the ministration of Paul, and was an eye-witness of the sufferings of the apostle upon this occasion. He stood by his apparently dead body, and saw him arise, bruised and covered with blood, not with groans nor murmurings upon his lips, but with praises to Jesus Christ, that he was permitted to suffer for his name. In one of the epistles of Paul to Timothy he refers to his personal knowledge of this occurrence. Timothy became the most important help to Paul and to the church. He was the faithful companion of the apostle in his trials and in his joys. The father of Timothy was a Greek; but his mother was a Jewess, and he had been thoroughly educated in the Jewish religion.

#### JEW AND GENTILE.

THE next day after the stoning of Paul, the apostles left the city, according to the direction of Christ: "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." They departed for Derbe, where their labors were blessed by leading many souls to embrace the truth. But both Paul and Barnabas returned again to visit Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the fields of labor where they

had met such opposition and persecution. In all those places were many souls that believed the truth; and the apostles felt it their duty to strengthen and encourage their brethren who were exposed to reproach and bitter opposition. They were determined to securely bind off the work which they had done, that it might not ravel out.

Churches were duly organized in the places before mentioned, elders appointed in each church, and the proper order and system established there. Paul and Barnabas labored in Antioch some time; and many Gentiles there embraced the doctrine of Christ. But certain Jews from Judea raised a general consternation among the believing Gentiles by agitating the question of circumcision. They asserted, with great assurance, that none could be saved without being circumcised, and keeping the entire ceremonial law.

This was an important question, and one which affected the church in a very great degree. Paul and Barnabas met it with promptness, and opposed introducing the subject to the Gentiles. They were opposed in this by the believing Jews of Antioch, who favored the position of those from Judea. The matter resulted in much discussion and want of harmony in the church, until finally the church at Antioch, apprehending that a division among them would occur from any further discussion of the question, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, together with some responsible men of Antioch, to Jerusalem, and lay the matter before the apostles and elders. There they were to meet delegates from the different churches, and those who had come to attend the approaching annual festivals. Meanwhile all

controversy was to cease, until a final decision should be made by the responsible men of the church. This decision was then to be universally accepted by the various churches throughout the country.

The apostles, in making their way to Jerusalem, called upon the brethren of the cities through which they passed, and encouraged them by relating their experience in the work of God, and the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith. Upon arriving at Jerusalem, the delegates from Antioch related before the assembly of the churches the success that had attended the ministry with them, and the confusion that had resulted from the fact that certain converted Pharisees declared that the Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.

The Jews were not generally prepared to move as fast as the providence of God opened the way. It was evident to them from the result of the apostles' labors among the Gentiles that the converts among the latter people would far exceed the Jewish converts; and that if the restrictions and ceremonies of the Jewish law were not made obligatory upon their accepting the faith of Christ, the national peculiarities of the Jews, which kept them distinct from all other people, would finally disappear from among those who embraced the gospel truths.

The Jews had prided themselves upon their divinely appointed services; and they concluded that as God once specified the Hebrew manner of worship, it was impossible that he should ever authorize a change in any of its specifications. They decided that Christianity must connect

itself with the Jewish laws and ceremonies. They were slow to discern to the end of that which had been abolished by the death of Christ, and to perceive that all their sacrificial offerings had but prefigured the death of the Son of God, in which type had met its antitype, rendering valueless the divinely appointed ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jewish religion.

Paul had prided himself upon his Pharisaical strictness; but after the revelation of Christ to him on the road to Damascus, the mission of the Saviour, and his own work in the conversion of the Gentiles, were plain to his mind; and he fully comprehended the difference between a living faith and a dead formalism. Paul still claimed to be one of the children of Abraham, and kept the ten commandments in letter and in spirit as faithfully as he had ever done before his conversion to Christianity. But he knew that the typical ceremonies must soon altogether cease, since that which they had shadowed forth had come to pass, and the light of the gospel was shedding its glory upon the Jewish religion, giving a new significance to its ancient rites.

The question of circumcision was warmly discussed in the assembly. The Gentile converts lived in a community of idolaters. Sacrifices and offerings were made to senseless idols by these ignorant and superstitious people. The priests of these gods carried on an extensive merchandise with the offerings brought to them; and the Jews feared that the Gentile converts would bring Christianity into disrepute by purchasing those things which had been offered to idols, and thereby sanctioning, in some measure, an idolatrous worship.

Also the Gentiles were accustomed to eat the flesh of animals that had been strangled; while the Jews had been divinely instructed with regard to the food they should use. They were particular, in killing beasts, that the blood should flow from the body, else it was not regarded as healthful meat. God had given these injunctions to the Jews for the purpose of preserving their health and strength. The Jews considered it sinful to use blood as an article of diet. They considered that the blood was the life; that the shedding of blood was in consequence of sin, and was a sacred emblem of the Son of God.

The Gentiles, on the contrary, practiced catching the blood which flowed from the victim of sacrifice, and drinking it, or using it in the preparation of their food. The Jews could not change the customs which they had so long observed, and which they had adopted under the special direction of God. Therefore, as things then stood, if Jew and Gentile came to eat at the same table, the former would be shocked and outraged by the habits and manners of the latter.

The Gentiles, and especially the Greeks, were extremely licentious; and many, in accepting Christianity, had united the truth to their un-sanctified natures, and continued to practice fornication. The Jewish Christians could not tolerate such immorality, which was not even regarded as criminal by the Greeks. The Jews, therefore, held it highly proper that circumcision, and the observance of the ceremonial law, should be brought to the Gentile converts as a test of their sincerity and devotion. This they believed would prevent the accession to the church of those who were carried away by mere feeling, or who adopt-

ed the faith without a true conversion of heart, and who might afterward disgrace the cause by immorality and excesses.

The questions thus brought under the consideration of the council seemed to present insurmountable difficulties, viewed in whatever light. But the Holy Ghost had, in reality, already settled this problem, upon the decision of which depended the prosperity, and even the existence, of the Christian church. Grace, wisdom, and sanctified judgment were given to the apostles to decide the vexed question.

Peter reasoned that the Holy Ghost had decided the matter by descending with equal power upon the uncircumcised Gentiles and the circumcised Jews. He recounted his vision, in which God had presented before him a sheet filled with all manner of four-footed beasts, and had bidden him kill and eat; that when he had refused, affirming that he had never eaten that which was common or unclean, God had said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

He related the plain interpretation of these words, which was given to him almost immediately in his summons to go to the Gentile centurion, and instruct him in the faith of Christ. This message showed that God was no respecter of persons, but accepted and acknowledged those who feared him, and worked righteousness. Peter told of his astonishment, when, in speaking the words of truth to the Gentiles, he witnessed the Holy Spirit take possession of his hearers, both Jews and Gentiles. The same light and glory that was reflected upon the circumcised Jews, shone also upon the countenances of the uncircumcised Gentiles. This was the warning

of God that he should not regard the one as inferior to the other; for the blood of Jesus Christ could cleanse from all uncleanness.

Peter had reasoned once before, in like manner, with his brethren, concerning the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, and his fellowship with them. On that occasion he had related how the Holy Ghost fell on them, and had said, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could resist God?" Now, with equal fervor and force, he said, "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 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?"

This yoke was not the law of the ten commandments, as those who oppose the binding claim of the law assert; but Peter referred to the law of ceremonies, which was made null and void by the crucifixion of Christ. This address of Peter brought the assembly to a point where they could listen with reason to Paul and Barnabas, who related their experience in working among the Gentiles. "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."

James bore his testimony with decision—that God designed to bring in the Gentiles to enjoy all the privileges of the Jews. The Holy Ghost saw good not to impose the ceremonial law on the Gentile converts; and the apostles and elders,

after careful investigation of the subject, saw the matter in the same light, and their mind was as the mind of the Spirit of God. James presided at the council, and his final decision was, "Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God."

