

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." – Rom. 1:16.

These words like all of Paul's words in general, are fitly spoken and are like "apples of gold in pictures of silver." Gospel signifies good tell, good news, glad tidings, something to make one rejoice and be glad; it must have been something of very great importance, something far-reaching in its nature, something supremely grand and glorious, for it had wrought a most wonderful change in Paul. He had not always been of the opinion which he now expresses, for he had persecuted those of "this way" even unto strange cities, and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them.

What had caused this change in the mind of the apostle?

Surely the gospel had not changed in its character; no, but he had become better acquainted with it. That is the way it ever is with the world: the better they are acquainted with the gospel of Christ, the better opinion they have of it, and the higher they value it. Paul was expecting soon to visit Rome, that imperial city, the mistress of the world, and of course if he spoke in public he wished to talk about something which he was not ashamed of, and this he declared was the thing: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Paul proved the truth of his assertion not only by his words, but by his actions as well.

The mighty mind of Paul, in its natural sweep immense, saw THAT in the gospel of Christ which was infinitely above and beyond everything else. If he could have seen how man, through the blinding effects of pride, and superstition, would have finally come to consider the gospel of Christ – if he could have stood upon the orthodox platform of our day and have looked out upon the pile of "wood, hay,

stubble," which is built on the foundation, Christ, can any one suppose he would have been able to say he was not ashamed of it? If the "mother church," which is proud of calling [R403 : page 3] him her patron saint, and after whom many of her churches are named, should through some of her dignitaries expound to him the doctrines of penance, papal succession, confession of sins to the priest and absolution, the state of the dead in purgatory, etc., can we suppose that he would indorse them and say of them, "I am not ashamed?"

If some one were to represent to him the doctrine of predestination as held by our Calvinistic brethren, and undertake to prove it by Paul's own writings in Rom. 8:29,33: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son," etc., and again in Rom. 9:15,24: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," etc., and conclude from it that God from all eternity planned to bring into being a few, favored with advantages of every sort – birth in a Christian land, surrounded by Christian influences, and upheld by Christian associations and the particular favor of God; but the large majority by the same eternal decree were born in the darkness of corrupt hereditary taint and association, and although they may have dim perceptions of God and truth, and may desire to know him, yet, though they may groan and strive, and turn their tear-dimmed eyes toward heaven, with untold longings, yet they shall go into a night of eternal anguish, "without one cheering ray of hope, or star of glimmering day," and the righteous from their exalted seats in glory shall look on this display of God's wisdom, and justice, and power, and praise him for this manifestation of his love.

This has its good features. It shows God's omniscience. This would be our ideal of a great God were it not that it lacks three essential qualities of greatness, viz.: mercy, love, and justice. None of these qualities would be manifested in bringing into the world billions

of creatures irrecoverably damned before they were born and mocked with protestations of love.

Is it possible that any thinking man can suppose that Paul would endorse this – that this was what he was not ashamed of? But would he look with more favor upon the view of our Arminian brother, who should say to him: that although the decree was made as our Calvinistic brother has stated, yet the provision was for all to be saved, the ransom was provided for all, but the secret of it is in the words of Jesus, ye "will not come unto me that ye might have life." The table was spread and bountifully provided for all, but they "would not and made light of it;" not taking into account the fact that more than nine-tenths of them never knew that there was any supper provided for them, that is to say, that infinite wisdom decreed that a certain number only should be informed of it, and be at the table, but had it set for ten times as many as he knew would be there to sup, and because they were not there, consigned them to eternal torment. Acting upon this basis of reasoning, if such it is, our Arminian brethren have sent as many missionaries as possible to tell the starving millions that there is a supper provided so that the poor creatures who are fortunate enough to hear of it may come and welcome, but those who do not must starve.

But this when looked at squarely, our Arminian brethren cannot see to be very good news, and so sometimes they conclude (though not in a very orthodox way) that these unfortunate millions who never heard of the gospel, will be provided for "in some way or other," (a good conviction). Can we think this is the gospel which Paul had in mind when he said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel? Nay, verily!

But there is still another view that has seemingly strong scriptural support, and this includes all men; this surely is a free gospel and universal, and Paul is supposed to be its strong supporter, for he has given that which is the key note in the promulgation of it, viz.: "As in Adam ALL die, EVEN so in Christ shall ALL be made alive." 1

Cor. 15:22. So our Universalist brother infers from this that in some way, in the hour of death, or before, or after, by some means, whether sinful or holy, everybody, everywhere shall be saved; and why not? He says, did not Christ by the grace of God taste death for every man? And if so did he die in vain for any man? But our brother of this opinion would not probably dwell with as much satisfaction upon the passage, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. 12:14, and would prefer that murderers and pickpockets should occupy a separate apartment in the "many mansions." (Here again conviction almost arrives at truth).

