

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(For March 26th)

THE CHURCH IN ROME

Golden Text.—I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. —Rom. 1:16

The Lesson as a Whole

Approach to the Lesson

We do not know just when the first Christians appeared in Rome and founded the church which in after years was to assume such prominence, both for good and for evil. Roman Catholic apologists insist that this church was founded by the Apostle Peter and was intended by Christ to hold pre-eminence over all other churches. Scripture itself makes it very clear that this claim is utterly false. There is no record whatsoever of any apostle having visited Rome until Paul himself was brought to that city as a prisoner. Peter's ministry was particularly to the Jews, as Paul's was to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-9). It seems evident that the Roman Church was founded actually by a little group of converts, most of whom were Hebrew Christians who had been brought to Christ elsewhere and then later on moved to that city. In the sixteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans Paul sends greetings to many of these whom he had known elsewhere. Certainly if Peter had been the resident bishop, Paul would have sent special greetings to him, but his name is not ever mentioned. There is no good reason to doubt that he himself was the first apostle to visit this church. He had such a visit in mind for some time before it was accomplished. He mentions this in his letter to them. This letter was written several years before his desire was fulfilled, and when it actually came to pass he reached Rome in chains, a prisoner for the Gospel's sake. In his letter he gives the fullest unfolding of the Gospel of grace that is found in the New Testament. Unhappily, in later centuries, leaders in Rome perverted Paul's own teaching in such a way as to make it almost unrecognizable. Through Dr. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other reformers, this Gospel was recovered in the sixteenth century, and we today who turn to the Word of God alone for our instruction are privileged to revel in the precious truths set forth in this Epistle. The key to the entire letter is found in Romans 1:17: "The just shall live by faith." This was the battle cry of the Reformation.

The Historical Setting

As already mentioned, we have no reliable data concerning the origin of the church in Rome. From the Epistle to the Romans which was written A.D. 60, while Paul was at Corinth, we gather that there was already a church of some importance in the great world metropolis. Paul arrived there as a prisoner, who had appealed to Caesar, in A.D. 63. He remained in durance for two years, being permitted to live in his own hired house (Acts 28:30). Scripture itself gives us no direct information as to what occurred afterward; but according to tradition he was cleared of the charge of sedition and allowed to go free. Later on he was arrested again and brought back to Rome, where he died as a martyr for Christ about A.D. 66.

Verse by Verse

Rom. 1:1.—Paul, a servant

an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." The word translated "servant" really means a bondman. Paul liked to think of himself as the purchased slave of Jesus Christ. He was an apostle by divine call, not by his own choice or by human appointment. He had been set apart by the Lord Himself for the great work of preaching the Gospel to the Gentile world.

Verse 7.—"To all that be in Rome . . . called . . . saints." This address indicates that there were already a number of Christians in Rome. These are spoken of as "beloved of God" and "saints by calling." Notice that the words "to be" are italicized and do not appear in the original text. All believers are divinely called saints. How different is this from the Romish idea that saints are super-Christians who have accumulated special merit, which may be passed on to others.

Verse 8.—"Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." These words are very significant. They tell us that before any apostle ever visited them, the believers in Rome had become widely known because of their consistent, faithful testimony.

Verse 9.—"Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." Paul's prayer interest extended not only to those whom he himself had led to Christ, but included all God's children wherever found.

Verse 10.—"Making request . . . I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you." Some might think that this prayer was unanswered, inasmuch as Paul came to Rome a prisoner and was shipwrecked on the way. But God overruled all for blessing, and Paul's experiences have become an encouragement to thousands of Christians passing through trying circumstances.

Verse 11.—"I long to . . . impart unto you some spiritual gift." It was the apostle's earnest desire to share with these believers the precious truths that God had made known to him in order that they might be more firmly established in the faith.

Verse 12.—"That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Fellowship with those of like precious faith is one of the most blessed privileges that Christians are permitted to enjoy here on earth. Those who refresh the souls of others by imparting truth to them which had not been hitherto apprehended are themselves refreshed and cheered when they find that truth laid hold of eagerly by those to whom they minister.

Acts 28:14.—"So we went toward Rome." Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, accompanied Paul on the long and dangerous voyage from Caesarea to Italy. It must have been with a sense of relief that these two devoted friends and servants of Christ began the last lap of their journey toward the imperial city.

Verse 15.—"The brethren . . . came to meet us." Representatives from the church of Rome, having learned of Paul's arrival in Italy, set out to meet him and joined the company of soldiers and prisoners at a small town on the Applan Road not far from Rome. Their coming greatly cheered Paul's heart.