This ended the discussion. In this instance we have a refutation of the doctrine held by the Roman Catholic Church—that Peter was the head of the church. Those who, as popes, have claimed to be his successors, have no foundation for their pretensions. Nothing in the life of Peter gives sanction to those pretended claims. If the professed successors of Peter had imitated his example, they would have taken no authoritative position, but one on an equality with that of their brethren.

James, in this instance, seems to have been chosen to decide the matter which was brought before the council. It was his sentence that the ceremonial law, and especially the ordinance of circumcision, be not in any wise urged upon the Gentiles, or even recommended to them. James sought to impress the fact upon his brethren that the Gentiles, in turning to God from idolatry, made a great change in their faith; and that much caution should be used not to trouble their minds with perplexing and doubtful questions, lest they be discouraged in following Christ.

The Gentiles, however, were to take no course which should materially conflict with the views of their Jewish brethren, or which would create prejudice in their minds against them. The apostles and elders therefore agreed to instruct the Gentiles by letter to abstain from meats offered to idols, from fornication, from things strangled,

and from blood. They were required to keep the commandments, and to lead holy lives. The Gentiles were assured that the men who had urged circumcision upon them were not authorized to do so by the apostles.

Paul and Barnabas were recommended to them as men who had hazarded their lives for the Lord. Judas and Silas were sent with these apostles to declare to the Gentiles, by word of mouth, the decision of the council: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well." The four servants of God were sent to Antioch with the epistle and message, which put an end to all controversy; for it was the voice of the highest authority upon earth.

The council which decided this case was composed of the founders of the Jewish and Gentile Christian churches. Elders from Jerusalem, and deputies from Antioch, were present; and the most influential churches were represented. The council did not claim infallibility in their deliberations, but moved from the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. They saw that God himself had decided this question by favoring the Gentiles with the Holy Ghost; and it was left for them to follow the guidance of the Spirit.

The entire body of Christians were not called to vote upon the question. The apostles and elders—men of influence and judgment—framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon

generally accepted by the Christian churches. All were not pleased, however, with this decision; there was a faction of false brethren who assumed to engage in a work on their own responsibility. They indulged in murmuring and fault-finding, proposing new plans, and seeking to pull down the work of the experienced men whom God had ordained to teach the doctrine of Christ. The church has had such obstacles to meet from the first, and will ever have them to the close of time.

Jerusalem was the metropolis of the Jews, and there were found the greatest exclusiveness and bigotry. The Jewish Christians who lived in sight of the temple would naturally allow their minds to revert to the peculiar privileges of the Jews as a nation. As they saw Christianity departing from the ceremonies and traditions of Judaism, and perceived that the peculiar sacredness with which the Jewish customs had been invested would soon be lost sight of in the light of the new faith, many grew indignant against Paul, as one who had, in a great measure, caused this change. Even the disciples were not all prepared to willingly accept the decision of the council. Some were zealous for the ceremonial law, and regarded Paul with jealousy, because they thought his principles were lax in regard to the obligation of the Jewish law.

When Peter, at a later date, visited Antioch, he acted in accordance with the light given him from Heaven, and the decision of the council. He overcame his natural prejudice so far as to sit at table with the Gentile converts. But when certain Jews who were most zealous for the ceremonial law came from Jerusalem, he changed his

deportment toward the converts from paganism in so marked a degree that it left a most painful impression upon their minds. Quite a number followed Peter's example. Even Barnabas was influenced by the injudicious course of the apostle; and a division was threatened in the church. But Paul, who saw the wrong done the church through the double part acted by Peter, openly rebuked him for thus disguising his true sentiments.

Peter saw the error into which he had fallen, and immediately set about repairing it as far as possible. God, who knoweth the end from the beginning, permitted Peter to exhibit this weakness of character, in order that he might see that there was nothing in himself whereof he might boast. God also saw that, in time to come, some would be so deluded as to claim for Peter and his pretended successors, exalted prerogatives which belong only to God; and this history of the apostle's weakness was to remain as a proof of his human fallibility, and of the fact that he stood in no way above the level of the other apostles.

#### IMPRISONMENT OF PAUL AND SILAS.

AFTER a time Paul again visited Lystra, where he had been greeted as a god by the heathen; where the opposing Jews had followed on his track, and by falsehood and misrepresentation had turned the reverence of the people into insult, abuse, and a determination to kill him. Yet we find him again on the scene of his former danger, looking after the fruit of his labors there.

He found that the converts to Christ had not been intimidated by the violent persecution of the apostles; but, on the contrary, were confirmed

in the faith, believing that through trial and suffering, the kingdom of Christ would be reached.

Paul found that Timothy was closely bound to him by the ties of Christian union. This man had been instructed in the Holy Scriptures from his childhood, and educated for a strictly religious life. He had witnessed the sufferings of Paul upon his former visit to Lystra, and the bonds of Christian sympathy had knit his heart firmly to that of the apostle. Paul accordingly thought best to take Timothy with him to assist in his labors.

The extreme caution of Paul is manifested in this act. He had refused the companionship of Mark, because he dared not trust him in an emergency. But in Timothy he saw one who fully appreciated the ministerial work, who respected his position, and was not appalled at the prospect of suffering and persecution. Yet he did not venture to accept Timothy, an untried youth, without diligent inquiry with regard to his life and character. After fully satisfying himself on those points, Paul received Timothy as his fellow-laborer and son in the gospel.

Paul, with his usual good judgment, caused Timothy to be circumcised; not that God required it, but in order to remove from the minds of the Jews an obstacle to Timothy's ministration. Paul was to labor from place to place in the synagogues, and there to preach Christ. If his companion should be known as an uncircumcised heathen, the work of both would be greatly hindered by the prejudice and bigotry of the people. The apostle everywhere met a storm of persecution. He desired to bring the Jews to Christianity, and sought, as far as was consistent with the faith, to remove every pretext for opposition.

Yet while he conceded this much to Jewish prejudice, his faith and teachings declared that circumcision or uncircumcision was nothing, but the gospel of Christ was everything.

At Philippi, Lydia, of the city of Thyatira, heard the apostles, and her heart was open to receive the truth. She and her household were converted and baptized, and she entreated the apostles to make her house their home.

Day after day, as they went to their devotions, a woman with the spirit of divination followed them, crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This woman was a special agent of Satan; and, as the devils were troubled by the presence of Christ, so the evil spirit which possessed her was ill at ease in the presence of the apostles. Satan knew that his kingdom was invaded, and took this way of opposing the work of the ministers of God. The words of recommendation uttered by this woman were an injury to the cause, distracting the minds of the people from the truths presented to them, and throwing disrepute upon the work by causing people to believe that the men who spoke with the Spirit and power of God were actuated by the same spirit as this emissary of Satan.

The apostles endured this opposition for several days; then Paul, under inspiration of the Spirit of God, commanded the evil spirit to leave the woman. Satan was thus met and rebuked. The immediate and continued silence of the woman testified that the apostles were the servants of God, and that the demon had acknowledged them to be such, and had obeyed their command. When the woman was dispossessed of the spirit

of the devil, and restored to herself, her masters were alarmed for their craft. They saw that all hope of receiving money from her divinations and soothsayings was at an end, and perceived that, if the apostles were allowed to continue their work, their own source of income would soon be entirely cut off.

A mighty cry was therefore raised against the servants of God, for many were interested in gaining money by Satanic delusions. They brought the apostles before the magistrates with the charge that "these men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, being Romans."

