

this preaching was Christ, his person, and his finished work for sinners. This was "the word of the Gospel" (ver. 7), which the Gentiles had heard and believed, and now, in many a town far away from Jerusalem, there was a little company bearing the name of Christ, separated from idols, looking up to God as their Father, and leading a new life.

How did the enemy threaten to disturb this state of things? Not by the open opposition of foes, but by the intrigues of seeming friends. From Judea, whence the Gospel had originally gone forth, there came down to Antioch men professing to be teachers. They had nothing to say against the hope and the aim of the believers there. That was all right—there was pardon for sinners, favor to be found with God, a new life to be lived, and a glorious hope for the future—but on what ground? Not on the ground merely of Christ's atoning death and resurrection—"there," they said, "you are wrong;" you must become Jews and keep the law; otherwise there is no salvation for you.

When we bear in mind that these men were no unbelievers, but Jews who had professed faith in the Lord Jesus, and who belonged to the Church at Jerusalem, we can see how great an influence they were likely to have on the Gentile converts.

Now suppose that some Gentile had believed this teaching, and had made haste to conform to the Jewish law, and rested his hopes on that, what would his life have become? Not a life of love to Christ, but a life of trying to keep the law. And could he ever have kept it? See what Peter says of the Jewish law, "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." Ver. 10. What peace could there be in a constant and fruitless struggle to bear this yoke? And when this life was over, and the man appeared before God, could he plead that he had tried to keep the law? Would that plea be accepted? He would find, then, that his hopes were in vain and his life a miserable failure. And if this teaching had been received in the Church generally the Church would have been a failure, a city whose foundations were destroyed, without peace and without security. How great, then, was the danger!

When the foundations of a city are threatened, it is time for the defenders to be on the alert. Paul and Barnabas saw the danger and at once opposed these false teachers, and presently the scene of conflict was shifted from Antioch to Jerusalem, and the apostles and elders there came together to consider the matter. The question to be decided was this: Was salvation to be had by faith in Christ alone, or by the Jewish law?

The apostles themselves were Jews, and, as such, were deeply attached to their own

laws and customs. Yet, what did Peter say to them?

His answer was that God had decided the question. For, 1. He had commanded Peter to preach the Gospel, not the law, to the Gentiles; 2. He had given the Holy Spirit to those Gentiles who believed; 3. He had "purified" their hearts by faith, so that their salvation was an evident fact. Then were there two ways of being saved—the one for a Jew, through the law, and the other for a Gentile, through Christ? By no means, said Peter; we shall be saved "by the grace of the Lord Jesus... even, as they."

Here the passage appointed for our lesson comes to a stop, instead of going on to the end of the conference, in order, perhaps, to call attention to the bearing of the matter upon ourselves.

1. *A question for the New Year.* Are you on the sure foundation? As there was but one then, so there is but one now. 1 Cor. 3. 11; 1 Pet. 2. 6.

2. *A caution for the New Year.* The enemy has not ceased to try and undermine the foundations. Beware lest he meddle with you. Remember, "By grace are ye saved through faith... not of works." Eph. 2.

3. *A battle call for the New Year.* If on the foundation, you should be one of the defenders. Be on the alert. Be zealous for the Gospel of Christ.* It is worth fighting for, for it will never disappoint you, it will never fail you, it "will stand forever." 1 Pet. 1. 25.

BEREAN METHODS.

Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Notice the time, place, circumstances: Paul and Barnabas at Antioch; Jews and Gentiles at peace in the Church, etc.... The false brethren, who they were, whence they came, their demand, and what it implied.... What similar requirements are made by some now? The disputation—who participated, the opposing views.... What great principle was at stake?... The journey, why taken, by whom, route of travel (draw on map), places visited, treatment of apostles.... The report, how presented and received.... The conference, who composed it, the question discussed.... The apostle's advice, from whom it came, its character, its spirit, its wisdom.... The result of the conference, and what would have resulted if it had decided otherwise.... See the Analytical and Biblical Outline and Additional Practical Lessons for two lines of thought.... What evils of to-day are here rebuked? 1. The expectation of salvation through forms, rites, penances, and membership in the Church; 2. Narrow sectarian spirit; 3. High churchly