

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

PAUL'S WISH.

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.—Rom. ix. 3.

Paul's conversion stands before the world an unanswered and unanswerable argument to the power of the gospel of Christ. He says of it: It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and it undoubtedly was so to him. He once thought that the followers of Christ were his enemies and he left no stone unturned to punish and crush them. Now, he knew the Jews to be his enemies from their unrelenting determination to imbitter that life which they felt powerless to take from him. Yet, his feelings towards these enemies are expressed in the words before us. And this was not a sudden impulse awakened by any generous act on their part, for no such act for a moment impeded the currents of their animosity. Their hatred was as constant as it was causeless. And in full view of this and amid the incessant temptations which befell him by the lying await of the Jews, he thus expresses the gushings of his heart. What, but a divine power could so completely change a man of his iron will and make him who was foremost in punishing the innocent a distinguished leader in the enduring of such punishment willingly, cheerfully and lovingly. He felt great anxiety and unceasing sorrow for his persecutors, and was ready, if need be, to suffer anything for their salvation. To justify his feelings for the nation he shows how much God had done for them, how many and great were their privileges, and that through them Christ came, who is God over all, blessed forevermore. The apostle's wish expressed a great love for Israel, resembling the love that prompted Jesus to freely suffer the death of the cross to save them, even when they were enemies to His Father and Himself.

Most of commentators we have read cannot think the apostle wished or could wish an eternal separation from Christ, and are satisfied that such separation is not the meaning of the passage, although a few understand this to be the meaning, and contend that Paul could wish himself eternally banished to hell to save his countrymen. We cannot entertain such an idea for the following among other reasons:

1st. Paul shows his wish to be a thoughtful one and in accord with God's love for the nation. He wished in every good he did or every sacrifice he made to have Christ in the lead. But to wish for banishment forever in hell has no example—human, angelic or divine. In such a wish Christ is not a leader.

2nd. Paul's love for Christ far exceeded his love for all others, and no consideration could induce him to wish an eternal separation from Him.

3rd. There is nothing in the eternal sufferings of the lost to procure the salvation of others, and Paul would not even express a wish so unreasonable.

Thomas Scott understands the apostle to say that he could wish himself crucified after the example of Christ. This was a cursed death, and he could wish not only to die but also to die such a death for his brethren, just as Jesus had done. When Paul did anything after the example of others he calls it doing it from them, as he says in II. Tim. i. 3: I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience. Such is Scott's view of this strong language of Paul who could wish to be accursed from Christ. We regard this as the most satisfactory explanation of this passage we have seen.

We can learn how Paul had served God with a

pure conscience from his forefathers. They had been his models. He was stimulated by their zeal and led by their example. On the subject of one dying for another, Jesus says: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv. 13) Paul says: "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Per-adventure for a good man some would even dare to die." (Rom. v.) Here, then, is the highest mark of heroic goodness. That a man die for his friends or that some would even dare to die for a good man—a benefactor or a friend of many. While history furnishes rare specimens of noble men who would dare to die for such friends, Paul did not wish that such men, noble though they were, should be his models to work by, for they could show no example suited to his case—a love for enemies, and he could draw no such inspiration from them. He who first taught men to love their enemies Paul wished to be his teacher. And He who set the example, both in His life and in His death, Paul wished to be his pattern and guide. As Jesus treated his true followers so Paul wished to treat them in the most faithful and affectionate manner. As Jesus treated the weary and heavy laden so Paul wished to treat them. As Jesus reproved the hardened opponents and told them the truth in faithfulness and love, so Paul wished to treat them. And as Jesus loved his countrymen and died for them an accursed death, Paul wished to love them and could wish to die such a death if it would benefit them. Let the infidel tell if he can whose power it was that changed Saul of Tarsus from a blasphemer of Christ, and a murderer of His innocent followers, into a friend who always rejoiced in suffering for His blessed name, and could even wish to die an accursed death for his persecutors if it would express his love and benefit them.