Satan stirred up a frenzy among the people. Mob spirit prevailed, and was sanctioned by the authorities, who, with their official hands, tore the clothes from the apostles, and commanded them to be scourged. "And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

The apostles were left in a very painful condition. Their lacerated and bleeding backs were in contact with the rough stone floor, while their feet were elevated and bound fast in the stocks. In this unnatural position they suffered extreme torture; yet they did not groan nor complain, but conversed with and encouraged each other, and praised God with grateful hearts that they were found worthy to suffer shame for his dear name. Paul was reminded of the persecution he had been instrumental in heaping upon the dis-

ciples of Christ, and he was devoutly thankful that his eyes had been opened to see, and his heart to feel, the glorious truths of the gospel of the Son of God, and that he had been privileged to preach the doctrine which he had once despised.

There, in the pitchy darkness and desolation of the dungeon, Paul and Silas prayed, and sung songs of praise to God. The other prisoners heard with astonishment the voice of prayer and praise issuing from the inner prison. They had been accustomed to hear shrieks and moans, cursing and swearing, breaking at night upon the silence of the prison; but they had never before heard the words of prayer and praise ascending from that gloomy cell. The guards and prisoners marveled who were these men, who, cold, hungry, and tortured, could still rejoice and converse cheerfully with each other.

Meanwhile the magistrates had returned to their homes congratulating themselves upon having quelled a tumult, by their prompt and decisive measures. But upon their way home they heard more fully concerning the character and work of the men whom they had sentenced to scourging and imprisonment. They also saw the woman who had been freed from Satanic influence, and who had been a very troublesome subject to them. They were sensibly struck by the change in her countenance and demeanor. She had become quiet, peaceful, and possessed of her right mind. They were indignant with themselves when they discovered that, in all probability, they had visited upon two innocent men the rigorous penalty of the Roman law against the worst criminals. They decided that in the morning they would command them to be pri-

vately released, and escorted in safety from the city beyond the danger of violence from the mob.

But while men were cruel and vindictive, or criminally negligent of the solemn responsibilities devolving upon them, God had not forgotten to be gracious to his suffering servants. An angel was sent from Heaven to release the apostles. As he neared the Roman prison, the earth trembled beneath his feet, the whole city was shaken by the earthquake, and the prison walls reeled like a reed in the wind. The heavily bolted doors flew open; the chains and fetters fell from the hands and feet of every prisoner.

The keeper of the jail had heard with amazement the prayers and singing of the imprisoned apostles. When they were led in, he had seen their swollen and bleeding wounds, and he had himself caused their feet to be fastened in the instruments of torture. He had expected to hear bitter wailing, groans, and imprecations; but lo! his ears were greeted with joyful praise. He fell asleep with these sounds in his ears; but was awakened by the earthquake, and the shaking of the prison walls.

Upon awakening he saw all the prison doors open, and his first thought was that the prisoners had escaped. He remembered with what an explicit charge the prisoners of the night before had been intrusted to his care, and he felt sure that death would be the penalty of his apparent unfaithfulness. He cried out in the bitterness of his spirit that it was better for him to die by his own hand than to submit to a disgraceful execution. He was about to kill himself, when Paul cried out with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here."

The severity with which the jailer had treated the apostles had not roused their resentment, or they would have allowed him to commit suicide. But their hearts were filled with the love of Christ, and they held no malice against their persecutors. The jailer dropped his sword, and called for a light. He hastened into the inner dungeon, and fell down before Paul and Silas, begging their forgiveness. He then brought them up into the open court, and inquired of them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

He had trembled because of the wrath of God expressed in the earthquake; he had been ready to die by his own hand for fear of the penalty of the Roman law, when he thought the prisoners had escaped; but now all these things were of little consequence to him compared with the new and strange dread that agitated his mind, and his desire to possess that tranquility and cheerfulness manifested by the apostles under their extreme suffering and abuse. He saw the light of Heaven mirrored in their countenances; he knew that God had interposed in a miraculous manner to save their lives; and the words of the woman possessed by the power of divination came to his mind with peculiar force: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."

He saw his own deplorable condition in contrast with that of the disciples, and with deep humility and reverence asked them to show him the way of life. "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." The jailer then washed the wounds of the apos-

bles, and ministered unto them; and was baptized by them. A sanctifying influence spread among the inmates of the prison, and the hearts of all were opened to receive the truths uttered by the apostles. They were convinced also that the living God, whom these men served, had miraculously released them from bondage.

The citizens had been greatly terrified by the earthquake. When the officers informed the magistrates in the morning of what had occurred at the prison, they were alarmed, and sent the sergeants to liberate the apostles from prison. "But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."

Paul and Silas felt that to maintain the dignity of Christ's church, they must not submit to the illegal course proposed by the Roman magistrates. The apostles were Roman citizens, and it was unlawful to scourge a Roman, save for the most flagrant crime, or to deprive him of his liberty without a fair trial and condemnation. They had been publicly thrust into prison, and now refused to be privately released, without proper acknowledgments on the part of the magistrates.

When this word was brought to the authorities they were alarmed for fear the apostles would make complaint of their unlawful treatment to the emperor, and cause the magistrates to lose their positions. They accordingly visited the prison, apologized to the apostles for their injustice and cruelty, and themselves conducted them out of the prison, and entreated them to depart

out of the city. Thus the Lord wrought for his servants in their extremity.

The magistrates entreated them to depart, because they feared their influence over the people, and the power of Heaven that had interposed in behalf of those innocent men who had been unlawfully scourged and imprisoned. Acting upon the principles given them by Christ, the apostles would not urge their presence where it was not desired. They complied with the request of the magistrates, but did not hasten their departure precipitously. They went rejoicing from the prison to the house of Lydia, where they met the new converts to the faith of Christ, and related all the wonderful dealings of God with them. They related their night's experience, and the conversion of the keeper of the prison, and of the prisoners.

The apostles viewed their labors in Philippi as not in vain. They there met much opposition and persecution; but the intervention of Providence in their behalf, and the conversion of the jailer and all his house, more than atoned for the disgrace and suffering they had endured. The Philippians saw represented in the deportment and presence of mind of the apostles the spirit of the religion of Jesus Christ. The apostles might have fled when the earthquake opened their prison doors, and loosened their fetters; but that would have been an acknowledgment that they were criminals, which would have been a disgrace to the gospel of Christ; the jailer would have been exposed to the penalty of death, and the general influence would have been bad. As it was, Paul controlled the liberated prisoners so perfectly that not one attempted to escape.

The Philippians could but acknowledge the

nobility and generosity of the apostles in their course of action, especially in forbearing to appeal to a higher power against the magistrates who had persecuted them. The news of their unjust imprisonment, and miraculous deliverance, was noised about through all that region, and brought the apostles and their ministry before the notice of a large number who would not otherwise have been reached. Christianity was placed upon a high plane, and the converts to the faith were greatly strengthened.

Thus we have the establishment of the church at Philippi under peculiar circumstances, and its numbers steadily increased. Among them were men of wealth and influence, whose noble generosity and ready sympathy were ever on the side of right. They often came to the aid of the apostles in their affliction and pecuniary necessity. Paul said of these brethren, "Now ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."

He sends also salutations from the brethren to Cæsar's household; for officers in the employment of the emperor had been converted under the labors of the apostles, and through the manifestation of God in their deliverance from prison.

#### OPPOSITION AT THESSALONICA.

AFTER leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas made their way to Thessalonica. They were there privileged to address a large concourse of people in the synagogue, with good effect. Their ap-

pearance bore evidence of their recent shameful treatment, and necessitated an explanation of what they had endured. This they made without exalting themselves, but magnified the grace of God, which had wrought their deliverance. The apostles, however, felt that they had no time to dwell upon their own afflictions. They were burdened with the message of Christ, and deeply in earnest in his work.

