



## LESSON XII.—MARCH 22.

## Paul's Message to the Ephesians.

Ephesians ii., 1-10.

## Golden Text.

By grace are ye saved through faith.—Eph. ii., 8.

## Home Readings.

Monday, Mar. 16.—Eph. ii., 1-10.  
 Tuesday, Mar. 17.—Eph. ii., 11-22.  
 Wednesday, Mar. 18.—Rom. iii., 19-30.  
 Thursday, Mar. 19.—Rom. v., 1-11.  
 Friday, Mar. 20.—Rom. v., 12-21.  
 Saturday, Mar. 21.—Eph. i., 1-14.  
 Sunday, Mar. 22.—Eph. i., 15-23.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

1. And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;

3. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.

5. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;)

6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

7. That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9. Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The lesson before us is from the letter of Paul to the Ephesian Christians. It will not do to read only the few verses given in our lesson, if one is to understand this great epistle. It has been called by Coleridge, 'one of the divinest compositions of man.' Not only does it contain noble utterances and great principles, but it presents the essence of the entire Gospel. It is a sort of summing up of the meaning of Christianity. Dr. James M. Gray, in his 'Synthetic Bible Studies,' says that 'The epistle to the Ephesians contains probably the profoundest spiritual truth revealed to man in the New Testament.' It explains the 'mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest,' as Dr. Gray also shows.

The kingdom of Christ was rejected by Israel as a nation, though predicted by the Old Testament. We have then a period known as the 'Church Age,' which was brought about by this national refusal of Israel to receive her King, and which is to continue until the return of Christ to set up his kingdom upon earth. This church age is therefore a 'mystery,' a sort of parenthesis, in history, and with this the epistle to the Ephesians deals.

So, you see the great importance of an epistle which deals with this mystery, this temporary arrangement, during the dispersion of Israel, until her restoration

and the establishment of the kingdom of our Lord upon the earth.

This epistle was written by Paul from Rome, while he was a prisoner there, A.D. 61 or 62. Though addressed to the Ephesians, it is believed that this letter was intended for the churches of all that region as well as Ephesus. By some it has even been thought that it was sent directly to the Laodicean church.

In the first chapter of Ephesians Paul takes up the subject of Christ's headship over the church, and more than this, he indicates God's reason for his infinite blessings and his sacrifices to save them. Perhaps you have wondered sometimes why God went to such great lengths to save men from their sins, and to lift them into a nobler, higher, happier life. In the first chapter of this epistle the answer is found. See verses 6, 12 and 14 of chapter i. Verse 12 says that God thus provided for our salvation, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory.' To quote Dr. Gray again, 'it comforts us, as we realize a sense of security, in the fact that his own glory is involved in the perfecting of the work of grace in us.'

We may divide this lesson into three parts, for purposes of teaching, as follows: 'Dead in Trespasses and Sins.' Under this head Paul speaks of the condition of man before he is saved. Verses 1-3.

'The exceeding riches of his grace.' What God has done for the sinner. 4-7.

'The gift of God.' Salvation not earned by us, but given by God. Verses 8-10.

The teacher would do well to ask scholars to find in the Scriptures, or recall from memory passages bearing upon each of these heads.

## 'DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SIN.'

Without salvation man is in a desperate moral condition. True, he does not always appear outwardly to be so. Many an unsaved young person seems to be enjoying life thoroughly and to be in complete peace of heart and mind. Yet if the power to seek pleasure is suddenly taken away, so that the mind has nothing to keep its attention from itself, then discontent, uneasiness and even fear are very apt to take the place of the joyous, rollicking mood we saw before. This condition is described as one of spiritual death:

Paul tells us that God has 'quickened,' that is, made alive, those who were formerly dead in trespasses and sins. Of course, he is addressing here the Ephesian Christians. He tells them that, in time past, before they believed, they 'walked according to the course of this world.' Conversion to Christ means a great change in the life, for it is no longer governed and ordered according to worldly ideas, but it is transformed. There is a new outlook, one has different ideals, he strives after better things: in short, he is made alive from spiritual death and to the grand possibilities that God has for him.

Notice that in walking according to the course of this world, one walks 'according to the prince of the power of the air,' that is, according to the will of Satan. It is now quite the fad among many to deny that there is a personal evil one, commonly known as the Devil, but the Bible teaches that there is, and that he is the adversary of mankind, by whom sin, sorrow and death have come into the world, but who is to be bound for a thousand years when Christ sets up his glorious reign. This evil spirit, the apostle goes on to say, now works in 'the children of disobedience,' and then, in verse 3, he refers to the manifestation of Satan in these Ephesian brethren before they became Christians. They were dead in sin, they walked according to the Devil, they lived in the lusts of the flesh, and they have been 'made alive' from these things.

Charles H. Yatman, the noted evangelist, used to say that conversion was simply ceasing to work for the Devil and beginning to work for God, just as one would change employers in business; though, he added, one need not give the Devil notice that he is going to quit. This, however, only partially expresses the idea; it is a good way to illustrate our freedom to

choose whom we will serve, but it stops short of the full meaning of conversion. Let Paul tell us, in Romans vi., 3-5, what more this quickening, this conversion means:

'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also raised in the likeness of his resurrection.'

## 'THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE.'

But, though man's natural condition is so hopeless, God's love and mercy come to his rescue. Paul speaks, in verse 4, of 'God, who is rich in mercy.' He is not barely merciful enough to save us from our sins, but there is a wealth of mercy in the divine nature. A genuine love dignifies the one who receives it. So God is not only merciful to man, but he gives him his infinite love. The Revised Version gives us a better view of what is contained in verse 6, 'and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' The idea is that we share in the resurrection of Christ, having thus a hope of a glorious life beyond the grave. We are made to sit with him in heavenly places, literally it is 'in the heavenlies.' That is, we, who were once sinful, lost men, are by God's grace given assurance of life eternal and of sharing the joyous heavenly experiences of Christ.

Paul gives an example of his grand views of things that are high and grand and full of hope. God has raised us up to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, 'that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.' In reading Paul's letters, notice how enthusiastic he becomes as he looks forward to the future, to the things in store for those who love and obey God. So here he must draw aside the curtain of the future for a moment and let the Ephesian Christians see that there is a great hereafter of peace and joy for them.

## 'THE GIFT OF GOD.'

But now Paul emphasizes a very important principle of the Christian faith. He first expresses it in verse 8, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' We might have faith, but that alone would not save us: our faith is acceptable through the grace of God.

'Not of works, lest any man should boast.' Here is a point where many stumble. They imagine that, in order to obtain salvation, we must simply 'be good' or 'do good.' Of course, it is true that such activity must be a part of Christian character, but good works are fruits of the Spirit in us, after we have accepted Christ, and are not themselves the condition upon which we are saved. A man cannot earn or buy a place in Heaven by any labor he may perform or by any gift he may offer. He must rather accept salvation as the gift of God through Christ.

We hear much to-day about ethics and an ethical religion. There is a tendency with many to accept Christ only as an example after which we are to model our lives in order to be saved, but there is no such teaching in the Bible. Verses 8 and 9 of our lesson should alone be sufficient argument against such an idea. If we are to be saved we must accept Christ's atonement for us.

'For we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works.' By conversion we are created anew, in Christ, for good works. You see, the works come after our creation in Christ. 'Which God hath afore prepared that we should walk in them.' (Revised Version.) These good works have been in the mind of God as an occupation of his children, even before the time for them. Our lives are not made up of chance and accidents, but God