

July 19th - Subject: Truth

DEAR FRIENDS: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from a verbatim report of—Talks on THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES —given by Peggy Brook. Biographies on our contributing authors can be found here.

ACTS 9: 2-3

The wonderful thing about Paul’s conversion and this whole tone of Love as Life is that it shows that salvation isn’t anything to do with human goodness or human badness—it’s just a scientific fact, true for everyone. On the road to Damascus Love showed Paul his true individuality and the way of Life, and all the Commentaries say that his conversion was of God and that it didn’t matter at all what Paul had done in the past—he could change at once and take on his true selfhood.

CHAPTER 9

VERSE 2. “this way”-Moffatt’s Commentary points out that this is the first time in the Acts that the apostles’ faith is known as the way, and that is lovely, because, as we’ve said, this whole tone of Love as Life is epitomized in Mrs. Eddy’s words, “Love hath shown thee the way of Life “ That is what happened to Saul.

VERSE 3. “Damascus” means “a sack full of blood,” and it seems to me that Saul was reaching the zenith of his persecution and that you might very well call it “a sack full of blood.” At that point the light dawned on him. Mrs. Eddy says, under the marginal heading “The darkest hours of all,” which they certainly were, both for the apostles and for Saul: “Love will finally mark the hour of harmony, and spiritualization will follow, for Love is Spirit” (S. & H. 96:4-5). She also says, “The more destructive matter becomes,”—and Saul was becoming the absolute apex of destruction at this point,—“the more its nothingness will appear, until matter reaches its mortal zenith in illusion and forever disappears” (S. & H. 97:11-13). That was true for Saul, and is true for us.

There’s nothing so comforting when you’re going through a difficult time as the saying, “The darkest hour precedes the dawn,” because it always does. One of the things which Mr. Doorly used to say over and over again was, “Whatever happens, and wherever you go, and whatever you do, go toward!” Often the darkest hour is when you don’t want to go forward, but if you stick to the truth long enough, it’s inevitable that the light will dawn. Paul always went forward, though here he was going right off in the opposite direction from Love, at the climax of his headlong career, but the light came to him, because he was honest and in earnest.

“Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven” —that was the light of Love, I think. Mrs. Eddy says, “Divine Science, the Word of God, saith to the darkness upon the

face of error, 'God is All-in-all,' and the light of ever-present Love illumines the universe" (S. & H. 503:12-15). The light of Love dawned on Paul, and he was to develop this universal sense which Love conveys that all men are the sons of God.

VERSE 6. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" —here you see Paul's humility; he wasn't humble at all by nature, but at this point he was willing to "humble himself as a little child."

VERSE 7. We often have that experience: we hear the truth, but we don't at once see the form of it.

VERSE 8. "and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man"-the same thing happened with Paul; his eyes were opened, but he didn't at once see the form of his vision. We often find that; we suddenly see some new sense of Truth, — perhaps we are attending some talks, or perhaps reading, or perhaps just thinking, — but for the moment we don't really see what it implies.

VERSE 9. It's interesting that Paul was three days without sight, because it seems to me that when you do see a wonderful revelation of Truth, it doesn't really become dynamic to you until you have identified yourself with it and seen that you are it and that it is you. Sometimes the vision seems to you intangible — you know that it's wonderful, but that's all. But if you culture it, one day you see it clearly and you can define and name it. It becomes "dry land" to you, and it's so clear and natural that you're one with it. Then that sense of Soul leads on to a sense of the power of Principle. That's exactly what happened here with Paul.

VERSE 11. Paul was to be found in the street called Straight, which seems a wonderful symbol that he was on the straight and narrow way. He was on the way, on the job, and nothing could stop him.

VERSES 13, 14. I think that this was really an argument that was going on in Paul's own thought, as well as Ananias' answer to God. Paul met this suspicion three times in this section (see also verses 21 and 26); he was suspected because he had been persecuting the Christians and his background naturally seemed very questionable. "Ananias" means "God hath been gracious," and surely that was just the thought that Paul needed to have come to him at that moment, —the thought that God had always been gracious and therefore Paul as His undivided idea had always been gracious, too, in reality. The argument must have come to Paul over and over again that he had been very guilty in persecuting the Christians, and that he had been cruel, unkind, and beastly.