Paul made the prophecies in the Old Testament relating to the Messiah, and the agreement of those prophecies with the life and teachings of Christ, clear in the minds of all among his hearers who would accept evidence upon the subject. Christ in his ministry had opened the minds of his disciples to the Old-Testament scriptures; "beginning with Moses and the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." Peter, in preaching Christ, produced his evidence from the Old-Testament scriptures, beginning with Moses and the prophets. Stephen pursued the same course, and Paul followed these examples, giving inspired proof in regard to the mission, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. He clearly proved his identity with the Messiah, through the testimony of Moses and the prophets; and showed that it was the voice of Christ which spoke through the prophets and patriarchs from the days of Adam to that time.

He showed how impossible it was for them to explain the passover without Christ, as revealed in the Old Testament; and that the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness symbolized Jesus Christ, who was lifted up upon the cross. He taught them that all their religious services and

ceremonies would have been valueless if they should now reject the Saviour, who was revealed to them, and who was represented in those ceremonies. He showed them that Christ was the key which unlocked the Old Testament, and gave access to its rich treasures.

Thus Paul preached to the Thessalonians three successive Sabbaths, reasoning with them from the Scriptures, upon the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. He showed them that the expectation of the Jews with regard to the Messiah was not according to prophecy, which had foretold a Saviour to come in humility and poverty, to be rejected, despised, and slain.

He declared that Christ would come a second time in power and great glory, and establish his kingdom upon the earth, subduing all authority, and ruling over all nations. Paul was an Adventist; he presented the important event of the second coming of Christ with such power and reasoning that a deep impression, which never wore away, was made upon the minds of the Thessalonians.

They had strong faith in the second coming of Christ, and greatly feared that they might not live to witness the event. Paul, however, did not leave them with the impression that Christ would come in their day. He referred them to coming events which must transpire before that time should arrive. He warned them that they should "be not shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

Paul foresaw that there was danger of his words being misinterpreted, and that some would claim that he, by special revelation, warned the people of the immediate coming of Christ. This he knew would cause confusion of faith; for disappointment usually brings unbelief. He therefore cautioned the brethren to receive no such message as coming from him.

In his Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul reminds them of his manner of laboring among them. 1 Thess. 2:1-4. He declares that he did not seek to win souls through flattery, deception, or guile. "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." Paul rebuked and warned his converts with the faithfulness of a father to his children, while, at the same time, he cherished them as tenderly as a fond mother would her child.

When the Jews saw that the apostles were successful in obtaining large congregations; that many were accepting their doctrines—among them the leading women of the city, and multitudes of Gentiles—they were filled with envy and jealousy. These Jews were not then in favor with the Roman power, because they had raised an insurrection in the metropolis not long previous to this time. They were regarded with suspicion, and their liberty was, in a measure, restricted. They now saw an opportunity to take advantage of circumstances to re-establish themselves in favor, and, at the same time, to throw reproach upon the apostles, and the converts to Christianity.

This they set about doing by representing that the leaders in the new doctrine were raising a tumult among the people. They accordingly ex-

cited the passions of the worthless mob by cunningly devised falsehoods, and incited them to make an uproarious assault upon the house of Jason, the temporary home of the apostles. This they did with a fury more like that of wild beasts than of men. They had been instructed by the Jews to bring out Paul and Silas, and drag them to the authorities, accusing them of creating all this uproar, and of raising an insurrection.

When they had broken into the house, however, they found that the apostles were not there. Friends who had apprehended what was about to occur, had hastened them out of the city, and they had departed for Berea. In their mad disappointment at not finding Paul and Silas, the mob seized Jason and his brother, and dragged them before the authorities with the complaint: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."

The Jews interpreted the words of Paul to mean that Christ would come the second time in that generation, and reign upon the earth as king over all nations. The charge was brought against the apostles with so much determination that the magistrates credited it, and put Jason under bonds to keep the peace, as Paul and Silas were not to be found. The persecuting Jews flattered themselves that by their course toward the Christians they had regained the confidence of the magistrates, and had established their reputation as loyal citizens, while they had, at the same time, gratified their malice toward the apostles, and transferred the suspicion which had

heretofore rested upon themselves to the converts to Christianity.

In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

Those who preach unpopular truth in our day meet with determined resistance, as did the apostles. They need expect no more favorable reception from a large majority of professed Christians than did Paul from his Jewish brethren. There will be a union of opposing elements against them; for however diverse from each other different organizations may be in their sentiments and religious faith, their forces are united in trampling under foot the fourth commandment in the law of God.

Those who will not themselves accept the truth are most zealous that others shall not receive it; and those are not wanting who perseveringly manufacture falsehoods, and stir up the base passions of the people to make the truth of God of none effect. But the messengers of Christ must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith, firmness, and courage, and, in the name of Jesus, keep at their work as did the apostles. They must sound the note of warning to the world, teaching the transgressors of the law what is sin, and pointing them to Jesus Christ as its great and only remedy.

## PAUL AT BEREIA AND ATHENS.

AT Berea Paul commenced his work again by going into the synagogues of the Jews to preach the gospel of Christ. He says of them, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women, which were Greeks, and of men not a few."

We here see that questioning doubts and obstinate unbelief were not commended by the inspired apostle. In the presentation of the truth, in these last days, a diligent searching of the Scriptures should be awakened in those who honestly desire to be right. This will produce similar results to those that attended the labors of the apostles in Berea. Those who preach the truth in these days meet many who are the opposite of the Bereans. They cannot controvert the doctrine presented to them, yet they manifest the utmost reluctance to investigate the evidence offered in its favor, and assume that even if it is the truth it is a matter of little or no consequence whether or not they accept it as such. They think that their old customs and faith are good enough for them. But the Lord, who has sent out the apostles and their successors to their work, giving them a message to bear to the world, will hold the people responsible for the manner in which they treat that message of heavenly origin. God will judge all according to the light which has been presented to them.

The apostles taught during the day, dissemi-

nating light to those who were in darkness; and then, through the larger portion of the night, labored with their hands to sustain themselves without calling upon any one for material aid. They did this to remove all suspicion that they were seeking personal advantage. Paul afterward writes, "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."

The minds of the Bereans were not narrowed by prejudice, and they were willing to investigate and receive the truths preached by the apostles. If men and women would follow the example of the noble Bereans, in searching the Scriptures daily, and in comparing the messages brought to them with what is there recorded, there would be thousands loyal to God's law, where there is one to-day. Even many who profess to love God have no desire to change from error to truth, but cling to the pleasing fables of Satan's creation. Error never sanctifies the receiver; but truth of heavenly origin purifies the heart.

The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica, filled with jealousy and hatred of the apostles, not content with having driven them from their labors among the Thessalonians, followed them to Berea, and again stirred up the excitable passions of the lower class to do them violence. The teachers of the truth were again driven from their field of labor. Persecution followed them from city to city. This hasty retreat from Berea deprived Paul of the opportunity he had anticipated of again visiting the brethren at Thessalonica.

Although the opposers of the doctrine of Christ

could not hinder its actual advancement, they still succeeded in making the work of the apostles exceedingly hard. God, in his providence, permitted Satan to hinder the return of Paul to the Thessalonians. The faithful apostle pressed on through opposition, conflict, and persecution, to carry out the purpose of God as revealed to him in vision.

Paul was sent from Berea to Athens. He was accompanied on his journey by some of the Bereans who had been newly brought into the faith, and who were desirous of learning more concerning the way of life from his teachings. When the apostle arrived at Athens, he sent these men back with a message to Silas and Timotheus to join him immediately in that city. The latter had remained behind in Berea to carry on the work so well commenced there, and to guide the new converts into the mysteries of their holy faith.

