

The Sunday-School.

SECOND QUARTER,
LESSON IX.—May 31.

THE LIFE GIVING SPIRIT.

ROMANS 8: 1-14.

Read the Whole Chapter.

GOLDEN TEXT.—For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.—Rom. 8: 14.

LEARN BY HEART.—V. 1; 1 John 3: 2; 1 Cor. 9: 27.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time.—The Epistle to the Romans was written, probably early in the spring of A.D. 57, soon after the Epistle to the Galatians.

Place.—Written from Corinth, to the church at Rome.

Place in the History.—At the close of Paul's three months' residence in Corinth (Acts 20: 3), the "wintering" of 1 Cor. 16: 6.

Circumstances.—The Epistle was written, seemingly, at the house of Caius (or Gaius), a Corinthian Christian (Rom. 16: 23; 1 Cor. 1: 14). Written in Greek, then widely understood in Rome. Tertius was Paul's amanuensis. Phoebe, a deaconess, carried it to Rome. The Epistle had three leading objects: (1) To expound Paul's great doctrine of justification by faith; (2) to counteract the influence of Jewish unbelief; (3) to instruct the Roman Christians in practical conduct.

THE LIFE OF GUILT AND THE LIFE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.—Vs. 1-4. In Rom. 7 Paul pictures the soul's struggles to do good, and its sad failures: "What I hate, that do I." Beecher calls Rom. 7 a prison-house, and defies any man to get out of that chapter into the glorious eighth save by the one word, "Christ."—"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is therefore (because Christ died to save us, Rom. 7: 25) now (since we became Christians, accepting Christ as our Saviour from sin) no condemnation. The Christian will be honestly trying to obey God's laws. To them which are in Christ Jesus, united to Christ by faith. For the law of the Spirit of life, God's Holy Spirit, who gives life, and is the essence of life. In Christ Jesus. Hath made me free in Christ, free through union with him. From the law of sin and death, from the power and authority of sin. For what the law (the Scriptures) could not do, the law could not save men from sin; it could only point out the sin and fix the penalty. But it was weak through the flesh, it was rendered inefficient by our lower nature which loves sin. God sending (i.e., by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Christ's was genuine flesh, but not sinful. He was a real man, exposed to all our temptations, but he kept himself from becoming a sinful man. And for sin, to atone for and destroy sin. Condemned sin in the flesh, in man's sinful nature. That the righteousness of the law. The righteous life required by God's law. Might be fulfilled in us, in our upright life, made possible by Christ's dwelling in us. Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. To "walk after" a thing

is to make it our aim, the object of our living.

THE LIFE OF THE FLESH AND THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.—Vs. 5-11. For they that are after the flesh. Those that live for their lower natures. Do mind. Set their minds upon, fix their affections on. The things of the flesh. Enumerated in Gal. 5: 19-21. But they that are after the Spirit. Those whose affections are set on the highest things. These rejoice in the things of the Spirit. See Paul's catalogue in Gal. 5: 22, 23. For to be carnally minded. That is, to fix our minds on selfish gratifications. Is death. It is spiritual death, and tends to and ends in eternal death. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Fulness of life here and the peace that is the result of such a life,—peace with God, and peace in one's own soul. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God. This is because the self-seeker is not subject to the law of God. The self-seeker follows his own will and lives selfishly. Neither indeed can be, until its nature is changed by Christ. So then they that are in the flesh (making self-gratification the object of their living) cannot please God. God is supremely unselfish. How could he take pleasure in beings that live for themselves?

Paul now applies to the Roman Christians directly what he has said in general terms in vs. 5-8. But ye, Christ's disciples. Are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Not under the sway of your lower nature. If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you, comforting, teaching, guiding. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ controlling his life. He is none of his. He is no true Christian, though he may be called by Christ's name. And if Christ be in you (as he is), the body is dead because of sin. Physical death is inevitable for all, but for the Christian its "sting" is gone (1 Cor. 15: 55). But the Spirit is life because of righteousness, our righteousness, made possible by Christ's. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you. The God of Christ's resurrection dwelling in you, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, raising them up from the grave, glorified. By his Spirit that dwelleth in you. A share in the Christian resurrection by the possession of the Spirit of Christ.

THE LIFE OF SLAVES AND THE LIFE OF SONS.—Vs. 12-14, and to the end of the chapter. The glorious thought of the eternal destiny of Christians, who are to rise into the fulness of life forevermore, fires Paul with the thought of duty. Therefore, brethren, since this eternal life is to be ours, we are debtors to the Spirit. Not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; that is, to pamper his body, gratify his senses, feed his passions. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. The more you rest your life in your lower, fleshly desires, the nearer are you to death, physical and spiritual, while, on the contrary, if ye through the Spirit do mortify (put to death) the deeds (evil practices) of the body, ye shall live. Put to death the lower nature, and the higher nature will live. For. Paul is going to give the reason for his state-

ment, "Ye shall live." As many as are led by the Spirit of God. All who submit themselves to this leading become the sons of God. The expression, sons of God, includes these three ideas: (1) Likeness to God, (2) objects of God's fatherly love, (3) heirs of God's inheritance.

HOW TO HEAR.

Theodore Parker, speaking of his early childhood, relates the following:

"When I was a little boy in my fourth year, one fine day in Spring my father led me by the hand to a distant part of the farm, but soon sent me home alone. On the way I had to pass a little pond, then spreading its waters wide; a rhodora in full bloom, a rare flower which grew only in that locality, attracted my attention and drew me to the spot. I saw a little tortoise sunning himself in the shallow waters at the roots of the flaming shrub. I lifted the stick I had in my hand to strike the harmless reptile; for though I had never killed any creature, yet I had seen other boys do so and I felt a disposition to follow their wicked example. But all at once something checked my little arm and a voice within me said, clear and loud: 'It is wrong!' I held my uplifted stick in a wonder at the new emotion, the consciousness of an involuntary but inward check upon my actions, till the tortoise and the rhodora both vanished from my sight. I hastened home and told the tale to my mother and asked what it was that told me it was wrong. She wiped a tear from her eye and, taking me in her arms, said: 'Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear and disobey, then it will fade out, little by little, and leave you in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends on heeding that little voice.'

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