

ing in keeping a fire going for the comfort of his shipwrecked fellows, and even while the island's inhabitants expect to see him fall down suddenly dead, he is miraculously preserved from harm.

The father of the chief man of the island lies sick, and he prays, and lays hands on him, and heals him. And others, also, come, and are healed.

And after three months he takes ship again laden with gifts from the island's inhabitants, not one of the ship's company of two hundred and sixty-six having had so much as a hair of his head harmed in all their harrowing experiences.

They first make Syracuse. From Syracuse they fetch a compass and come to Rhegium, in Italy, opposite Messina, in Sicily. Then, the south wind favoring them, they make the Bay of Naples in a day, landing from their ship, the Castor and Pollux, at Puteoli, in the shadow of Vesuvius, which has not yet overwhelmed Pompeii.

THANKING GOD AND TAKING COURAGE

Seven days he tarries with the brethren found there: and so he goes toward Rome.

As he travels overland on the last stage of his journey to the goal of his desire, word goes ahead that he is coming, and when within forty-odd miles of the city, at the market of Appius, where there are three taverns beside the great highway of the triumphal marches of the Caesars he meets with the final adventure of his long and eventful journey. For from Rome, "when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

"And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him."

How simple, how unostentatious an entry into Rome, yet how momentous for the pagan civilization of which that city was the head!

One clause of this account of the great Apostle's coming to Rome has received much attention: "Whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."

Paul was on his way from a shipwreck to a prison. He knew that from which he had escaped and that to which he was going, and yet, at the presence of the brethren from Rome, meeting him along the Appian Way, "he thanked God, and took courage."

One must be an optimist to extract comfort from such a situation, and that is what Paul was. With tribulations enough to make a pessimist out of one less sustained by faith, he ever maintained his buoyant spirit and went unafraid into every danger that lay in his path of duty.

THE GOSPEL OF UNLIMITED CHANCES

A "Life of Paul" would be a good book to put into the hands of any one contemplating suicide.

Trivial circumstances have often led to the taking of one's own life. A disappointment overwhelms one, darkens the future and makes life seem a failure; then, in a moment of despair, a fatal resolve terminates this earthly existence.

Paul teaches us that nothing from without can cloud the sky when it is illumined by an inner faith in God. No way seems impossible when one follows a heavenly vision; obstacles summon the energy necessary to overcome them, just as water, rising behind a dam, furnishes the power necessary to sweep it out of the way.

There is no excuse for despair, no matter what the circumstances. Christianity has been called the Gospel of the Second Chance. It is more than that—it offers unlimited chances; it teaches exhaustless mercy.

Walter Malone, in a poem on "Opportunity," which seems intended to answer the rather gloomy ode on the same subject by Senator Ingalls, says:

"Wail not for precious chances passed away,
Weep not for golden ages on the wane!
Each night I burn the records of the day—
At sunrise every soul is born again."

No, shamefaced outcast ever sank so deep
But he might rise and be again a man!"

There is no day so dark, no condition so threatening, that the Christian, like Paul, cannot thank God and take courage.

A CHRISTIAN UNASHAMED

Paul had the indomitable courage that comes from faith in God, and so he could say to the Romans (Romans 1:15, 16): "I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ:

for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Paul said that he was not ashamed of the Gospel. It is a thought that needs to be emphasized today.

The Gospel is sometimes preached in an apologetic way. It is whittled down; it is pruned of anything that would disturb the sensibilities of the unregenerate. That is not the kind of Gospel that Christ taught and not the kind that He intended should be taught in His name.

In that wonderful commission which He gave His disciples after His resurrection, in His last communion with them, He commanded that they should teach the observance "of all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Nothing but a complete Gospel proclaimed by those who believe in it can save the world or satisfy the needs of man.

Paul was not ashamed to preach the Gospel. He resolved that he would preach nothing but the Gospel of the crucified Christ. His tongue was not restrained by doubts as to the deity of Christ, or questionings as to the fullness of His power, or as to the wholesomeness of His doctrines.

Paul went all the way with Christ. He was ready to give a reason for the faith that was in him, and he was as ready to die for that faith as to live for it. This was the religion that he communicated to those who looked to him for advice. And there was in them the same spirit that inspired Paul. It is a compelling spirit.

"I, TOO, AM A CHRISTIAN"

In "Quo Vadis" there is a despicable character who betrayed the Christians into the hands of the emperor and then rode with him in his chariot when he drove through the park lighted by these human torches—bodies of Christians in flames.

As the story goes, this enemy passed before a dying Christian whom he knew and who, by his treachery, had been brought to the stake. The Christian recognized him and, instead of exhibiting hatred or revenge, smiled as if in forgiveness.