Athens was indeed the metropolis of heathendom. Paul did not here meet with ignorant, superstitious idolaters, as at Lystra; but he encountered a people famous for their intelligence and education. Sculpture, representing gods, and deified heroes of history and poetry, met the eye in every direction; while magnificent architecture and paintings represented the national glory, and the national worship of imaginary gods.

The senses were entranced by the beauty and glory of art. Sanctuaries and temples, erected with a total disregard to cost, reared their lofty forms on every hand. Victories of arms, and deeds of renowned men, were commemorated by tablets, and inscriptions upon marble. All these

things made this renowned city like a vast gallery of art. As Paul looked upon the beauty and grandeur surrounding him, and saw the city crowded with idols, his spirit was stirred with jealousy for God, whom he saw dishonored on every side.

His heart was drawn out in deep pity for the citizens of that grand metropolis, who, notwithstanding their intellectual greatness, were given to idolatry. Paul was not deceived by the grandeur and beauty of that which his eyes rested upon, nor by the material wisdom and philosophy which encountered him in this great center of learning. He perceived that human art had done its best to deify vice and make falsehood attractive by glorifying the memory of those whose whole lives had been devoted to leading men to deny God.

The great moral nature of the apostle was so alive to the attraction of heavenly things, that the joy and splendor of those riches that will never fade occupied his mind, and made valueless the earthly pomp and glory with which he was surrounded. As he saw the magnificence of the city, and its costly devices, he realized their seductive power over the minds of the lovers of art and science; his mind was deeply impressed by the importance of the work before him in Athens. He longed with affection for the sympathy and aid of his fellow-laborers. His solitude in that city of magnificence, where God was not worshiped, was oppressive. As far as human fellowship was concerned, he felt himself to be utterly isolated. In his Epistle to the Thessalonians he expresses his feelings in these words: "Left at Athens alone."

Paul's work was to bear the tidings of salvation to a people who had no intelligent understanding of God and his plans. He was not traveling for the purpose of sight-seeing, nor to gratify a morbid desire for new and strange scenes. His dejection of mind was caused by the apparently insurmountable obstacles which presented themselves against his reaching the minds of the people of Athens. Grieved and indignant at the idolatry everywhere visible about him, he felt a holy zeal for his Master's cause. He sought out his Jewish brethren, and, in the Jewish synagogue of Athens, proclaimed the doctrine of Christ. But the principal work of Paul in that city was to deal with paganism.

The religion of the Athenians, of which they made great boast, was of no value, for it was destitute of the knowledge of the true God. It consisted, in great part, of art-worship, and a round of dissipating amusement and festivity. It wanted the virtue of true goodness. Genuine religion gives men the victory over themselves; but a religion of dry intellect and taste is lacking in the essential qualities to raise its possessor above the evils of his nature, and to connect him with God. On the very stones of the altar in Athens this great want was expressed by the inscription, "To the Unknown God." Yes, though boasting of their wisdom, wealth, and skill of art and science, the learned Athenians could but acknowledge that the great Ruler of the universe was unknown to them.

The great men of the city seemed hungering for matters of discussion, in which they would have opportunity to display their wisdom and oratory. While waiting for Silas and Timotheus

to meet him, Paul was not idle. "He disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him." The great men of Athens were not long in finding out this singular teacher, who propounded such strange things to the people on all suitable occasions.

Some who prided themselves upon the depth of their intellectual culture entered into conversation with him. This soon drew a crowd of listeners about them. Some were prepared to ridicule the apostle, as one far beneath them, socially and intellectually, and said jeeringly among themselves, "What will this babbler say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."

The Stoics and the Epicureans encountered him; but they, and all others who came in contact with him, soon saw that he had a fund of knowledge even greater than their own. His intellectual power commanded the respect and attention of the more intelligent and learned; while his earnest, logical reasoning, and his power of oratory, held the promiscuous audience. Thus the apostle stood undaunted, meeting his opposers on their own ground, matching logic with their logic, and philosophy with their philosophy.

They reminded him of Socrates, a great philosopher, who was condemned to death because he was a setter forth of strange gods. Paul was counseled not to endanger his life in the same way. But the apostle's discourse riveted the attention of the people; and his unaffected wisdom commanded their admiration and respect. He was not silenced by the science or irony of the

*savants*; and, after bandying many words with him and satisfying themselves that he was determined to accomplish his errand among them, and tell his story at all hazards, they decided to give him a fair opportunity of doing so.

They accordingly conducted him to Mars' Hill. This place was the highest on the Athenian coast, and its recollections and associations were such as to cause it to be regarded with superstitious awe and reverence, that with some amounted to dread. There courts of justice had been held to determine upon criminal cases, and to decide difficult religious questions. There was a platform in the open air, with seats for the judges hewn out of solid rock. This platform was reached by stone steps. At a little distance below stood the temple of the gods, and their sanctuaries; and massive architecture, sculpture, and statuary made the place one of great magnificence.

Here the Athenians conducted Paul, away from the public thoroughfares, and the tumult of promiscuous discussion; for the frivolous, thoughtless class of society did not care to follow him to this place of highest reverence. Here the apostle could be heard without interruption. Learned men addressed him: "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean." "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, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all

things therein, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, 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."

Thus, in the most impressive manner, with hand outstretched toward the temple crowded with idols, Paul poured out the burden of his soul, and with deep reasoning revealed the fallacies of the religion of the Athenians. His words could not be controverted. Pointing to their statuary and idols, he declared to them that God could not be likened to forms of men's device. The works of art could not, in the faintest sense, represent the glory of the infinite God. He reminded them that their images had no breath nor life. They were controlled by human power; they could move only as the hands of men moved them; and those who worshiped them were in every way superior to that which they worshiped. Pointing to noble specimens of manhood about him, he declared, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Man was created in the image of this infinite God, being blessed with intellectual power, and a perfect and symmetrical body. He declared that the heavens were not large enough to con-

tain God; yet how much less able were those temples made with hands. Paul, under the inspiration of his subject, soared above the comprehension of the idolatrous assembly, and sought to draw their minds beyond the limits of their false religion to right views of the true Deity, whom they instinctively acknowledged, and had called the "Unknown God." This glorious Being, whom he now declared unto them, was independent of man, needing nothing from his hand to add to his power and glory.

The people were carried away with admiration of Paul's reasoning and eloquence. The Epicureans began to breathe more freely, believing that he was strengthening their position, that everything had its origin in blind chance; and that certain ruling principles controlled the universe. But his next sentence brought a cloud to their brows. He asserted the creative power of God, and the existence of his overruling providence. He declared unto them the true God, who is the living center of government.

This divine Ruler had, in the dark ages of the world, passed lightly over heathen idolatry; but now he had sent them the light of truth, through his Son; and he exacted repentance from all men unto salvation; not only from the poor and humble, but from the proud philosopher, and the princes of the earth. "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."

As Paul thus spoke of the resurrection from the dead, his speech was interrupted. Some

mocked; others put his words aside, saying, "We will hear thee again of this matter." Thus the teaching of the apostle was brought to a close; for the Athenians, though enjoying the reputation of high literary and scientific culture, clung to their idolatry, and turned away from the light of a true and reasonable religion. When a people are wholly satisfied with their own attainments, little more need be expected of them. Highly educated, and boasting of their learning and refinement, the Athenians were yearly becoming more corrupt, and having less desire for anything better than that which they possessed.

The labors of Paul in Athens were not wholly in vain. Several became converts to Christianity, and joined themselves to him. His words also, and the description of his attitude and surroundings, as traced by the pen of inspiration, were to be handed down through all coming generations, bearing witness of his unshaken confidence, his courage in loneliness and adversity, and the victory he gained for Christianity, even in the very heart of paganism.

