

Give that you may be like Him and accounted worthy to receive His commendation at the last, Matt. 25 : 34-45.

The Main Lesson is "Christian liberality" as treated above

LESSON 9.

June 1,
1884.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

{ Gal. 4 : 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free."—Gal. 5 : 1.

TIME.—Written late in A. D. 57, or early in 58.

PLACE.—The place of writing cannot be exactly fixed. Some have supposed at the close of the apostles stay at Ephesus ; others on the voyage from Macedonia to Corinth ; others, at Corinth.

INTRODUCTION.—The Galatians were descendants of one branch of the great Celtic migration, which in the third century, before Christ swept eastwards into Greece, and eventually settled in parts of Asia Minor. A restless and warlike race, when they were not engaged making excursions in the territory of their neighbours on their own account, they were ready to fight for any prince or people that would pay for their services. Galatians are recorded to have served in the boy's guard of Herod the Great. There were numerous Jewish settlers in Galatia, but the inhabitants were mainly Gentiles, and in their treatment of the Gospel message exhibited the characteristic instability of their race. They readily accepted the preaching of Paul and became converts of Christianity, but with almost equal readiness they seem to have listened to the efforts of the Jews who dwelt amongst them, and who would have made their faith little better than a degraded Judaism. To counteract these hostile, perverting influences, and to keep the Galatians true to the Gospel, and Gospel liberty, this epistle was written. The epistle stands closely connected with that to the Romans, both with respect to topics and phraseology. Taken together these epistles present a full exposition of Christianity as God's way of Salvation, and especially of the relations which the Law bears to the Gospel in that way.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.—Ver. 1. "The heir:" repeated from the last verse of the preceding chapter, and should be read in connection, here those who can claim the blessing God has promised. "A child:" like an infant, one under full age, a minor; with us a young man is "of age" at twenty-one, with the Romans it was at fourteen or seventeen. "Differeth nothing:" as to the right of controlling his own actions, he may have the right to a property, and even if the father be dead, it may be in his possession, but he cannot legally assert his ownership; if still a child he is under guardians, and by them controlled.

Ver. 2. "Tutors—governors," REV., "guardians and stewards:" his affairs are managed for him, not by him. "Time appointed:" by the heir's father. The idea is that the father has fixed a time for his son to be of full age, and until that time has put him under guardians.

Ver. 3. "We:" reference especially to the Jews. "We children:" the Jewish economy was a state of religious childhood, the Christian of full spiritual manhood. "In bondage under the elements" (REV. "rudiments") "of the world:" that is we had to learn the rudiments, the alphabet of our faith, just as instruction is given in the world by signs and pictures.

Vers. 4, 5.—"Fulness of time:" the "time appointed" of ver. 2; the time which God had fixed upon in His infinite wisdom. Speaking from a human standpoint, it would appear as if the time was indeed the "fulfulness of time" for the Gospel; events had made the people much more dis-

posed to receive the Gospel, while seventy years later the Jewish nation was scattered, never to be re-consolidated as a nation. "His Son—made" (REV. "born") "of a woman:" the twofold nature of Jesus, Son of God, and Son of man. Emphatically *His own Son*, not as in verse 5: those who are sons by adoption "Under the law." Christ was subject to the law, moral and ceremonial; as our representative, He was under all its obligations, perfect in His observance Himself, yet, for the violation of it by mankind, in whose stead He appeared, He had to suffer its penalties. "Redeem:" from the slavery and curses of the law to the liberty of the adoption. "Might receive:" enter upon our inheritance as the sons of God, being adopted by Him. Thus those who are enemies of God may by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ become the children of God, and if "Children then heirs." Rom. 8 : 14-17.

Vers. 6, 7. "Because sons:" the indwelling of the Spirit follows the adoption into God's family, and the Spirit gives an assurance of sonship, so that we cry "Abba Father." We get the universality of the blessing here, for Jew and Gentile; the Hebrew says: "Abba," the Greek: "Father." So these Galatian Gentiles had the proof in themselves that they were the sons of God. "Servant:" REV. "Bond-servant:" in bondage to the law. "An heir:" REV., "through God:" which more correctly continues the idea of verses 2, 4, 6, that the gift and the blessing are from the Father.

Ver. 9. Having set forth the privileges given them through God's grace, the apostle now, in vigorous language, contrasts that into which they were willing to be led. "Weak and beggarly elements:" REV., "Rudiments:" so called because of the elementary character of the Jewish dispensation, with its types and shadows of something higher, as if a scholar should desire to go back again to the alphabet and pictures of his childhood. "Weak:" because they are utterly unable to do for man what his nature cries out for. "Beggarly:" as opposed to the riches of the inheritance which God has given.

Ver. 10. "Days:" as the Jewish Sabbath and festival days of the year. "Months:" feasts of the new moon. "Times:" the festivals recurring at longer intervals than a month, as Tabernacles, Pentecost and Purim. "Years:" as the commencement of the year with the month Tisri. So far had the Galatians been lead away, but had not adopted Circumcision, although they were in danger of so doing. See chap. 5 : 2, 3; 6 : 12, 13.

Ver. 11. "Afraid of you:" Paul feared that if they were so ready to turn again to the beggarly rudiments of form that they had no vital Christian principle, and that his labours amongst them had been "in vain."

Ver. 12. "Be as I am—I am as ye are:" Imitate me in this, that, born a Jew, I have cast aside the bondage of Jewish observances, and a Pharisee of the Pharisees; I became as a Gentile among Gentiles. "Ye have not injured me:" REV. connects this with what follows, which makes the meaning quite clear.

Vers. 13, 14. "Infirmity of the flesh—at first:" on his first visit, as mentioned in Acts 16 : 6, he had an attack of illness. This drew to him the sympathy of the Galatians and gave him the opportunity to preach Christ "at the first." He had been their twice; his second visit is narrated in Acts 18 : 23, "my temptation," REV., "that which was a temptation to you:" His "thorn in the flesh:" 2 Cor. 12 : 1, which was a temptation to the Galatians to despise him. It was, perhaps, this affliction which led his enemies to speak of his personal appearance as "mean." So far from despising him for this, they received him "as an angel:" one of God's bright and perfect messengers, nay, even as Him who is Lord of angels, "Christ Jesus," Himself.

Ver. 15. "Where—blessedness:" REV., "Gratulation of yourselves:" in their first reception of the Gospel, they