

## Three Parallel Lines

F. B. Hole.

Edification Vol. 1 1927, page 287.

THERE are *three* of them. They are as follows:-

1st. *The line of fact* — God's facts. In the cross of Christ certain things have become accomplished facts before God.

2nd. *The line of experience*. Every Christian has an experience, good, bad, or indifferent. It is a secret thing, hid from the eyes of his fellows, but very real to the individual himself.

3rd. *The line of behaviour*. This is more or less public — scanned by the eyes of all.

In an ideal Christian life these three lines are exactly parallel. In every life the third runs approximately parallel to the second, that is, our behaviour is largely controlled by our experience. We write in our public behaviour the secret history of our experience within,

It may be that every Christian who reads these lines is prepared to confess that our life and witness for Christ is not what it should be. We want it more in accordance with God's facts — the Cross and its results — more controlled by the Spirit, more fragrant of Christ. How shall this be produced?

It will never be produced by self-occupation, though many Christians think so, and spend weary months and years in the vain effort to work themselves into a more satisfactory state. You will not succeed in drawing a line parallel to another by concentrating all your attention upon the line you propose to draw. No! Fix your eye upon the line which serves as guide, adjust your rule in accordance with that, and the thing is done. To make progress we must maintain the divine order. Our behaviour is regulated by our experience, and our experience should be regulated by the knowledge of divinely accomplished facts.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of the epistle to the Romans are largely occupied with both experience and behaviour, and yet the line of fact runs through each of them like a golden thread.

Permit us now to inquire after your spiritual health. How are you getting on? and do you find the joy in your Christianity that you were led to expect when you first trusted the Lord? Perhaps not. It may be, like many others, you have defeat and not victory, gloom and not gladness. But you may take comfort from the fact that in Romans 7 an individual testifies concerning himself, and you could hardly sink lower than he. His experience was wretchedness itself; he sums it up thus: "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7: 14). His behaviour was, as it is to be expected, no better: "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7: 19).

What helped this wretched man? Why, just that which will help you — the knowledge of divinely accomplished facts. In each of these chapters there is one verse which states a fact. These facts are in no way dependent upon us. Be our experiences what they may, their truth stands unchanged. They are as follows: —

"Our old man is crucified with Him" (Rom. 6: 6).

"Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7: 4).

"God; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the

flesh" (Rom. 8: 3).

In one thing these verses coincide, viz. they, all refer to what God accomplished for Himself at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then and there our old man was crucified; we were made dead to the law and sin in the flesh was condemned.

*Make your reckoning with these facts.* If our old man — the apostle personifies all that we were as children of Adam — was crucified with Christ, then God has done with it, and there is no reason why you should mope over its delinquencies any longer. If we have been made dead to the law, then you need not lash yourself with legal scorpions every time you fail, but rather judge yourself in the light of God's grace. If sin in the flesh has been condemned, then it is evident that God has in the Cross gone down to the root of things, and executed His judgment upon sin, the root of the mischief; so why not now spend your moments considering the great love which His death expressed, rather than the sin which His death condemned?

Do not run away with the idea that the mere knowledge of these facts, valuable as that is, will of itself do anything. No; unless your knowledge of them leads to this — that you give up all hope of more satisfactory experience or behaviour in yourself, and fix your eye upon Christ by the Spirit's power, it will avail you nothing. As you are prepared to allow the blessed Spirit of God to fill your heart with the excellence and glory of Christ, the scene will change, and both experience and behaviour will be elevated to an altogether different level.

An electric tram aptly illustrates this. It runs by the aid of three parallel lines, two beneath and one charged with electricity above. Everything depends upon its being, by means of its long arm, kept in contact with the live wire above. You see one upon a dark night. How swiftly it runs! How brightly it shines! Lo! it vanishes. What has happened? The contact is broken, and when contact is broken its motive power is gone and its lights go out. So long, and only so long, as the blessed Spirit of God keeps us in contact with the line of divine facts, shall we run our heavenly race and brightly shine for Christ.

In conclusion, notice that all the three lines appear in these chapters in Romans. If through grace we are kept in touch with God's facts, we shall taste the blessedness of the experience thus described:-

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 2).

We shall breathe the air of the liberty of an enjoyed Christ, and as for our behaviour, we shall act in keeping with this injunction:-

"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6: 13).