

LESSON VI. HOLDING TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

A Meeting in Jerusalem.

August 11, 1900

(Gal. 2:1-5.)

“THEN after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised; and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.”

Remember that when the apostle wrote the epistle, he did not divide it into chapters; it is one continuous narrative, and there is no break between the first chapter and the second. Therefore you must have the whole of the first in mind before beginning on this one. Do not forget to study each time from the beginning. Study the first chapter again carefully, from first to last, and then read the verses set apart for this lesson, fifty or a hundred times. Read slowly, thinking of every word, and question and cross-question the text.

Have you not seen pictures containing hidden faces, which you were to find? At first you could see no face or figure. By and by, after looking at the picture from every point of view, you saw the hidden face, and after that you could not look at the picture without seeing it. But sometimes you could not find the face until a friend pointed it out to you. After that you could always see it without any help, and could show it to another, not quoting your friend as authority, but pointing out that in the picture which you yourself saw. You did not need your friend's finger any more. Now the suggestions accompanying the text of these lessons are simply the finger of a friend, pointing out some of the pictures in the text that you might not see at first, but which are apparent enough when your attention has once been called to them. It would be better for all if they could see all these things for themselves, and so they could in time, if they looked intently; but a little direction will save much time, and all should remember that the Scriptures are an inexhaustible mine, and that any portion in which we have found much, still contains infinitely more hidden treasure to reward our further search.

QUESTIONS.

Where was Paul when the Lord was made known to him?

To what place did he soon go? What did he next do?

How long a time elapsed after his conversion before he went to Jerusalem?

What did he do fourteen years afterward?

“After the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem.”

How long would this be after his conversion?

Who accompanied him on this journey?

What led him to go this time?

“I went by revelation.”

What did he do when he arrived in Jerusalem?

“I laid before them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.”

How did he lay it before some?

“Privately.”

To whom did he present the Gospel privately?

“To them that were of repute.”

Why did he present the Gospel privately to these?

“Lest by any means I should be running or had run in vain.”

What about Titus?

“Not even Titus who was with me . . . was compelled to be circumcised.”

Who was Titus?

“A Greek.”

What is indicated by the statement, “*Not even Titus . . . a Greek, . . . was compelled to be circumcised*”?

Why was it necessary that this visit to Jerusalem should he made?

“Because of false brethren privily brought in.”

Why had they come in privily?

“To spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.”

What was their object?

“That they might bring us into bondage.”

Did he yield anything to the claims of these “false brethren”?

“No, not for an hour.”

Why did he thus withstand them?

“That the truth of the Gospel might remain with you.”

What, then, was the controversy concerning?

What would these “false brethren” do?

NOTES.

1. The first three years of Paul's life as a Christian he spent in Arabia and Damascus. At the end of three years he went up to Jerusalem, which he had left as a persecutor of Christians. That time he stayed but fifteen days, living with Peter. Fourteen years afterward, that is, seventeen years after his conversion, he went up again to Jerusalem.
2. It was about the year A. D. 34 that Paul was converted; and seventeen years later

would bring us to the year A. D. 51, the time of the meeting in Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. See marginal references. So we know from this, as well as from things mentioned in the epistle, that the visit referred to in this lesson is the one described in Acts 15.

3. That meeting was over the teaching of some “false brethren” (Acts 15:24), who by their false teaching subverted the souls of the disciples. They claimed that a man could not be saved without being circumcised (Acts 15: 1); but that this was not the teaching of the apostles and elders is shown from the fact that “not even Titus, . . . a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.” This expression shows that when Paul made this visit to Jerusalem, there was an attempt to compel all to be circumcised, which connects it with the visit recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. The attempt, however, was not successful.
4. The brethren at Antioch, where Paul was laboring, determined that he and Barnabas and certain others should go up to Jerusalem over the disputed question of circumcision (Acts 15:1, 2); but Paul tells us that he went up by revelation (Gal. 2:2). He did not go up on an errand for men, but for the Lord. He was the Lord’s servant, not man’s.
5. Paul did not go up to Jerusalem to find out if he had been teaching the truth. To suppose that he did would be to contradict all that he says in the first chapter of this epistle. He went up to impart to others the light which God had given him.
6. A careful reading of the lesson will show that verse 4 refers back to verses 1 and 2. It is not that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised on account of the false brethren, but that Paul went up to Jerusalem because of the false brethren, and it was because of them that he presented the Gospel privately to some. These false brethren, who, as the Danish vividly expresses it, had “sneaked in,” would pervert every word that Paul uttered in public.
7. The reason why Paul would not give any place to the teaching of those men, was that he wished “the truth of the Gospel” to remain with the churches, which had been formed from among the Gentiles. This shows that the whole controversy was over the Gospel. These false brethren were presenting a false gospel. Paul stood for the truth of the Gospel, which is the power of God to save every one that believes.
8. We can now see why Paul relates this personal experience. He had already encountered men who did just what the men were doing who were troubling the Galatians with a pretended gospel. The question at issue resolved itself into this: Are men saved by faith alone, or by works? Is it by the power of God alone, or by human merit?