The providence of God has given us this glance at the life of the Athenians, in all their knowledge, refinement, and art, yet marked with vice and shame, that he might show how through his servant he rebuked idolatry, and the sins of a proud, self-sufficient people. The words of Paul memorialize the occasion, and give a treasure of knowledge to the church. He was placed in a position where he might easily have spoken that which would irritate his proud listeners, and bring himself into difficulty. Had his oration been a direct attack upon their gods, and the great men of the city who were before him, he would have

been in danger of meeting the fate of Socrates. But he carefully drew their minds away from heathen deities, by revealing to them the true God, whom he acknowledged, but who was to them unknown, as they themselves confessed by a public inscription.

#### PAUL GOES TO CORINTH.

PAUL did not wait for his brethren, but, leaving them to follow him, went at once to Corinth. Here he adopted a different course of action from that which had marked his labors at Athens. While in the latter place, he had adapted his style to the character of his audience; and much of his time had been devoted to the discussion of natural religion, matching science with science, logic with logic, and philosophy with philosophy. But when the apostle reviewed the time and labor he had there devoted to the exposition of Christianity, and realized that his style of teaching had not been productive of much fruit, he decided upon a different plan of labor in the future. He determined to avoid discussions of theories and elaborate arguments as much as possible, but to urge the doctrine of salvation through Christ upon sinners. In his epistle to his Corinthian brethren, he afterward described his manner of laboring among them:—

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching

was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Here the apostle has given the most successful manner of converting souls from ignorance and the darkness of error, to the light of truth. If ministers would follow more closely the example of Paul in this particular, they would see greater success attending their efforts. If all who minister in word and doctrine would make it their first business to be pure in heart and life, and to connect themselves closely with Heaven, their teaching would have greater power to convict souls, and many would be converted to God.

Corinth presented to the apostle an important field. It was a large mercantile city, closely connected with Rome. Paul saw that if the gospel could be established there it would be rapidly communicated to all parts of the world. The Jews who had recently been banished from Rome, because of their continual insurrections, had taken up their residence at Corinth. Many who were innocent of any wrong were violently persecuted and were compelled to suffer with the guilty. Among this class were Aquila and Priscilla. Paul made the particular acquaintance of these persons, because their trade and his own were the same.

The apostle preached through the day, and at night worked with Aquila and Priscilla at tent-making. While in a city of strangers, he would not be chargeable to any one, but labored with his hands for his own support; and while thus preaching and working, he presented the highest type of Christianity. He combined teaching

with his labor; and, while toiling with those of his trade, he imparted to his fellow-workmen knowledge in regard to the way of salvation. In this way he had access to many whom he could not otherwise have reached.

Corinth was regarded as a very unpromising field of labor. Idolaters were there in numbers, and Venus was their favorite goddess. A large number of dissolute women were employed in connection with the worship of this reigning deity, for the purpose of attracting pleasure-seekers of lax morals. The Corinthians were sunken to the depths of moral pollution.

Paul found himself in the midst of a numerous population of Greeks and Jews. People from all parts of the world were called to this place. The apostle, according to his custom, preached first in the synagogue every Sabbath. When Silas and Timotheus joined him, they labored together with Paul. But when he taught that Jesus was the Messiah, the Jews were angry. "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue."

The apostle, in his teaching, dwelt upon Christ, and proved from Moses and the prophets that he was the long-looked-for Messiah. He did not labor to charm the ear with oratory, nor to engage the mind with philosophical discussions, which would leave the heart untouched. He preached the cross of Christ, not with labored

eloquence of speech, but with the grace of God; and his words had a powerful effect. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."

Paul met the worst opposition from the Jews. They hindered his labor in every way possible, blaspheming the Spirit and power which everywhere attended him, and attributing to Satanic agency the miracles he wrought in the name of Christ. The conversion and baptism of Crispus had the effect to exasperate instead of to convince these stubborn opposers. Their opposition increased as the converts to Christianity increased in numbers. Similar results attend the labors of those who seek to win souls to the present truth. Many professed Christians are the most bitter and unreasonable opposers, in defiance of the most convincing evidence.

Paul was very anxious to understand his duty, and the Lord gave him evidence that he was interested in his work, and cognizant of his anxiety and discouragement. A vision was given him in the night season, assuring him of the divine presence and support, promising him safety and success, and urging him not to keep silence, but to continue his efforts with renewed courage. In the moment of severe trial, conscious strength was thus given him of God to prepare him for still greater demonstrations on the part of the Jews.

The increased success of Paul in presenting Christ to the people, roused the unbelieving Jews to more determined opposition. They arose in a body with great tumult, and brought him before

the judgment-seat of Gallio, who was then deputy of Achaia. They expected, as on former occasions, to have the authorities on their side, and with loud and angry voices preferred their complaints against the apostle, saying, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law."

The proconsul, disgusted with the bigotry and self-righteousness of the accusing Jews, refused to take notice of the charge. As Paul prepared to speak in self-defense, Gallio informed him that it was not necessary; that the affair did not come under his authority. Then turning to the angry accusers, he said, "If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment-seat."

For the first time during Paul's labors in Europe, the mob turned on the side of the minister of truth; and, under the very eye of the proconsul, and without interference from him, the people violently beset the most prominent accusers of the apostle. "Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things."

Gallio was a man of integrity, and would not become the dupe of the jealous and intriguing Jews. Unlike Pilate, he refused to do injustice to one whom he knew to be an innocent man. The Jewish religion was under the protection of Roman power; and the accusers of Paul thought that, if they could fasten upon him the charge of violating the laws of their religion, he would

probably be given into their hands for such punishment as they saw fit to inflict. They thus hoped to compass his death.

Both Greeks and Jews had waited eagerly for the decision of Gallio; and his immediate dismissal of the case, as one that had no bearing upon the public interest, was the signal for the Jews to retire, baffled, and enraged, and for the mob to assail the ruler of the synagogue. Even the ignorant rabble could but perceive the unjust and vindictive spirit which the Jews displayed in their unreasonable attack upon Paul. Thus Christianity obtained a signal victory. If the apostle had been driven from Corinth at this time, because of the malice of the Jews, the whole community of converts to the faith of Christ would have been placed in great danger. The Jews would have endeavored to follow up their advantage, as was their custom, even to the extermination of Christianity.

"And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them."

#### APOLLOS AT CORINTH.

PAUL'S next scene of labor was at Ephesus. He was on his way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost; and his stay at Ephesus was necessarily short. He reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue, and produced such a favorable impression that he was entreated to tarry there, and to protract his labors among them. His plan to visit Jerusalem prevented him from doing so; but he promised to visit them on his return. He left Aquila and Priscilla to

carry forward the good work which he had begun.

It was at this time that Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, visited Ephesus. He had received the highest Grecian cultivation, and was a scholar and an orator. He had heard the teachings of John the Baptist, had received the baptism of repentance, and was a living witness that the work of the prophet was not in vain. Apollos was a deep student of the prophecies, and was a powerful expounder of scripture, publicly proclaiming his faith in Christ, as far as he himself had received the light.

Aquila and Priscilla listened to this able speaker, and saw that his teaching was defective. He had not a thorough knowledge of the mission of Christ, his resurrection and ascension, and of his Spirit, the Comforter, which he sent to his people. They accordingly sent for Apollos, and the educated orator received instruction from them with grateful surprise and joy. They explained the scripture to him more clearly than he had before understood it, and he became one of the ablest defenders of the Christian church. Thus a deep scholar and brilliant orator learned the way of the Lord more perfectly from the teachings of a Christian man and woman whose humble employment was that of tent-making.