Verse 30.—"Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house." Upon arrival in Rome Paul followed his usual custom of bearing witness to the Jews first, but when most of them refused his message, he announced, as he had done elsewhere, that he would go to the Gentiles to share with them the Gospel of Christ. As

Canadian Garden Service — 1950

By Gordon Lindsay Smith
Lots of New Things

Whether or not 1950 marks the end of the half century it does bring the world back to normal production of garden seeds again. During the war years and for some time afterwards not only were there actual shortages, because of the cutting off of imports from Europe and Asia, but there was also drastic curtailment of the introduction of new varieties.

Now it takes a little time to produce and distribute a new variety. It must be thoroughly tested to make sure it is really new and valuable, and also that it is suited for the rather vigorous climate of Canada. Then it must be grown two or three years in quantity to build up sufficient volume of seed for general distribution. New new introductions are flowing freely again.

In Canadian seed catalogues this year will be found new flowers, or new colors of old familiar varieties, new types, shorter or taller than their predecessors or hardier or perhaps earlier in blooming. They Grow Faster Now

And in the vegetables too there have been some substantial changes. To anyone who hasn't looked at a seed catalogue for several years there will be a lot of things there today that are completely new. There are tenderer and larger beans, sweeter corn, new and much better varieties in almost every line. As well, there has been steady improvement, particularly in hardiness.

It is not so many years since corn was practically unknown in Prairie gardens. In fact it was only introduced into Southern Ontario about the beginning of the century. Today one can grow garden corn successfully away north. The reason? Earlier maturing varieties.

And what has been done in corn has also been done in melons, cucumbers, beans, peas, tomatoes and all sorts of other things. By getting varieties that mature faster, the plant breeder has overcome our handicap of late and early frosts. In the modern seed catalogue there is usually listed the number of days it takes grow individual varieties. This is vital information for the gardener who lives outside those very limited areas where the first of May means that danger from frosts is practically over.

Planning Flower Garden

Now with flowers, earliness and hardiness are important, too, but the experienced gardener takes other points into consideration as well when he sits before the fire and plans his 1950 garden. It doesn't make much difference in the vegetable plot whether four-foot corn alternates with four-inch lettuce. But planting like that would be a blunder in the flower garden.

Next, Weew—more about planning and first jobs outside.

—Canadian Seed Trade Asso.

noted above, he was allowed by the authorities to live in a rented abode while waiting for his case to come up in the imperial court. His friends, or any who desired to converse with him or to hear his testimony, were given free access to his house. Thus the door was kept open for the proclamation of the Gospel even while he was a prisoner awaiting trial.

Verse 31.—"Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern Lord Jesus Christ." So the Book of Acts closes as it began. In chapter 1, verse 3, we learn that the Lord Jesus, during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension, instructed His disciples concerning the Kingdom of God. This was the theme of the Apostle Paul's ministry as recorded in the divine authority over the hearts of those who have been born of God through believing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Heart of the Lesson

Having preached the Gospel throughout western Asia and eastern Europe for some thirty years since his remarkable conversion, it was Paul's earnest desire to go to Rome, there to confirm the faith of those in that city who had come to Christ already. In the Epistle which he wrote apprising them of this desire, he set forth in an orderly and masterly manner the great doctrines of grace which he had been commissioned to carry to the world. Reaching Rome several years later, as a prisoner, a door of utterance was given him, so that many more in that great city heard the Gospel and received Christ as their Saviour. Among these were even some of the imperial guard, designated as "Caesar's household" in Philippians 4:22. These might never have been reached had Paul not come to Rome as a prisoner.

FEWER LIVESTOCK IN AREA FARMS

A sizable decline in the number of livestock on Ontario County farms as on December 1, 1949, as compared with June 1, 1949, is reported by the Statistics Branch of the Ontario Dept. of Agriculture in its monthly crop report.

The figures for the county on December 1, 1949, with the totals for June 1 in brackets, are as follows:—

Sheep and lambs 10,120 (15,000); Cattle 72,200 (79,000); Swine 63,600 (62,100); Horses 10,585 (10,600).

Galt Boys Play Nursemaid To Sick Deer



This exhausted deer which collapsed on the ice of the Grand river in Galt, Ont., was cared for by Terry Sudden, 12, and

Clement Quessy, 14, until it could be taken to city park for treatment. Animal was one of many roaming around area in search for food.

THORNHILL VILLAGE YEARNS FOR CITY CONVENIENCES

The village of Thornhill with its 350 population is yearning for the status of a town and conveniences of the city, although they are yet in the country, and some question their ability to pay for all they ask. Last week the councils of the townships of Markham and Vaughan out of which the Yonge Street village has been carved, met the village trustees who made known their wants to the councils who more or less manage the affairs of Thornhill.

