

"IF YE BE CHRIST'S."

"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." – Gal. 3:29.

THESE words were addressed by the inspired Apostle to Christians, and they apply with equal force to the same class to-day. He does not say – "If ye be Jews;" although like all the early Christian churches, those of Galatia were no doubt composed in good proportion of Hebrews of various tribes. That was not the ground, or condition, upon which they might consider themselves *heirs* of the promise made to Abraham.

Neither does he say – "If ye be Anglo-Israelites." He knew nothing about such kinship according to the flesh having anything whatever to do with a joint-heirship in the promise. Quite to the contrary indeed: for under divine inspiration he tells us –

"Though the number of the *children of Israel* be as the sand of the sea, a *remnant* [only] shall be saved [from their blindness predicted.]" "For they stumbled at that stumbling stone;" and "*the Gentiles*, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to the righteousness which is by faith." "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ [if by losing this joint-heirship myself I might gain it] for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, *who are Israelites.*" – Rom. 9:27,32,30,2-4.

Still discussing the blindness of Israel and their fall from divine favor, which opened the door of favor to the Gentiles, the Apostle assures us that the vessels of God's mercy prepared unto glory are "*us* whom he hath called, not of Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." (Rom. 9:23,24.) "Israel [as a nation, the twelve tribes] hath

not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." – Rom. 11:7.

Keeping up the same discussion he asks, "Have they [the fleshly seed] stumbled that they should fall [utterly]?" He answers, "God forbid: but rather that through their fall [as the natural seed to which the promise first was made] salvation is come to the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." And it has had, and will yet more have, this effect. Since the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, Israel no longer goes after Baal, Moloch and other idolatries. That people seem to be growing more and more *jealous* of Christianity, and are now claiming and quoting Jesus as a Jew, as shown in our issue of Apr. 15, page 114, and June 11, page 162.

Thus "the fall of them [is] the riches of the world; and the diminishing of them [the selecting of only a few, a *remnant* from them results in] the enriching of the Gentiles [proportionately – Gal. 3:14.] And if the cutting off of that people resulted in such blessing to others, how much greater blessings may we expect as a result of Israel's ultimate full regathering to God as a result of the jealousy? (Rom. 11:12.) Blindness in part [*temporary* blindness] has happened unto Israel [– except the remnant which accepted Christ; and that blindness will last] *until* the fulness of [the completeness of the **[R1696 : page 276]** elect Church, selected from] the Gentiles be come in. And so [thus or then] all Israel shall be saved [from the *blindness* which happened to them eighteen centuries ago]: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer [Christ, the head, and his Church, the body], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel after the flesh]. For this is my covenant [agreement] with them when I shall take away their sins." – Verses 25-27.

Satisfied that the Apostle did not in our text refer to *all* Israel that stumbled and that is to be saved from blindness by and by, nor to their children according to the flesh, lost or found, we settle it in our minds that the Apostle meant the words of our text to apply to consecrated

believers in Christ, only; for whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, all who are in Christ Jesus are *one*; joint-heirs of the promise made to Abraham. – Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28.

But notice, again, very particularly, the words of our text. The Apostle begins the statement with that small but very significant word, *if*: "If ye be Christ's." It was not sufficient to [R1697 : page 276] be known as a regular attendant of one of the congregations of believers in Galatia – a brother in good standing with fellow Christians and of good moral character. Nor did it avail anything that the great Apostle Paul recognized those congregations of believers in Galatia as "brethren" and "sons of God." (Gal. 3:15,26; 4:6,12,31; 5:11,13; 6:1,18.) Notwithstanding all this, the inspired writer says, "*if*."

To "be Christ's," therefore, evidently means a great deal more than faith, respectability and good endorsement. It means to *belong* to Christ; – to be his, body, soul and spirit; – to be his to-day and forever; his servant, to do his *will* in his *way* and at his *time*; when convenient and pleasurable, and when inconvenient, painful and difficult.

