

## Lesson 1

Saturday, June 27

### Paul's Ministry in Corinth

Though Paul sat, a diligent student, at the feet of Gamaliel, he also learned a trade. He was an educated tentmaker. It was the custom among the Jews, the wealthy as well as the poorer classes, to train their sons and daughters to some useful employment, so that should adverse circumstances come, they would not be dependent on others, but would have educated ability to provide for their own necessities. They might be instructed in literary lines, but they must also be trained to some craft. This was deemed an indispensable part of their education.

The testimony of Paul and Aquila is that by their occupation they were tentmakers. While they preached the gospel, Paul and his companion wrought at their trade as tentmakers, and in doing this they could give a more thorough knowledge of Christ to those who heard them. They labored that they might obtain means for support. . . .

In Corinth he [Paul] had lived and labored with Aquila and Priscilla, instructing them more perfectly in the truth. The great apostle was not ashamed or afraid of work, and he did not treat this subject as in any way lowering to his work in the ministry. . . .

The custom of supporting men and women in idleness by private gifts or church money encourages them in sinful habits, and this course should be conscientiously avoided. Every man, woman, and child should be educated to do practical, useful work. All should learn some trade. It may be tentmaking, or it may be business in other lines; but all should be educated to use the members of their body to some purpose, and God is ready and willing to increase the adaptability of all who will educate themselves to industrious habits.

If a man in good physical health has property, and has no need of entering into employment for his own support, he should labor to acquire means that he may advance the cause and work of God. He is to be "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11). God will bless all who will guard their influence in regard to others in this respect. —*This Day With God*, p. 203.

During his sojourn at Corinth, Paul found time to look forward to new and wider fields of service. His contemplated journey to Rome especially occupied his thoughts. To see the Christian faith firmly established at the great center of the known world was one of his dearest hopes and most cherished plans. A church had already been established in Rome, and the apostle desired to secure the co-operation of the believers there in the work to be accomplished in Italy and in other countries. To prepare the way for his labors among these brethren, many of whom were as yet strangers to him, he sent them a letter announcing his purpose of visiting Rome and his hope of planting the standard of the cross in Spain. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 373.

Sunday, June 28

Paul, a God-called Apostle of Jesus

The solemn charge that had been given Paul on the occasion of his interview with Ananias rested with increasing weight upon his heart. When, in response to the invitation "Brother Saul, receive thy sight," Paul had for the first time looked upon the face of this devout man, Ananias under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said to him: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:13–16).

These words were in harmony with the words of Jesus Himself, who, when He arrested Saul on the journey to Damascus, declared: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16–18).

As he pondered these things in his heart, Paul understood more and more the meaning of his call to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (Ephesians 1:1). His call had come "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father" (Galatians 1:1). The greatness of the work before him led him to give much study to the Holy Scriptures, in order that he might preach the gospel "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Corinthians 1:17), "but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," that the faith of all who heard "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5). — *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 279.

In the records of those who have done and suffered for the name of Jesus, there is no name that shines with a brighter or purer luster than the name of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. The love of Jesus, glowing in his heart, made him self-forgetful, self-denying. He had seen the risen Christ, and the Saviour's image was impressed upon his soul, and shone forth in his life. With faith, courage, and fortitude, that would not be daunted by danger or stayed by obstacles, he pressed his way from land to land to spread the knowledge of the cross. — *Our Father Cares*, p. 122.

Monday, June 29  
From Athens to Corinth

During the first century of the Christian Era, Corinth was one of the leading cities, not only of Greece, but of the world. Greeks, Jews, and Romans, with travelers from every land, thronged its streets, eagerly intent on business and pleasure. A great commercial center, situated within easy access of all parts of the Roman Empire, it was an important place in which to establish memorials for God and His truth.

Among the Jews who had taken up their residence in Corinth were Aquila and Priscilla, who afterward became distinguished as earnest workers for Christ. Becoming acquainted with the character of these persons, Paul "abode with them."