Now candidly, can we suppose that these views, which we think, in a plain-spoken way, we have fairly represented as being the views held by the churches in general, regarding the gospel, are the views held by Brother Paul when he uttered the words we have referred to? We cannot think so, and we do think that few, if any, who reflect are perfectly satisfied that either of these were the views which he held. Then do you stand back aghast and say: Can it be possible that all this is error that we have been taught so long, and that has so much seeming support from the Bible? Do you say, impossible? Then which is your choice, and which is good news to you? Can you walk out beneath the starry heavens at night and looking up into illimitable space among the exhibitions of infinite wisdom and power, and there alone in the presence of God lay your hand upon either one of these dogmas and say, I believe THIS is the gospel of Christ, of which Paul was not ashamed?

Well, my dear brother or friend, these dogmas are not all errors, neither are they all truth. Like the confederation of States, to which has been proudly attached the gospel of which Paul was not ashamed are "E Pluribus Unum," i.e., one composed of many. We understand then that the gospel, of which Paul spoke, embraces in its scope many of the ideas held by each of our brethren to whom reference has been

made, and for whose opinions we have respect, but we cannot think that either of them is complete alone, and we believe that either of the churches who think that its plan or creed is the only and true one, while so much at variance with the others, has done much to make the man of the world who is uninformed reject the instrument (the Bible) upon which he thinks so many variant tunes can be played. With force then the question recurs to us: what was the gospel or good news of which Paul was not ashamed? What was the great and glorious thought connected with the gospel that he had in mind?

Paul's was a critical and calculating mind, and his inspired thoughts were stamped with that peculiarity. He "reckons" about his sufferings; he "counted all things loss," etc., etc. In this case he is "not ashamed of the gospel," for (the reason that) it is "the power of God," something above and beyond all human institutions, something that the world, the mind of the natural man never would have thought of, something supernatural, yes, and something from which the mind of man (if left to itself) would soon wander; and that is evidently why these truths have been torn asunder, and the different parties in the church have each taken a piece, and upon it built a superstructure of its own, much of it, the "wood, hay, and stubble," to which Paul refers in 1 Cor. 3:12. Each of these, according to our understanding, has already begun to be swept away or to be burned up, and "the day" which "shall declare it" is even now begun we fully believe, (vs. 13). We feel convinced that the fire which is to consume the world (of error) is even "now kindled."

But, says one, where is the disagreement? Do we not all believe that this gospel is the power of God unto salvation? (To every one that believeth, our Arminian brother breaks in, but he must wait a little). Well, they say so, but in practice deny it. Our Calvinistic brother says "unto salvation," and adds (in creed) of a few, and unto damnation of the many, i.e., power to save all, will to save a few. Our Arminian

brother can emphasize the will of God to save, but whispers the power, for O! man opposes His will. Our Universalist brother can declare aloud both will and power, and take all into glory.

Let us illustrate the difference between our brethren, and suppose three natives of some foreign land, who were totally unacquainted with the design or nature of the national emblem, "the stars and stripes," were to call at different times upon the American Consul in that land, and he was to present to one a portion of the flag as a memento, having only the red, at another time, to another one, a portion having only the white, and still another having only the blue, each might suppose that his portion represented in color the whole, and contend that because the representative of the nation gave it to him, he was sure that was the true color, and so of each of the others, while the fact would be that each was right in supposing that he had the true color, but erred in the supposition that he had the only color, when it was composed of "red, white, and blue," and that in a specific proportion.

Now, our Calvinistic brother sees so clearly that predestination is taught in the scriptures, that he cannot see that there is a universal salvation; and our Arminian brother sees so clearly that there is salvation provided for all, that he cannot see that there is clearly taught the doctrine of predestination and election; and our Universalist brother sees so clearly that all will be saved, that his conception of God's Love overrides that of His Justice.

But, says one, you seem to agree with each, and disagree with each; how is this? They cannot all be right and wrong at the same time. Well, not altogether right, but partly so, as in the illustration. We are glad to see that each has enough ground for his belief to awaken our sympathy and respect. Respect for what Paul would have been ashamed of? No, we did not say that [R404 : page 3] Paul was

ashamed of these brethren, but of the doctrines or creeds that have come to be considered the gospel.