First item on the list of "wants" is a domestic water service. The trustees reported water could be purchased from North York Township, and the proposal is that a ten-inch main be run up Yonge Street to the northern limit of the village.

The trustees placed as their No. 2 need a new hydro lighting system along Yonge Street, with

the new overhanging type of pole, and thirdly it was proposed that Thornhill needed and recommended a fire area, with engine and brigade stationed there. Lastly the trustees asked for better police protection with perhaps a man stationed on Yonge Street in or near that village.

Practically all these improvements are highly desired by all rural villages, but they can come if and when the taxpayers are able to shoulder the cost.

A water area, fire area, and light area, would all be taxed directly to the area served, and it may be possible some of the requests made can be worked out without undue delay.

Less than five per cent of live births in Canada are illegitimate.

We're nearing the season of hop, skip and jump—all over the youngsters who chalk up our front walk.

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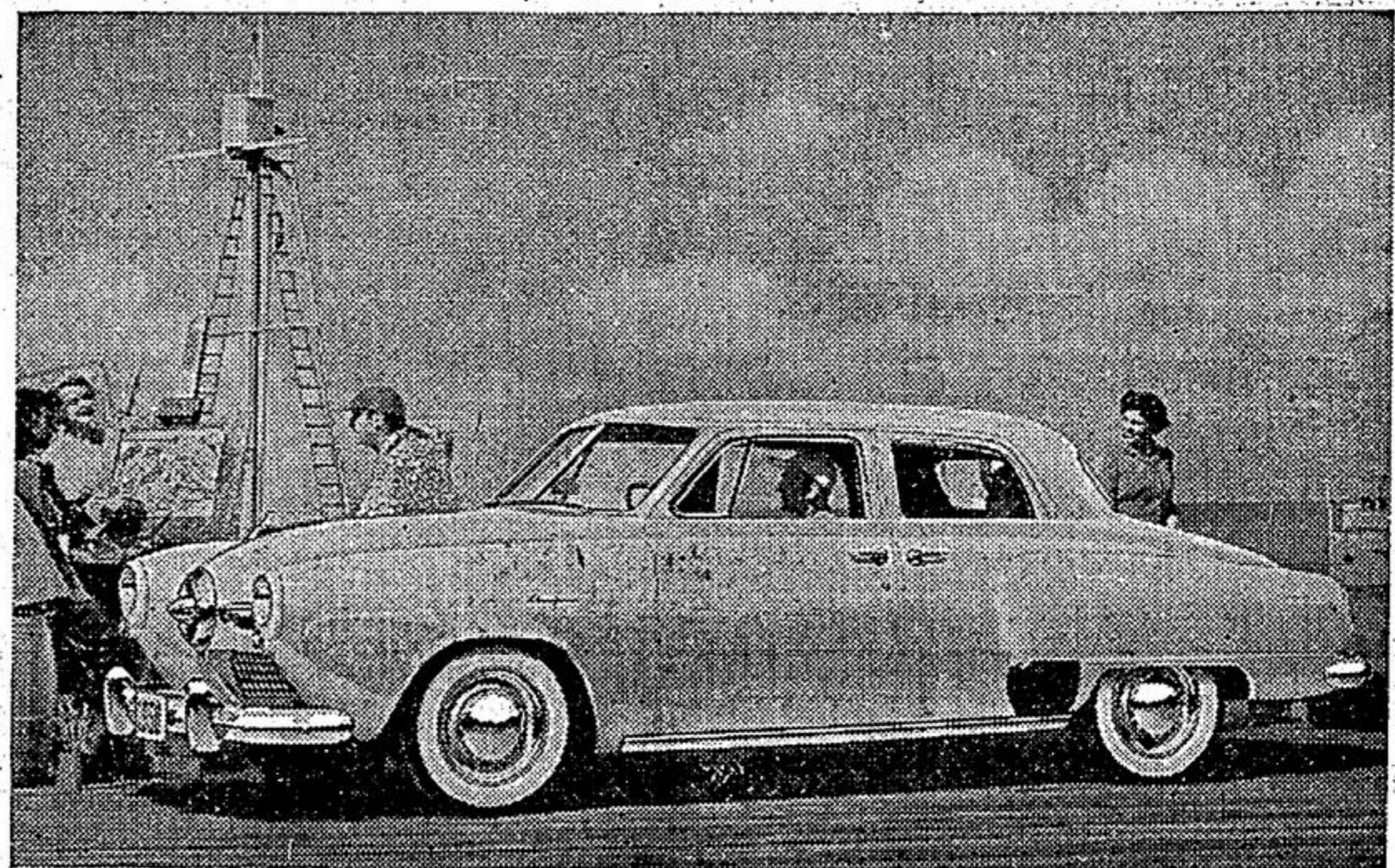
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