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"THE GOSPEL WHICH I PREACHED"

- I COR. 15:1-20. - JUNE 21. -

Golden Text: – "But these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

– John 20:31.

THIS lesson is appointed as a review for the Quarter, and no doubt will be profitable to many so to use it. We, however, call attention to the reading lesson as a summary of the entire Gospel of Christ. The Apostle declares, "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." – vs. 1,2.

From these words we perceive how important faith is to present salvation. Whoever cannot believe, whatever the lesson, cannot be saved in this present time. Whoever has not heard the Gospel, as in the case of the heathen, is not saved in ignorance, and whoever has heard the Gospel and does not keep it in memory and thus loses its power will miss the present salvation; or, if it should be kept in memory, still it might be useless because of failure to allow the Gospel message to act properly upon the heart and life. These things being true we perceive how important it is for us to have a pure Gospel, to know the truth, for nothing but the truth can make us free. We do not mean by this that full knowledge of the truth is necessary either to our justification or to our consecration; we do not mean that if we have a measure of error mixed with our knowledge of the truth this would keep us from the privileges of justification and sanctification; on the contrary, nearly all of us were justified and

brought into relationship with God while we had as yet much error in our minds. It was not, however, the error which justified nor the error which led us to sanctification or consecration; only the truth could so profit us. The more truth we have at the beginning the more favored we are, and we are blessed then in proportion as we get rid of the errors and superstitions which becloud our mental vision. The truth alone can make us entirely free, and hence we cannot enter fully into the enjoyment of all the blessings and privileges while as yet we are hampered by error. But may we not say that it is entirely probable that we shall be hampered by some errors, some confusion to the very end of our journey, and that not until our change shall come shall we know as we are known?

ST. PAUL'S GOSPEL SUMMARY

The Apostle summarizes our Christian faith saying, "I delivered unto you first of all [as of primary importance] that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures." This much of knowledge is necessary to anyone who would be properly termed a believer, a Christian. Hence the heathen, whatever their condition in their ignorance of these facts, could not be believers, could not be Christians. This is the faith which justifies, and those who have it not are not justified. It recognizes "our sins" and "Christ's death" as our ransom-price, and Christ's resurrection, as evincing the satisfying of divine justice, and that the Redeemer lives to carry out the glorious features of our salvation. There was a time when to us, as still to the majority of Christians, all this matter was hazy because of the false doctrines, false theories which filled our minds, leading us to believe that eternal torment was the penalty for sin and hindering us from understanding how Christ's death could meet our penalty therefor. Then again the error that the minute of dying means getting more alive hinders one from understanding

how the Lord died for our sins and also hinders appreciation of the meaning of his resurrection from the dead. Nevertheless, we were justified even in our ignorance of the philosophy of these matters, justified because our faith accepted the general facts, namely, that we were sinners and that Christ did something acceptable in God's sight as the ransom price for our sins, and that now by the grace of God we are thereby relieved from the condemnation and brought back into fellowship of heart with him.

The Apostle then proceeds to recount the evidence respecting our Lord's resurrection, apparently confining himself to those manifestations which our Lord made to the apostles. Thus he mentions Cephas, or Peter, but does not mention Cleophas, who was one of the two with whom the Lord talked on the way to Emmaus. Neither does he mention the appearance to Mary and the other women on the day of the resurrection. Although he mentions the five hundred brethren the apostles were amongst them. He is summing up the strongest kind of evidence respecting our Lord's resurrection, and finally says, "Last of all he was seen of me also as of one born before the time" – as of premature birth. That is to say, St. Paul saw our Lord not in fleshly form, but shining above the brightness of the noonday sun; he saw him as a spirit being, as all the Church hope to see him after they shall have experienced the resurrection change, when they shall be like him and see him as he is (not as he was) and share his glory.

"SO WE PREACHED – SO YE BELIEVED"

The Apostle was combating the heathen theory that a resurrection of the dead was unnecessary. Some claimed that the dead would never rise, others that in **[R4188 : page 182]** the moment of dying they become more alive than ever. The Apostle lays down the Christian teaching on the subject, namely, that the

dead are dead and that without a resurrection there would be no hope. Those to whom he wrote were shortsighted; they claimed still to believe the resurrection of Jesus, but had dropped the thought of the necessity of a resurrection for others. The Apostle seeks to re-establish them by pointing out that all the hope they had received as Christians was built upon the resurrection of Jesus, that a dead Savior would be of no assistance to them; that his teaching and the teaching of the other apostles had been, that while the merit of the redemption resided in the sacrifice of Christ yet the redemption itself was equally dependent upon the resurrection of him who died for us, because a dead Savior could not help us. He says, "So we preached, and so ye believed; how, then, say some amongst you that there is no resurrection of the dead;" that you do not now see the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection respecting the Church? If it was important in respect to our Lord, is it not equally so in respect to the Church and the world? If, as some claim, the doctrine of the resurrection is foolish and false, then Christ is not risen. Do you say, What if he is not risen? I answer, "Then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain, and we are found false witnesses to God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised." – Vs. 13-15.

Thus does the Apostle link together the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus with the doctrine of the resurrection of the Church and of the world. If the latter is not true the former is not true; if the resurrection of Christ was necessary, the resurrection of the Church and of the world is also necessary. With what clinching argument the Apostle sets this forth, saying, "If Christ be not risen your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins; yea, also, they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." If Christian people in general would study this lesson and allow it to have its proper weight in their minds, it would settle certain questions thoroughly. They would decide to throw away, either the

teachings of the Apostle and the whole Bible respecting the condition of man in death (that he was really dead or figuratively said to be "asleep," waiting for the resurrection change in the Millennial morning), or else they would throw away the human theories that are blinding and confusing them on this subject and which teach that the dead are not dead but more alive than ever, neither dead nor asleep, but in heavenly glory or eternal torment. Let us take the Apostle's standpoint and rest our hearts and our faith thereupon. Christ died, and on the third day arose from the dead. His followers and the whole world died, and in the Millennial morning they are to come forth, the Little Flock in the First Resurrection of the blessed and holy, the world in general in the general resurrection unto judgment or trial or testing in respect to their willingness to become God's people or not.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

The following references by another Apostle are fully in harmony with those of St. Paul: The Gospel was written that those who have the hearing ear and the proper heart might be enabled to believe that Jesus is the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name. (John 20:31.) Not that merely believing will bring the life, for "devils also believe and tremble," but that believing brings them into that relationship with God where it is possible for them to become followers of Jesus, pupils in the school of Christ to learn of him; to be assisted in walking in his footsteps, to learn of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and by assistance granted, to make their calling and election sure to life eternal as members of his Little Flock, his Bride class. All this is possible in his name, in his merit, but none of it is possible on any other terms or conditions, for "there is none other name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved." We thank God, however, that while only the few have the hearing ear now, and hence only the few hear the divine call

now, yet by and by all the deaf ears shall be unstopped; the message will be delivered in no uncertain tones and all shall know, from the least to the greatest, of divine love and mercy in Christ, and shall have the opportunity of accepting the same in his name or of rejecting and coming under the divine condemnation of the Second Death.

Let us see to it with diligence, that having been favored so highly as we are, it shall not be said of us that we received the grace of God in vain! Receiving it let us use it, let us improve the opportunity, let us make our calling and election sure!