The same argument of personal failings comes to us in different forms it says to us, for instance, "Oh; you've never had the proper upbringing to understand Science; you can't talk about Science, because you don't know how to talk, and you've never had any experience of talking," or "You're not the sort of person to go out and tell others about Science," — arguments arising out of our human background, and yet that background doesn't matter, because it isn't true anyhow. If Mrs. Eddy had listened to those arguments of the serpent, she might have said, "I'm not physically strong, so I'm not the sort of person to carry a movement," but she saw that mortal history is a lie, and that our ability,

our strength, our individuality, and so forth are from God. Mrs. Eddy writes, “It is well to know, dear reader, that our material, mortal history is but the record of dreams, not of man’s real existence, and the dream has no place in the Science of being” (Ret. 21:13-15). It’s a wonderful thing when you can see that the ever-present fact about yourself is that at this moment your individuality is fulfilled divinely and so whatever you have to do at this moment you can do, because your individuality is fulfilled. It isn’t really a question of getting better and better and more and more capable of doing things, but it’s like the bud of a flower — at every stage that bud is perfect and just what it has to be at that moment.

In connection with Paul’s conversion, remember that Mrs. Eddy says, “The destruction of sin is the divine method of pardon.” You haven’t got to get gradually better and better as a mortal; it is the destruction of sin, which is really the belief of life in matter, that is the divine method of pardon. “Divine Life destroys death, Truth destroys error, and Love destroys hate. Being destroyed, sin needs no other form of forgiveness. Does not God’s pardon, destroying any one sin, prophesy and involve the final destruction of all sin?” (S. & H. 339:1-6). She says also, “A false belief is both the tempter and the tempted, the sin and the sinner, the disease and its cause” (S. & H. 393: 30-32). It’s so important to remember that, if mortal mind tells you that you have been a sinner, or that you’ve been ill, or that you’ve done something that wasn’t right. I’ve often derived much comfort from realizing that the sin and the sinner are both false beliefs, —that it wasn’t I who committed a particular sin, but the “I” that committed it and the sin itself were both false beliefs, neither of them true — It’s so helpful, too, to remember that in the practice, because sometimes you find yourself thinking, “Now, if I know the right idea about the situation, then the disease will go, or the situation will work out,” but the wrong situation and the belief about it are one, and so when you see the truth, the whole false structure collapses.

And so Paul had to see that he had never indulged in sin, and that the belief that he had been a sinner and the sin itself were one, and that the whole experience was completely untrue. Paul saw his individuality as fulfilled in the plan of Love now and forever. It’s so easy to be caught out by old theology; we sometimes feel that some calamity has come upon us because of something that we’ve done and we feel that it’s right for us to suffer, but that’s just the argument of old theology. The scientific fact is that we never did sin; the sin and the sinner are both false beliefs, and so the thing that is trying to tempt us is just a lie about God. When we see that, we can deal with it.

It doesn’t matter how many years of your life you’ve spent in going the wrong way, because the scientific fact of your individuality is that it is forever in the plan of Love as perfect and fulfilled. Years of going wrong can be wiped out in a moment, and so can years of belief in sickness or in mere human goodness. The only truth is that you are a scientific fact in Love’s plan, and that is eternally true; there is no time, because Life wipes out the sense of time. You may have been believing for years, or for five minutes, that $2 + 2 = 5$, but that belief goes the moment you correct it with $2 + 2 = 4$. Any false belief is a lie about some fact in Science, and so when you put the scientific fact in place of the lie, that’s the end of the trouble —if you really see it. This doesn’t mean that there’s an easy way out of sin, or that you can sin and get away with it, because you suffer so long as the belief of sin lasts. If you’re indulging in false belief, which, is both the sin and the sinner, then you seem to go on suffering. But it’s a scientific impossibility for man in

God's image to have anything to do with missing the mark, or falling from the divine standard, and it will free you if you realize that. I know that in saying these things one is talking from a high scientific standpoint, but Science is exact and so something is either scientific or it is not. Naturally, in the working out of these facts one does the best one can in human experience but we must have the high and pure goal always before us, or else we are working with semi-metaphysics, which is no use.

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