

STUDIES OF THE MAN PAUL

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649715619

Studies of the Man Paul by Robert E. Speer

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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OF
THE MAN PAUL

BY

ROBERT E. SPEER

Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions

"I know a man in Christ."—2 Cor. xii. 2.



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
Publishers of Evangelical Literature

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PREFACE

THESE studies have for their subject the character of Paul, not so much his life or work or thought as the man. Of course it is only by his life and work and thought that the character of the man is revealed. But the aim of this little book is to study as far as possible the man himself, the personality of Paul. In some measure certainly what he did shaped and moulded him. In truer sense what he was determined and explained what he did.

The various chapters are divided into sections and numbered divisions for the convenience of Bible classes. They were prepared for Bible students, and have appeared in part, in the *Record of Christian Work* for the use of a mid-week Bible class. The simple name Paul, rather than Saint Paul, is used in conformity with the invariable usage of both the Authorized and the Revised Versions. The references throughout are to the Revised Version. Almost the whole of F. W. H. Myers' *Saint Paul* has been quoted in these studies. I wish that every one who reads this book might possess and study that exquisite poem.

These simple studies are sympathetic, not critical. Their purpose is wholly practical, and they pass by in the main the questions with which criticism is concerning itself. Even in such practical studies, however, it is impossible to avoid statements which involve judgments of one sort or another on these questions. Yet the whole purpose has been to set in the foreground Paul himself and not any secondary interests, and in some richer and fuller way to understand him.

In a sense, such a study is disappointing after a study of the character of Christ in the Gospels. We are conscious of having passed into a different

sphere. Yet what is this but a fresh testimony to the uniqueness of Jesus and of the records of His earthly life? And what can be the consequence but increased reverence for the One who alone was perfect and increased interest in the one who loved Him so passionately but who called himself the "chief of sinners" and recognized thus his enduring relationship to each man who, having been tempted, cannot say of himself what was said of his Lord that he "was without sin."

The very real humanity of Paul makes the study of his personality a practical help to every man. It strengthens the appeal which his character addresses to each Christian. What the grace of God did in Paul it can do in us, and what the Spirit of God did with Paul in making him steadfast and true and faithful, and eager in his love of Christ, the Spirit of God can do with us. As Paul himself said, "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in Me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. iv. 9.) He was a man of like passions with us. (Acts xiv. 15.) We also may be men of like passions with him.

Perhaps also as we come to know Paul better and to form our own characters after his, as he formed his character after Christ's, some of the things which he wrote, "hard to be understood" (2 Peter iii. 16,) will become more intelligible and clear.

He was "our brother Paul." (2 Peter iii. 15.) We should know him better. To be sure "where-soever the Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge God, there Paul of Tarsus, is revered as the great teacher of a universal redemption and a Catholic religion, the herald of glad tidings to all mankind," (Conybeare and Howson, *Life and Letters of St. Paul*, ch. xxvii.), but perhaps we have revered him as a great and distant man, and not as one who craved human love, who was willing for his brethren's sake to be accursed, and who would be to each of us a friend "in the blameless family of God."

For he has not passed away. "Even on earth Paul could not die. He lives among us to-day with a life

a hundredfold more influential than that which throbbed in his brain while the earthly hull which made him visible still lingered on the earth. Wherever the feet of them who publish the glad tidings go forth, beautiful upon the mountains, he walks by their side as an inspirer and a guide; in ten thousand churches every Sabbath and on a thousand thousand hearths every day his eloquent lips still teach that gospel of which he was never ashamed; and wherever there are human souls searching for the white flower of holiness or climbing the difficult heights of self-denial, there he whose life was so pure, whose devotion to Christ was so entire, and whose pursuit of a single purpose was so unceasing, is welcomed as the best of friends." (*Stalker, Life of St. Paul*, p. 166 f.)