Apollos, having seen new light in regard to the way of salvation through Christ, accepted it gladly, and reasoned from the Scriptures with greater power and success than he had ever before done. He felt anxious to visit Corinth, and the Ephesian brethren wrote to the Corinthians to receive him as a teacher who was in full harmony with the acknowledged church of Christ. He accordingly went to Corinth, and labored

with the very Jews who had rejected the truth as preached to them by Paul. He argued with them from house to house, both publicly and privately, showing them Christ in prophecy; that he was Jesus whom Paul had preached, and that all their expectations of another Messiah to come were in vain. Thus Paul planted the seed of truth, and Apollos watered it; and the fact of Apollos supporting the mission of Paul gave character to the past labors of the apostle among them.

His success in preaching the gospel occasioned some of the church to exalt his labors above those of Paul, while he himself was working in perfect harmony with Paul for the advancement of the cause. This rival spirit threatened to greatly hinder the work. Paul had purposely presented the gospel to the Corinthians in its veriest simplicity. Disappointed with the result of his labors in Athens, where he had brought his learning, eloquence, and ability to bear upon his hearers, he determined to pursue an entirely different course in Corinth. He presented there the plain, simple truth, unadorned with worldly wisdom, and studiously dwelt upon Christ, and his mission to the world. The eloquent discourses of Apollos, and his manifest learning, were contrasted by his hearers with the purposely simple and unadorned preaching of Paul.

Many declared themselves to be under the leadership of Apollos, while others composed another party perseveringly adhering to the instructions of Paul. Satan came in to take advantage of these imaginary differences in the Corinthian church, tempting them to draw comparisons between the ministers who taught the

way of salvation. Some claimed Apollos as their leader, some Paul, and some Peter. Thus Paul, in his efforts to establish Christianity, met with conflicts and trials in the church as well as outside of it. Factions were beginning to rise through the influence of Judaizing teachers, who urged that the converts to Christianity should observe the ceremonial law in the matter of circumcision.

They still maintained that the original Israel were the exalted and privileged children of Abraham, entitled to all the promises made to Abraham. They sincerely thought that in taking this medium ground between Jew and Christian, they would succeed in wiping out the odium which attached to Christianity, and gather in large numbers of the Jews who would not otherwise embrace the true faith. They vindicated their position, which was in opposition to that of Paul, by showing that the course of the apostle, in accepting the Gentiles into the church without circumcision, prevented more Jews from accepting the faith than there were accessions from the Gentiles. Thus they excused their opposition to the results of the calm deliberations of God's acknowledged servants.

They refused to admit that the work of Christ embraced the whole world; but claimed that he was the Saviour of the Hebrews alone; therefore they maintained that the Gentiles should receive circumcision before being admitted to the privileges of the church of Christ. After the decision of the council at Jerusalem concerning this question, many were of this same opinion, but did not then venture to push the matter farther. The council had, on that occasion, decided that

the Jewish Christians might observe the ordinances of the Mosaic law if they chose, while they should not be made obligatory upon the Gentile Christians. The opposing class now took advantage of this to urge a distinction between the observers of the ceremonial law and those who did not observe it, holding that the latter were removed farther from God than the former.

Here Paul was forced into the battle, to argue the question whether the converts to Christianity should be Jews in every respect, save their belief that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, or whether they should discern to the end of that which had been abolished by the death of Christ, and bear evidence that they were children of Abraham, not merely in their bodies, but in their hearts, showing by their righteous lives the merits of the grace of Christ.

Paul's indignation was stirred. His voice was raised in stern rebuke: "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." The party maintaining that Christianity was valueless without circumcision arrayed themselves against the apostle, and Paul had to meet them in every church which he had raised up; in Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. God urged him out to the great work of preaching Christ and him crucified; that circumcision or uncircumcision was nothing. The Judaizing party looked upon Paul as an apostate, bent upon breaking down the partition wall which God had established between the Israelites and the world. They visited every church which he had organized, creating divisions. Reasoning that the end would justify the means, they circulated false charges against the apostle, and endeavored to

bring him into disrepute. As Paul, in visiting the churches, followed after these zealous and unscrupulous opposers, he met many who viewed him with distrust, and some who even despised his labors.

These divisions in regard to the ceremonial law, and the relative merits of the different ministers teaching the doctrine of Christ, caused the apostle much anxiety and hard labor. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, he thus addresses them on the latter subject:—

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

He also explains the reason of his manner of labor among them: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

He thus shows them that he could not, when with them, address them as those who had an experience in spiritual life and the mystery of

godliness. However wise they might have been in worldly knowledge, they were but babes in the knowledge of Christ, and it was his work to instruct them in the first rudiments, the very alphabet of Christian faith and doctrine. It was his task to sow the seed, which another must water. It was the business of those who followed him to carry forward the work from the point where he had left it, and to give spiritual light and knowledge in due season, as they were able to bear it.

When he came to them they had no experimental knowledge of the way of salvation, and he was obliged to present the truth in its simplest form. Their carnal minds could not discern the sacred revealings of God; they were strangers to the manifestations of divine grace. Paul had spoken to them as those who were ignorant of the operations of that grace upon the heart. They were carnal-minded, and the apostle was aware that they could not comprehend the mysteries of salvation; for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. He knew that many of his hearers were proud believers in human theories, and reasoners of false theologies, groping with blind eyes in the book of nature for a contradiction of the spiritual and immortal life revealed in the Book of God.

He knew that criticism would set about controverting the Christian interpretation of the revealed word, and skepticism would treat the gospel of Christ with scoffing and derision. It behooved him to introduce most carefully the great truths he wished to teach them. True Christianity is a religion of progress. It is ever giving light and blessing, and has in resource still greater

light and blessing to bestow on those who receive its truths. The illuminating influence of the gospel of Christ, and the sanctifying grace of God, can alone transform the carnal mind to be in harmony with spiritual things.

Paul did not venture to directly rebuke the licentious, and to show them how heinous was their sin in the sight of a holy God. His work was, as a wise teacher, to set before them the true aim and object of life, impressing upon their minds the lessons of the divine Teacher, which sought to bring them up from worldliness and sin, to purity and immortal life. The spiritual senses must be matured by continual advancement in the knowledge of heavenly things. Thus the mind would learn to delight in them; and every precept of the Word of God would shine forth as a priceless gem.

Paul had especially dwelt upon practical godliness, and the character of that holiness which must be gained in order to make sure of the kingdom of Heaven. He wished the light of the gospel of Christ to pierce the darkness of their minds, that they might discern how aggravating to God were their immoral practices. Therefore the burden of Paul's preaching among them had been Christ, and him crucified. He wished them to understand that the theme for their most earnest study, and greatest joy, should be the grand truth of salvation through repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the saving merits of his blood.

The philosopher turns aside from the light of salvation because it puts his proud theories to shame. The worldling refuses to receive it, because it would separate him from his earthly

idols, and draw him to a holier life, for which he has no inclination. Paul saw that the character of Christ must be understood before men could love him, and view the cross with the eye of faith. Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In the light of the cross alone can the true value of the human soul be estimated.

The refining influence of the grace of God changes the natural disposition of man. Heaven would not be desirable to the carnal-minded; their natural, unsanctified hearts would feel no attraction toward that pure and holy place; and if it were possible for them to enter, they would find nothing there congenial to them, in their sinful condition. The carnal propensities which reign in the natural heart must be subdued by the grace of Christ, before fallen man can be elevated to harmonize with Heaven, and enjoy the society of the pure and holy angels. When man dies to sin, and is quickened to new life in Christ Jesus, divine love fills his heart; his understanding is sanctified; he drinks from an inexhaustible fountain of joy and knowledge; and the light of an eternal day shines upon his path, for he has the light of life with him continually.

