

INTRO TO THE STUDIES IN GALATIANS

THERE are two sorts of Sabbath-school lessons that are always in danger of being but slightly studied, namely, long ones and short ones. If a lesson is very long, the pupil will often become discouraged, and say, "I can't master such a lesson as that, and there's no use trying." If it is very short, many will think, "There isn't much to that lesson, and I don't need to spend much time on it." Now if a lesson is long and difficult, every effort should be made to master as much of it as possible; and if it is short, as are the lessons in this series, then one should determine to know everything that may be learned from it.

The Epistle to the Galatians is so compact, every sentence being full of instruction, and the connection is so close, that it requires very careful study to know exactly what it says. The only trouble in understanding it comes from lack of acquaintance with the events to which it refers, which are recorded elsewhere in the Bible, and in assuming, from a too careless reading, that it says things that it really does not. Accordingly only a few verses have been included in each lesson, as it is expected that each one will be thoroughly mastered. How can you expect to understand a man if you do not know what he says? and how can you expect to understand this epistle if you are not familiar with every statement in it, and have not considered the relation of each to its fellow? A verse a day will suffice to make one master of its contents; and such is the richness of the epistle, that five or six verses will furnish ample material for a week's study.

Don't speculate, and don't listen to any other person's speculations. Never say to anybody, "What do you think this means?" You do not stand in need of what somebody *thinks*; what you want is knowledge, and "the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Prov. 2:6. You may question the Lord very often, for He "giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not."

It is not an unheard-of thing for a teacher to say to his class, "I am not very well prepared with this lesson, for I have had very little time to study it, and hardly know where it is." If that is the case, it is right for him to confess it, and then to take his place in the class, to learn as much as may be from some one who does know the lesson. A teacher ought to *know*; it is his privilege and his duty. To stand before a class with no definite idea of what is to be taught, is a sin. The Scriptures and the souls of men are too sacred to be thus trifled with. If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch? If any member of the class does not know the lesson text, then let him keep his Bible open during class-time, and let him read his answers from it. Do not let anybody hazard a conjecture. The beauty of proper Bible study is that we may answer correctly every time. We may not know much, but we may be sure of what we do know.

The Epistle to the Galatians was not written for controversy, but to settle controversy, and to bring wanderers back to the fold of Christ. Now controversy is never settled but only augmented by argument; for the controversialist, "e'en though vanquished," can

“argue still.” The only way to settle controversy, and to reclaim erring souls, is to set forth the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. That is what is done in this epistle, and the only way to understand it is to study it with a humble desire to learn of Christ “as the truth is in Jesus,” and with a heart open to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Those who study it with a controversial spirit, to find some argument with which to “meet an opponent,” are sure to miss the truth.

Be very careful not to read your own ideas into the text, as you study it. “My thoughts are not your thoughts,” says the Lord. Hold yourself rigidly to the words that the apostle has written, but make use of as many good translations as you can get hold of. No one set of words can perfectly express the idea of the original. There is no popular commentary that is of any use whatever in studying this epistle. Make yourself perfect master of the text before thinking of reading anything else. There is no one who can not profitably read the portion assigned fifty or a hundred times during the week. Read it, question it, meditate upon it, until your brain sees it, and you can *read it intelligently* in the dark.

In these lessons the text used is that of the Revised Version. In many instances it is much clearer than the common version, and in any case it furnishes another rendering, which all can compare with the text in the Bibles which they ordinarily use, In the notes quotations are made from the two versions indiscriminately. Whenever you find a text of Scripture quoted differently from what it is in your Bible, you may know that it is from the revision, unless otherwise stated.

LESSON I. OUR SINS PURCHASED.

July 7, 1900.

(Gal. 1:1-5.)

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

It often happens that when questions are asked upon a portion of Scripture that has just been read, members of a class will answer at random, without any reference to the text, seeming to think that they are expected to manufacture the answer in their own heads. At other times the text will be read or quoted in answer, but so much will be recited that the specified thing desired to be fixed in mind by the question is lost sight of. The trouble with much reading and study is that it is too diffuse; attention is not given to details, and consequently no intelligent general view can be obtained. In order to get pupils into the habit of noting all the details, and of being exact, some questions on the text will be given, with answers always in the exact words of Scripture.

No lesson should be considered learned until, as the result of cross-questioning, the text, the whole of it, is indelibly fixed in the mind, and every distinct thought flashes forth, and can be mentally noted, as one reads or repeats the whole.

While every teacher, as well as every pupil, ought to have his Bible in hand, no one ought to presume to attempt to teach the lesson before he has the Scripture text so thoroughly mastered that he can, by questions, without the open Bible before him, draw out from the class every item of it in the exact language of the Scripture, and can know whether or not the answers are correctly given.

QUESTIONS.

Who wrote the epistle that we are studying?

“Paul.”

To whom was it addressed?

“To the churches of Galatia.”

Who did he say joined with him in the greeting and the sentiments expressed in the epistle?

“All the brethren which are with me.”

Who was this Paul?

“An apostle.”

What is the meaning of the word “apostle”?

By whom was Paul sent?

“By Jesus Christ, and God the Father.”

From whom did he not receive his commission?

“Not of men.”

Was there any man concerned in his being made an apostle?

“Neither by man.”

What shows the high authority of his apostleship?

He was sent “by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.”

What is proclaimed to all who read this epistle?

“Grace to you and peace.”

From whom does this gift come?

“From God the Father.”

Who is associated with God the Father in bestowing this gift?

“Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What has He done to procure us this gift of grace and peace?

He “gave Himself.”

For what did Jesus give Himself?

He “gave Himself for our sins.”

Why did He do this?

“That He might deliver us from this present evil world.”

From what does the gift of Christ deliver us?

“From this present evil world.”

Whose will is it that we should be delivered from this evil world?

“The will of our God and Father.”

What is, therefore, due to Him?

“The glory.”

For how long is the glory due to God?

“Forever and ever. Amen.”

NOTES.

1. Note how in this greeting the divinity of Christ is accepted as a matter of course. What shows this?
2. It is worth noting that the apostle Paul did not ignore the brethren, although he derived no authority from them. He did not disdain to give credit to all the brethren that were with him, as being associated with him in the sentiments of the epistle. What circumstances in Paul's experience made it very natural that he should incidentally indicate that “the brethren” were agreed with him?

3. The Word of God is living. The Epistle to the Galatians has as direct application to us as it had to “the churches of Galatia,” more than eighteen hundred years ago. The things that called out the epistle were not peculiar to the Galatians. We can read it as though it were written to-day and addressed to us, and not to the churches of Galatia.
4. Study “the peace of God.” Look up scriptures mentioning it, and note how it is bestowed, and what is involved in it. What does the grace of God bring?
5. What relation is there between “our sins” and “this present evil world”? Show it from the text that we are studying, and from other portions of Scripture.
6. What is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us? Where do we learn God's will? What special advantage is there to us in knowing God's will? These questions all admit of direct answers in the exact language of Scripture. Find them.
7. To whom do our sins belong? What comfort does this afford to those who think that because of their sins the Lord will not accept them?
8. What expression in this introduction to the epistle stamps it as a part of the last message? Compare verse 5 and Rev. 14:6, 7. How much glory is to be given to God? Why? How do we give the glory to God?