Original Contributions.

THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

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Those Christians who profess to take the Bible and the Bible alone as the one book containing their rules of faith and life, ought, above all others, to be familiar with its contents.

It is not putting this thought too strong to say that such persons ought to be as familiar with the contents of the New Testament as the Episcopalians are with the Book of Common Prayer, or Presbyterians with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The devout Episcopalian learns the prayer book. The intelligent Presbyterian learns the catechism. The Disciples ought to learn just as thoroughly the New Testament. Do they?

The book of Common Prayer is not necessary. The catechisms are not necessary. Articles of religion of human composition, as tests of fellowship and bonds of union, are not needed. They do not succeed in keeping the faith pure—nor do they maintain union among believers. The fact is, they seem to promote division. How many varieties of Presbyterians are there? How many different kinds of Methodists? Are there divisions among Episcopalians? Who is able to catalogue the Baptists and tell how many varieties there are?

The early Christians—the Christians of the Apostolic era, had nothing of this kind, and they "were of one heart and of one soul." They had only the teaching of the heaven inspired apostles—we have the same in the New Testament. From the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, man can now learn what to believe and what to do in order to become disciples of the Lord Jesus, and in order to live Christian lives. This little book contains the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of divinely authoritative teaching on these points. Here every man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Timothy was commended, because from very childhood he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The men of Berea were more noble than were the men of Thessalonica, because they received the word spoken by Paul and Silas with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so.

But, a thorough understanding of the New Testament includes a knowledge of the Old Testament. The New cannot be understood without the Old. The Sacred writings with which Timothy was familiar were in the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament was not written at that time. The scriptures which were searched by the men of Berea, were the Old Testament writings. The references to the Old Testament in the Gospels, in the Acts, and in the Epistles, are constant. How can any man understand, for instance, the epistle of the Hebrews who is ignorant of the Levitical ritual? The apostle Paul, said, in the fifteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, that, " whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through comfort and patience of the scriptures, might have hope."

A revived interest in the study of the Word is needed. We need it for our own spiritual health. We need it in order to more successfully lead others to the Christ and His salvation.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES,"

DOCTRINAL PREACHING.

There is, in the minds of many, a growing dislike to doctrinal preaching. Whether this is the fault of the preacher, the hearer, or both, is left for the reader to determine. But to discourage doctrinal preaching is hurtful.

The doctrine in the inspired scriptures is the substratum on which the Christian character rests. The saint who has not a doctrinal basis has an ephemeral foundation that will be swept from under him by the first blast of infidelity.

If preachers do not teach the doctrine of Christ, what are they to teach? Surely not the doctrines of men. For, "In vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." To teach the doctrine of Christ is not to teach one part to the exclusion of another, but to teach it in its entirety. Christ has not one doctrine of faith, another of repentance, another of baptism; thus making a plurality of doctrines. His doctrine is one. He who opposes any one part opposes the doctrine of Christ. This a Christian cannot do and be guiltless.

The power of this gospel or doctrine can be seen in what it accomplishes. Paul thanks his God that the Roman brethren had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine" which had been delivered them. The obedience to this doctrine of Christ is what made the saints at Rome such worthy examples. The doctrine in this passage is compared to a mould; and the Romans had been shaped in character according to this mould. Thus they were transformed from the servants of sin to the servants of righteousness, by obeying from the heart the doctrine of Christ.

Why is it that there are so many professed followers of Christ who are carried away by new and heretical teaching? Is it not because they are ignorant of Christ's teaching? Does not Paul accurately describe them when he likens them to drift wood on the surf? The wood has no anchor and it is borne hither and thither on the bosom of the deep. It veers as often as the wind. This is the condition of the followers of Christ who are not indoctrinated. Popular favor, religious excitements, strange teachings, worldly amusements, bear them away on their bosoms and they are driven by the wind and tossed. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no way to anchor these storm-