

**October 25, 2004 - Subject: Everlasting Punishment**

**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 — TALKS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES — by Peggy Brook. For a brief biography on our featured authors, click [here](#).

**ACTS**

LOVE as Life (Chapter 9:1-43). *Love's way of Life is redemptive* reclaiming the sinner, healing the sick, and raising the dead.

As we individually find the unity of God and man in the plan of Love, nothing will be impossible for us to accomplish through divine power.

In this tone of Love as Life we have first of all the story of Saul's conversion; then the story of the healing of a sick man, Aeneas; and then the story of the raising of Dorcas. The whole tone shows that it doesn't matter how sinful mortal mind says that you've been, or how long you've been ill, or even how good you've been in the human, because the scientific fact is that right now you're the son of God; everyone stands the same chance of claiming this fact. Human goodness or badness or health or sickness doesn't count in attaining salvation; the only truth is the scientific and spiritual fact. It's true that scientific and spiritual fact produce better health and morals, but this is because of scientific fact and not because the human has any power of itself to improve. Mortal man does nothing at all to merit salvation. Mrs. Eddy say "Mortals are not fallen children of God. They never had a perfect state of being, which may subsequently be regained. ...Mortality finally swallowed up in immortality" (S.&H. 476:13-15; 17-18) Love as Life shows so clearly that the scientific fact of perfection is *now*: the perfection of man's spiritual individuality is a *fact* of being.

It's interesting that the story of Saul's conversion comes in the tone of Love as Life because you remember that it was in the tone of Life as Love that Saul was first mentioned, where his true individuality was touched and aroused by Stephen's defence. Paul had a great sense of universality, and so it seems quite natural that he should come fully into the picture with the tone of Love. The story of his conversion is epitomized perfectly in Mrs. Eddy's words "Love hath shown thee the way of Life!" (S.&H. 137:24-25).

Mrs. Eddy says; "Saul of Tarsus beheld the way—the Christ, or Truth—only when his uncertain sense of right yielded to spiritual sense, which is always right. Then the man was changed. Thought assumed a nobler outlook, and his life became more spiritual. He learned the wrong that he had done in persecuting Christians, whose religion he had not understood, and in humility he took the new name of Paul. He beheld for the first time the true idea of Love,"—it's interesting that she uses the

synonymous term Love, because where Love is, the accuser is not there and there is only Science, God's plan,—”and learned a lesson in divine Science” (S.&H. 326:23-32). You know, it's so obvious that Paul should come fully into the picture in the tone of Love, because whatever he did, he did wholeheartedly and in a thorough-going way—there were never any half-measures with Paul. He had a universal outlook, too—there's the tone of Love—and his conversion and missionary journeys all give the sense of Love's impelling.

Mrs. Eddy also says, “Great only as good, because fashioned divinely, were those unpretentious yet colossal characters, Paul and Jesus”—she puts Paul first, you notice. “Theirs were modes of mind cast in the moulds of Christian Science: Paul's, by the supremely natural transforming power of Truth; and the character of Jesus, by his original scientific sonship with God. Philosophy never has produced, nor can it reproduce, these stars of the first magnitude—fixed stars in the heavens of Soul” (*Mis.* 360: 6—14). I think that Mrs. Eddy mentions Paul first there because she is speaking in terms of Christianity; even her statement about Paul brings the wonderfully compassionate sense which Christianity gives, because it indicates that every one of us can be a Paul. Jesus naturally had the sense of scientific sonship with God, whereas Paul had it by “the supremely natural transforming power of Truth” and we too can have it in Paul's way, for “God is no respecter of persons.” Paul changed his sense of himself as a mortal to the divine *fact* of his sonship with God, and Mrs. Eddy shows that it was “supremely natural.”

“Paul” means “small,” or “little,” whereas “Saul” means “desired,” and it seems to me that in Saul there was something unsatisfied; he had to go on persecuting, looking for some kind of satisfaction, but never finding it. And then he became Paul, and he became humble,—amazingly humble for such a colossal and humanly dynamic character. ...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 forward.” 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'll 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 a scientific fact 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.

**VERSES 19, 20.** The first chapter of Galatians gives the impression that Paul went away to Arabia for some while, evidently thinking out the Christ-idea and studying and pondering. I think that he must have been imbibing the spirit of the gospel during this period. His conversion had come about without human agency, and so perhaps Paul felt that his inspiration could best come from individual study of the Hebrew Scriptures in the light of this new revelation, though Peter probably taught him a great deal when he

stayed with him in Jerusalem. The Commentaries don't know exactly when Paul went to Arabia, but he was there at some period before he really began his ministry.

**VERSE 21.** The same argument going on—"Isn't this the man who was a sinner?"

**VERSES 22—25.** I always love what Mrs. Eddy says: "God is responsible for the mission of those whom He has anointed.

Those who know no will but His"—who love the idea more than themselves —"take His hand, and from the night He leads to light" (*Mis.* 347:25-27). Also, "I ask: What has shielded and prospered preeminently our great Cause, but the out-stretched arm of infinite Love?" Remember that we're considering Love as Life, — that Love which protects and preserves true individuality. Mrs. Eddy goes on, "....In the eighties, anonymous letters mailed to me contained threats to blow up the hall where I preached; yet I never lost my faith in God, and neither informed the police of these letters nor sought the protection of the laws of my country. I leaned on God, and was safe" (*Mess.* '02, 14:24-26; 15: 1-5). That's what Paul did — he leaned on God and was safe.

**VERSE 26.** The same argument again, and, as I have said, I feel that it was something which Paul was working out in his own thought, because he probably had a great fear that he would have a hostile reception; in fact, he probably couldn't make out himself why he had been chosen by God. And so he was working out all the time that one's past history is a lie, because God is All and as the idea of God man is perfect now.

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