At the very beginning of his labors in this thoroughfare of travel, Paul saw on every hand serious obstacles to the progress of his work. The city was almost wholly given up to idolatry. Venus was the favorite goddess, and with the worship of Venus were connected many demoralizing rites and ceremonies. The Corinthians had become conspicuous, even among the heathen, for their gross immorality. They seemed to have little thought or care beyond the pleasures and gaieties of the hour.

In preaching the gospel in Corinth, the apostle followed a course different from that which had marked his labors at Athens. While in the latter place, he had sought to adapt his style to the character of his audience; he had met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. As he thought of the time thus spent, and realized that his teaching in Athens had been productive of but little fruit, he decided to follow another plan of labor in Corinth in his efforts to arrest the attention of the careless and the indifferent. He determined to avoid elaborate arguments and discussions, and "not to know anything" among the Corinthians "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He would preach to them "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Corinthians 2:2, 4. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 243, 244.

It had been Paul's custom to adopt an oratorical style in his preaching. He was a man fitted to speak before kings, before the great and learned men of Athens, and his intellectual acquirements were often of value to him in preparing the way for the gospel. He tried to do this in Athens, meeting eloquence with eloquence, philosophy with philosophy, and logic with logic; but he failed to meet with the success he had hoped for. His aftersight led him to understand that there was something needed above human wisdom. . . . He must receive his power from a higher source. In order to convict and convert sinners, the Spirit of God must come into his work and sanctify every spiritual development.

To Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. . . . He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.

At the time of his conversion, Paul was inspired with a longing desire to help his fellow men to behold Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of the living God, mighty to transform and to save. Henceforth his life was wholly devoted to an effort to portray the love and power of the Crucified One. . . . The apostle's efforts were not confined to public speaking; there were many who could not have been reached in that way. . . . He visited the sick and the sorrowing, comforted the afflicted, and lifted up the oppressed. And in all that he said and did he magnified the name of Jesus. . . .

Paul realized that his sufficiency was not in himself, but in the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influence filled his heart. . . . Self was hidden; Christ was revealed and exalted. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 341.

Tuesday, June 30  
The City of Corinth

Paul was a tentmaker, and he supported himself by working at his trade. While working thus, he spoke of the gospel to those with whom he came in contact, and turned many souls from error to truth. He lost no opportunity of speaking of the Saviour, or of helping those in trouble.

The history of the apostle Paul is a constant testimony that manual labor cannot be degrading, that it is not inconsistent with true greatness and elevation of human or Christian character. Those toilworn hands, he deemed, detracted nothing from the force of his pathetic appeals, sensible, intelligent, and eloquent. . . .

Those toilworn hands as he presented them before the people bore testimony that he was not chargeable to any man for his support. . . . At times he also supported his fellow workers, himself suffering from hunger in order to relieve the necessities of others. He shared his earnings with Luke, and helped Timothy obtain the necessary equipment for his journey.

Paul set an example against the sentiment, then gaining influence in the church, that the gospel could be proclaimed successfully only by those who were wholly freed from the necessity of physical toil. He illustrated in a practical way what might be done by consecrated laymen in many places where the people were unacquainted with the truths of the gospel. His course inspired many humble toilers with a desire to do what they could to advance the cause of God, while at the same time they supported themselves in daily labor. . . .

While some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel, many others, upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination, are called to act an important part in soulsaving. . . . The self-sacrificing servant of God who labors untiringly in word and doctrine, carries on his heart a heavy burden. . . . His wages do not influence him in his labor. . . . From heaven he received his commission, and to heaven he looks for his recompense when the work entrusted to him is done.

—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 342.

The Bible reveals the true philosophy of history. In those words of matchless beauty and tenderness spoken by the apostle Paul to the sages of Athens is set forth God's purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations: He "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." Acts 17:26, 27. God declares that whosoever will may come "into the bond of the covenant." Ezekiel 20:37. In the creation it was His purpose that the earth be inhabited by beings whose existence should be a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator. All who will may identify themselves with this purpose. Of them it is spoken, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Isaiah 43:21.

—*Education*, p. 173.