It means, furthermore, that we cannot *belong* to anyone else in this complete sense, for no man can serve two masters. Here comes in a difficulty for those who *belong* to secret or other Societies. The laws, professions and customs of these are almost certain to conflict with or infringe upon a *full* consecration to Christ. They profess some things which Christ condemns, and if we would speak as his oracles we would offend. Their laws and customs are worldly, or at least conformed to this world, and our Master has laid down as his law that we be not conformed to this world, but that we be "transformed by the renewing of our minds – proving [ascertaining] the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." These Societies inculcate the wisdom of pleasing the world: our Master tells all that are *his*, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of this world." "If any man love the world, the love of

the Father is not in him." In a word he says to us, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

These observations apply as truly to religious societies, churches, etc., as to others: indeed, more so, because the latter affect to represent Christ and to speak for him, which, surely, they have no right or authority to do; for our Master still speaks to those that are his through the Gospels and the words of his inspired Twelve Apostles. See article on "The Twelve Apostles," in TOWER, May 1, '93, p.131.

Almost all denominations have formulated Confessions of Faith to which all who *belong* to them either directly or indirectly give assent. And these uniformly conflict with the doctrines of Christ. They demand consecrated time and money, as well as name and influence, for these, which are false doctrines, and hence in opposition to Christ's doctrines. If we "be Christ's" *only* and *fully*, we cannot compromise with the world, nor with its policy and spirit amongst Christ's disciples. Not to compromisers, but to "overcomers," Christ's very own, is given the promise of a share with him in his throne as fellow-members of the Seed of Abraham and heirs according to that promise or covenant.

Finally, and most important of all, the Christian must learn that, "if he be Christ's" servant and disciple, he is *not his own*; – not his servant to do his own will in his own way and time, nor his own teacher to make *his own* theology and code of laws and philosophies. He is simply a disciple or pupil in the School of Christ, under instruction upon every subject; – he is a know-nothing, a fool, according to the [R1697 : page 277] wisdom of this world, in order that he may gain the true, heavenly wisdom. He is to be emptied of self in every sense, that he may "be Christ's" completely – dead to self, and alive toward God through Jesus Christ, his Lord.

Few such? Ah! yes; and this the Master foretold us, saying, "Fear not, *little* flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

"Not my own, but saved by Jesus,
Who redeemed me by his blood,
Gladly I accept the message;
I belong to Christ, the Lord.

"Not my own! to Christ, my Savior,
I, believing, trust my soul;
Everything to him committed,
While eternal ages roll.

"Not my own! my time, my talent,
Freely all to Christ I bring,
To be used in joyful service
For the glory of my King.

"Not my own! Oh, not my own!
Jesus, I belong to thee!
All I have and all I hope for,
Thine for all eternity."

But what is it to be "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" made to Abraham?

The promise made to Abraham was the first distinct statement of the Gospel of which we have any record. It reads, "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This was *good tidings* to Abraham, as it would be indeed to all who have generous, godlike hearts; and hence the Apostle says that "God preached the *gospel* beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'"

This gospel is still beforehand, in the sense that all the families of the earth have not yet been blest; but it may be said to be a *present* gospel to the few who now have "ears to hear," – to appreciate it.

To hear it fully and clearly is to appreciate the fact that a Millennium of blessing was provided for by the death of Christ as man's ransom or substitute, and that consequently a blessing is to come to *all the families of the earth*. This blessing will consist of a full opportunity to know God and to come into harmony with him under the conditions of the New Covenant (sealed with the precious blood), and thus to have everlasting life.

To those who appreciate this gospel, and who thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead [legally], and that we who live [through Christ's promise and work] should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who loved us and died for us; – to these the Lord makes known the exceeding riches of his grace, and offers a share with him in that work of blessing all the families of the earth, *because* they appreciate his work. And the further they go in obedience, self-denial and self-sacrifice in his service, the more he communicates of his gracious, loving plan, whose lengths and breadths and heights and depths are far beyond the comprehension of the natural man; but God reveals them by his spirit to those who are "Christ's." – 2 Cor. 5:14,15; 1 Cor. 2:9,10.
