

INTRO TO THE STUDIES IN GALATIANS

THERE are two sorts of Sabbath-school lessons that are always in danger of being but slightly studied, namely, long ones and short ones. If a lesson is very long, the pupil will often become discouraged, and say, "I can't master such a lesson as that, and there's no use trying." If it is very short, many will think, "There isn't much to that lesson, and I don't need to spend much time on it." Now if a lesson is long and difficult, every effort should be made to master as much of it as possible; and if it is short, as are the lessons in this series, then one should determine to know everything that may be learned from it.

The Epistle to the Galatians is so compact, every sentence being full of instruction, and the connection is so close, that it requires very careful study to know exactly what it says. The only trouble in understanding it comes from lack of acquaintance with the events to which it refers, which are recorded elsewhere in the Bible, and in assuming, from a too careless reading, that it says things that it really does not. Accordingly only a few verses have been included in each lesson, as it is expected that each one will be thoroughly mastered. How can you expect to understand a man if you do not know what he says? and how can you expect to understand this epistle if you are not familiar with every statement in it, and have not considered the relation of each to its fellow? A verse a day will suffice to make one master of its contents; and such is the richness of the epistle, that five or six verses will furnish ample material for a week's study.

Don't speculate, and don't listen to any other person's speculations. Never say to anybody, "What do you think this means?" You do not stand in need of what somebody *thinks*; what you want is knowledge, and "the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Prov. 2:6. You may question the Lord very often, for He "giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not."

It is not an unheard-of thing for a teacher to say to his class, "I am not very well prepared with this lesson, for I have had very little time to study it, and hardly know where it is." If that is the case, it is right for him to confess it, and then to take his place in the class, to learn as much as may be from some one who does know the lesson. A teacher ought to *know*; it is his privilege and his duty. To stand before a class with no definite idea of what is to be taught, is a sin. The Scriptures and the souls of men are too sacred to be thus trifled with. If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch? If any member of the class does not know the lesson text, then let him keep his Bible open during class-time, and let him read his answers from it. Do not let anybody hazard a conjecture. The beauty of proper Bible study is that we may answer correctly every time. We may not know much, but we may be sure of what we do know.

The Epistle to the Galatians was not written for controversy, but to settle controversy, and to bring wanderers back to the fold of Christ. Now controversy is never settled but only augmented by argument; for the controversialist, "e'en though vanquished," can

“argue still.” The only way to settle controversy, and to reclaim erring souls, is to set forth the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. That is what is done in this epistle, and the only way to understand it is to study it with a humble desire to learn of Christ “as the truth is in Jesus,” and with a heart open to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Those who study it with a controversial spirit, to find some argument with which to “meet an opponent,” are sure to miss the truth.

Be very careful not to read your own ideas into the text, as you study it. “My thoughts are not your thoughts,” says the Lord. Hold yourself rigidly to the words that the apostle has written, but make use of as many good translations as you can get hold of. No one set of words can perfectly express the idea of the original. There is no popular commentary that is of any use whatever in studying this epistle. Make yourself perfect master of the text before thinking of reading anything else. There is no one who can not profitably read the portion assigned fifty or a hundred times during the week. Read it, question it, meditate upon it, until your brain sees it, and you can *read it intelligently* in the dark.

In these lessons the text used is that of the Revised Version. In many instances it is much clearer than the common version, and in any case it furnishes another rendering, which all can compare with the text in the Bibles which they ordinarily use, In the notes quotations are made from the two versions indiscriminately. Whenever you find a text of Scripture quoted differently from what it is in your Bible, you may know that it is from the revision, unless otherwise stated.