Wednesday, July 01  
"Many in This City"

The angels of God are ready and waiting to go with humble men who with their Bibles in their hands will go to those who have not had this light, and read to them a "Thus saith the Lord."

Those who have the gift of song are needed. The melody of praise is the atmosphere of heaven. Often by the words of sacred songs, the springs of penitence and faith have been unsealed. Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart.

Let little companies of workers go out as the Lord's missionaries, and do as Christ commissioned the first disciples to do. Let them go into the different parts of our cities, two and two, and give the Lord's message of warning. Tell the people the story of Creation, and how at the close of His work the Lord rested upon and blessed the Sabbath day, setting it apart as a memorial of His work.

Church members young and old should be educated to go forth to proclaim this last message to the world. If they will go in humility, angels of God will go with them, teaching them to lift up the voice in prayer, how to raise the voice in song, and how to proclaim the gospel message for this time. We have not a moment to lose. . . .

Who will take up this work of teaching Bible truth to old and young? Who will carry the message, following Christ's plan of labor? . . . Many there are in every city who feel the need of gospel shepherds. We need men who will read the truth, practice the truth, and explain the truth.

Brethren, Christ calls you. Will you heed His voice? Will you become His messengers? Will you seek the sheep that are lost? Will you teach the Word in all humility and earnestness to those who will hear?

Young men and women, take up the work to which God calls you. Tell the wondrous story of the cross. Christ will lead you, and teach you to use your abilities to good purpose. As you receive the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, and you seek to teach others, your minds will be refreshed, and you will be enabled to present words that are new and strangely beautiful to your hearers. Pray, and sing, and speak the word. . . .

Spiritual freedom will come to those who consecrate themselves unreservedly, and the quickening grace of Christ will bring light and peace and joy. The saving influence of truth will sanctify the soul of the receiver. —*The Upward Look*, p. 91.

Thursday, July 02

Paul's Letters to the Corinthians

In this letter to the Corinthians Paul endeavored to show them Christ's power to keep them from evil. He knew that if they would comply with the conditions laid down, they would be strong in the strength of the Mighty One. As a means of helping them to break away from the thralldom of sin and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, Paul urged upon them the claims of Him to whom they had dedicated their lives at the time of their conversion. "Ye are Christ's," he declared. "Ye are not your own. . . . Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

The apostle plainly outlined the result of turning from a life of purity and holiness to the corrupt practices of heathenism. "Be not deceived," he wrote; "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, . . . nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." He begged them to control the lower passions and appetites. "Know ye not," he asked, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?"

While Paul possessed high intellectual endowments, his life revealed the power of a rarer wisdom, which gave him quickness of insight and sympathy of heart, and brought him into close touch with others, enabling him to arouse their better nature and inspire them to strive for a higher life. His heart was filled with an earnest love for the Corinthian believers. He longed to see them revealing an inward piety that would fortify them against temptation. He knew that at every step in the Christian pathway they would be opposed by the synagogue of Satan and that they would have to engage in conflicts daily. They would have to guard against the stealthy approach of the enemy, forcing back old habits and natural inclinations, and ever watching unto prayer. Paul knew that the higher Christian attainments can be reached only through much prayer and constant watchfulness, and this he tried to instill into their minds. But he knew also that in Christ crucified they were offered power sufficient to convert the soul and divinely adapted to enable them to resist all temptations to evil. With faith in God as their armor, and with His word as their weapon of warfare, they would be supplied with an inner power that would enable them to turn aside the attacks of the enemy.

The Corinthian believers needed a deeper experience in the things of God. They did not know fully what it meant to behold His glory and to be changed from character to character. They had seen but the first rays of the early dawn of that glory. Paul's desire for them was that they might be filled with all the fullness of God, following on to know Him whose going forth is prepared as the morning, and continuing to learn of Him until they should come into the full noontide of a perfect gospel faith. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 306, 307.

Friday, July 03  
For Further Reading

*God's Amazing Grace*, "More Than Conquerors," September 29, p. 280.  
*Lift Him Up*, "The Plan of Redemption a Gift," September 21, p. 278.