It touched the heart of the cruel man. He stepped down from the chariot of the emperor, and, kneeling in the front of the tortured follower of the Nazarene, cried: "I, too, am a Christian."

This was the spirit of the early Christians. They were not ashamed, and it was their willingness to confess Christ before man and to seal their confession with their blood that laid the foundations of the Christian Church.

How long would it take Christianity to conquer the world if the same spirit were in all who today profess His name?

A preacher once told me of an experience he had in a prayer meeting. He was exhorting the members of the church boldly to proclaim themselves followers of Jesus. To illustrate what he meant, he said:

"You who are Republicans do not hesitate to say that you are followers of Abraham Lincoln. You, who are Democrats, are not ashamed to say that you are followers of Thomas Jefferson—"

WHY SHOULD YOU BE ASHAMED?

Before he could get any further, a gray haired man in the rear of the room, mistaking the purpose of the preacher's language, promptly arose and said, "I am not ashamed to say that I am a follower of Thomas Jefferson." The response fitted into the preacher's remarks and he used it to emphasize still further his appeal.

Lawyers are not ashamed to admit they are followers of the great lawyers of the past: physicians are not ashamed to confess that they follow the great men in medicine; and so it is with business men. Why should a Christian be ashamed of the Gospel?

"It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

I MIGHT ENJOIN THEE, BUT I PREFER
TO BESEECH THEE
By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR DEC 11

(Philemon 8-21.)

Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

Whom I have sent again; thou therefore receive him, that is mine own bowels:

Whom I would have retained with me, that in

thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

But without thy mind would I do nothing; that they benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever;

Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?

If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord; refresh my bowels in the Lord.

Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

In previous Bible Talks, we have dealt with Paul as an heroic character, fighting against great odds, hurling sentences that had the momentum of a battering ram, exhorting the timid and praising the courageous.

We deal with him today as a friend, pleading for a runaway slave who was converted under his teaching and whom he had learned to love.

Our text—Paul's touching epistle to Philemon, a scant five hundred words that has been called "one of the most beautiful pieces of literature in the world"—reveals an important side of many-sided Paul. It gives us an inner view of the great apostle; it enables us to estimate the height, the depth and the breadth of the man. And it holds a mighty lesson for every man and woman and every nation today.

IS YOUR POCKETBOOK BAPTIZED?

Philemon was a man of means of Asia Minor, but he consecrated his means to the service of God and to the advancement of Christianity. A story is told of a Baptist preacher who was about to immerse an applicant for membership, when the latter stopped the ceremony in order to take his pocketbook out of his pocket. "Don't do that," said the preacher, "I want to baptize your pocketbook with you." Philemon evidently had his pocketbook with him when he was baptized for his money seems to have been baptized also.

The question is sometimes asked: "How much money can a man have and be a Christian?" Any amount, provided he earns it honestly, so long as he is the master of his money. Whenever he gets so much that his money controls him it is time for him to read about the camel and the difficulty it had with the eye of a needle.

Philemon was one of the company of Christians of Asia Minor and Paul had stopped at his house. In this very epistle he asks Philemon to prepare a lodging for him against his day of release from his chains in Rome.

It seems that Onesimus was a slave of Philemon's and had run away from home and taken refuge in Rome. He came under the influence of Paul's preaching and was converted and became a servant of Paul's.

The relationship between Paul and Onesimus was so intimate that Paul says that he is "not now as a servant but above a servant, a brother beloved." He would like to keep him, but as the slave had run away from his master, Paul felt that the master's claim came first and that it was the slave's duty to return and fulfill the requirements of the law.

THE TIE THAT BINDS MANKIND

It is significant that the attitude of Onesimus was changed. Before he was converted he ran away, seeking his own pleasure, contrary to the law as it then existed. When he became a follower of Christ and a companion of Paul his viewpoint was changed and he went willingly back to his master. They could talk together now and work together, because the tie that bound them together as Christians was stronger than the master's sense of ownership and stronger than the slave's desire for liberty. It makes all the difference in the world what purpose is dominant, because the dominant controls that which is subordinate.

Paul, who sends Onesimus back to servitude, pleads for him, saying to Philemon, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself."

That was asking a good deal of a friend, to receive a runaway slave as if the slave were Paul himself. But Paul went even further, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account."

This was the very spirit of the Christ to whom Paul had given his life. As Christ had taken the sins of man upon Himself and died, than man, through Him, might be saved, so Paul steps forward and offers himself in the place of the slave, asking that Philemon should charge up to him, Paul, anything that Onesimus