Paul now sought to impress upon them the fact that he himself, and the ministers who followed him, were only men, commissioned of God to teach them the truth; that they were individually engaged in the same work, which was marked out for them by their Heavenly Father; that they were all dependent upon him for the success which attended their labors. "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of

Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

The consciousness of being God's servants inspires the minister with energy and diligence to perseveringly discharge his duty, with an eye single to the glory of his Master. God has given to each of his messengers his distinctive work; and, while there is a diversity of gifts, all are to blend harmoniously in carrying forward the great work of salvation. They are only instruments of divine grace and power.

Paul says, "So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." The teacher of Christ's truth must be near the cross himself, in order to bring sinners to it. His work should be to preach Christ, and to studiously avoid calling attention to himself and thus encumbering the sacred truth, lest he hinder its saving power.

There can be no stronger evidence in churches that the truths of the Bible have not sanctified the receivers than their attachment to some favorite minister, and their unwillingness to accept and be profited by the labors of some other teacher who is sent to them in the providence of God. The Lord sends help to his church as they need, not as they choose; for short-sighted mortals cannot discern what is for their best good.

It is seldom that one minister has all the qualifications necessary to perfect any one church in all the requirements of Christianity; therefore God sends other ministers to follow him, one after another, each one possessing some qualifications in which the others were deficient.

The church should gratefully accept these servants of Christ, even as they would accept their Master himself. They should seek to derive all the benefit possible from the instruction which ministers may give them from the Word of God. But the ministers themselves are not to be idolized; there should be no religious pets and favorites among the people; it is the truths they bring which are to be accepted, and appreciated in the meekness of humility.

In the apostles' day, one party claimed to believe in Christ, yet would not give due respect to his ambassadors. They claimed to follow no human teacher, but to be taught directly from Christ, without the aid of ministers of the gospel. They were independent in spirit, and unwilling to submit to the voice of the church. Another party claimed Paul as their leader, and drew comparisons between him and Peter, which were unfavorable to the latter. Another declared that Apollos far exceeded Paul in address, and power of oratory. Another claimed Peter as their leader, affirming that he had been most intimate with Christ when he was upon earth, while Paul had been a persecutor of the believers. This party spirit was in danger of ruining the Christian church.

Paul and Apollos were in perfect harmony. The latter was disappointed and grieved because of the dissension in the church; he took no ad-

vantage of the preference shown himself, nor did he encourage it; but hastily left the field of strife. When Paul afterward urged him to visit Corinth, he declined, and did not do so until long after, when the church had reached a better spiritual state.

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of Apollos as one who had watered the precious seed sown by himself. He made no mention of the false teachers who were sent to Corinth to destroy the fruit of his labor. Because of the darkness and division in the church, he wisely forbore to irritate them by such references, for fear of turning some entirely from the truth. But he called the attention of the Corinthians to his work among them, saying, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Paul, as a champion of the faith, did not hesitate to declare the character of his work. But he did not thereby exalt himself when he asserted that he was a wise master-builder, who had laid the foundation for another to build upon. He had just stated, "For we are laborers together with God." He claimed no wisdom of his own; but divine power, uniting with his human efforts, had enabled him to present the truth in a manner pleasing to God. He was a co-laborer with Christ, a diligent worker in bringing spiritual knowledge from the Word of God and the works of Christ, to all whose hearts were open to evidence. United with Christ, who was the great-

est of all teachers, he had been enabled to communicate lessons of divine wisdom that met the necessities of all classes and conditions of men, and which were to apply to all times, all places, and all people. In so doing, Paul took no glory to himself, as a humble instrument in the hands of God.

God gave Paul the wisdom of a skillful architect, that he might lay the foundation of the church of Christ. This figure of the building of a temple is frequently repeated in the Scriptures, as forcibly illustrating the building up of the true Christian church. Zechariah refers to Christ as the Branch that should build the temple of the Lord. He also refers to the Gentiles as helping in this building: "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."

Paul had now been working in the Gentile quarry, to bring out valuable stones to lay upon the foundation stone, which was Jesus Christ, that by coming in contact with that living stone, they might also become living stones. In writing to the Ephesians, he says, "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God."

Some ministers, through their labors, furnish the most precious material: gold, silver, and precious stones, which represent true moral worth sanctified and purified by the Spirit of God. The false material, gilded to imitate the true,—

that is a carnal mind, and unsanctified character, glossed over with seeming righteousness,—may not be readily detected by mortal eye; but the day of God will test the material. "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it."

The precious stones represent the most perfect Christians, who have been refined and polished by the grace of God, and affliction which they have endured with much prayer and patience. Their obedience and love resemble that of the great Pattern. Their lives are beautified and ennobled by self-sacrifice. They will endure the test of the burning day, for they are living stones. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

Many, from worldly policy, endeavor, by their own efforts, to become as polished stones, but cannot be living stones, because they are not built upon the true foundation. The day of God will reveal that they are, in reality, only hay, wood, and stubble. The great temple of Diana was ruined; her magnificence utterly perished; those who shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," perished with their goddess and the temple which enshrined her. Their religion is forgotten, or seems like an idle tale. That temple was built upon a false foundation, and when tried, it was found to be worthless. But the stones that Paul quarried out from Ephesus were found to be precious and enduring.

Paul laid himself upon the true foundation, and brought every stone, whether large or small, polished or unhewn, common or precious, to be connected with the living foundation stone, Christ

Jesus. Thus slowly ascended the temple of the church of God. The apostle says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Paul, in vision, had a view of the city of God, with its foundation of precious stones; and he represents the true Christian converts to be gold, silver, and precious stones. But the Jews made the work of Paul exceedingly difficult. They were continually claiming to be the only true children of Abraham, and therefore the only legitimate building-stones for God's house; and when the Gentiles accepted the truth, and were brought to the true foundation, they murmured about this material. Thus they hindered the work of God; nevertheless, the apostle unflinchingly continued his labors.

Paul and his fellow-workmen were skillful architects because they had learned from Christ and his works. They had not only to build, but to tear down. They had to contend with the bigotry, prejudice, and violence of men who had built upon a false foundation. Through the power of God the apostles became mighty in pulling down these strongholds of the enemy. Many who wrought as builders of the temple of Christ's church could be likened to the builders of the wall in Nehemiah's day: "They which builded on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

One after another of the noble builders fell at his work by the hand of the enemy. Stephen

was stoned; James was slain by the sword; Paul was beheaded; Peter was crucified; John was exiled. And yet stone after stone was added to the building, the church increased in the midst of the terrible persecutions that afflicted it, and new workers on the wall took the place of the fallen.

These faithful builders sought diligently to bring precious material to the living foundation. Paul labored to have his own heart, affections, and character correct and in harmony with the law of God; and then earnestly sought to bring about the same result with his converts. He exhorted Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine." This is the duty of every teacher of Bible truth, to illustrate in his own life the active Christian virtues, to be pure in heart, given to holy conversation, to be good, and to do good.

God will not accept the most splendid service, or the most brilliant talent, unless it is laid upon, and connected with, the living foundation stone; for this alone gives true value to the ability possessed, and makes it a living service to God. We may look back through centuries, and see the living stones gleaming like jets of light through the rubbish of moral darkness, errors, and superstition. These precious jewels shine with continually increasing luster, not alone for time, but for eternity. Although dead, the words and deeds of the righteous of all ages testify to the truth of God. The names of the martyrs for Christ's sake are immortalized among the angels in Heaven; and a bright reward awaits them when the Life-giver shall call them from their graves.