Well, says our Calvinistic brother, is not Predestination or Election clearly taught in the Scriptures?

Yes, my brother, yes. Well, says my Arminian brother, is not free will as clearly taught? Yes, my brother; we so understand.

And is not universal salvation as clearly taught? says my Universalist brothers and we answer, we think and believe so.

Perhaps all of these brethren, including the Papist brother, cares to hear no more; if so, perhaps some "fool for Christ's sake" will, so we will say on and consider the last question first. We consider our Universalist brother's text, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. 15:22, as unanswerable as regards the universality of salvation: If there were not another text in the Bible to teach it, that would. It seems to us that nothing can be plainer, and for this reason other Scripture somewhat obscure must in some way harmonize with it, and so of each of the other texts quoted by our brethren as teaching the doctrines of "Election" and "Free will," or Arminianism. In the above text, we think no one would undertake to make the word "all" in the second place mean less than in the first, especially when the first is followed and the latter preceded by the words "even so." The misunderstanding seems to be as to the kind or mode of life. "As in Adam all die;" how do all die by Adam? To answer it correctly, first conclude how all lived by Adam. Not spiritual life, was it? Human life and its continuance **CONDITIONED** on obedience, was it not? Then he (and all represented in him) lost no more than that, and "even so" he (and "all" represented in him) will be made alive by Christ, the second Adam. But, says one, is that all the life we get through Christ? That is all the universal salvation we can find held out to mankind in the Bible, and that we think is "very good." God said it was, but thank God there is something more, but if any

wish to stop there, God has predestinated to let them, but if they have heard of the higher life, and neglected so great salvation, theirs will be an irreparable loss.

Then you think, says one, that there are different degrees of salvation? O, yes; let us read on a little further (23d ver.): "But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

Having seen that there are orders or ranks of being, as is also shown by the apostle in the 39th verse and onward, we can see that it does not follow that because all are made alive through Christ, they will therefore come finally to the same kind of being, but are brought to life and take position according to "order," for "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." (ver. 48).

With this view, that there are different orders, and that all are brought to the restoration of what was lost in Adam, we can see how there may be a will in man to gain a position in any given order, and how there may be a selection, "Election," or "Predestination" (whichever you choose to call it) of God from among his creatures of those who are qualified or fitted for the different grades, orders, or ranks of being. He has predestinated, or established a law, that, "to those who by patient continuance in well doing SEEK for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" shall be given. Rom. 2:7. "But unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil," (verses 8 and 9). Now who disobey? Those who know the truth surely. You do not consider your child as disobedient until it transgresses a known command; neither does God, for "like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Many fear him who do not know much about him, and do not know what is commanded, or whether he has commanded anything

or not. Such cannot, of course, obey the truth, nor come under wrath, but will come to life (not eternal), the life lost in Adam without any will or choice of theirs. It was for this purpose that "He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Heb. 2:9. And God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Yes, "WHEN we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Rom. 5:8-10.

But does some one say, very well, but Paul says here of the gospel, that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?

Ah, but brother, now you are reaching that point in the mind and teaching of the apostle in which is embraced another rank or "order": the power of GOD UNTO; we do not imagine that the power of God is staid at all when man is brought back to the Adamic condition; that is, to a reconciled condition; he lost that life without previously [R404 : page 4] knowing the nature of sin or death. True, God told him, but like children without experience, they disobeyed, and his posterity die for it, or because of it; whether they sin or not they all go down in death because of the sin of Adam which "taints us all," and come up because of the righteousness of Christ that restores us all. We die on Adam's account, and live again on Christ's account. Now brought back to the Adamic condition we are reconciled to God. Well, is there anything more for us? Yes, hear the apostle again: "Much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." 10th verse. What! Saved more? Yes, much more by the power of God unto salvation. Will all men be saved much more? We are sorry to part company with any, but though this is a blessed restored condition, yet we shall have to leave on this plane those who do not believe, for this much more salvation is to every one that believeth. Now my Calvinistic and Arminian brothers stand by and see the beauty of those texts which you have had to stretch and twist so. You need not stretch them now; they are all

right and true. "Whom he did foreknow" would be fitted by desire, and faith, and continuance in well doing, each and severally for the different orders, "He predestinated" them to, and so this gospel, GOOD news is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth – to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Why to the Jew first? ("He is not a Jew which is one outwardly," "but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly." Rom. 2:28-29), because he believes first, here, in time to reach the great salvation. Dear brethren, let us desire more, study God's word more, believe more, and have the "much more" salvation. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." 1 Cor. 2:9-10.

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