

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

P. O. BOX 20331—GREENSBORO, N. C. 27420
 PHONE 273-1758

Second Class Postage Paid at Greensboro, N. C.

10c Per Copy Published Weekly \$6.00 Per Year

Mrs. King Mourns Death of Rosena J. Willis

"The death of Mrs. Rosena J. Willis on March 30 has resulted in a severe loss to the National Education Association and to the black community," Samuel B. Etheridge, NEA assistant executive secretary for teacher rights, said today. "Her unexpected death has also created a painful vacuum in the civil and human rights programs for children and educators for which she determinedly worked."

Mrs. Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said in a telegram to Mrs. Willis' mother, Mrs. Maggie Anderson: "My staff joins me in this expression of heartfelt sympathy. We share your grief, for Mrs. Willis' dedication indicated her respect for our common cause and we are grateful. We assure you that her efforts will be continued, and we hope that our endeavors will be a fitting tribute to her and all others who have sacrificed their time and energy. Our prayer is that God will assuage your grief and grant you strength."

Mrs. Willis, 43, coordinator for intergroup relations for the NEA's Center for Human Relations, spent her last hours doing what she had done since 1966 when she joined NEA—coordinating and designing programs to honor those who honor human dignity, in this case those men and women who will receive recognition at the Human Rights Awards dinner to be featured at the NEA annual convention in San Francisco this July.

"Her title, coordinator for intergroup relations, did little to indicate the amount of labor and love she put into her duties," Etheridge said. "Her job required, and received, intense concentration, creativity, and complete sensitivity to the multi-faceted problems of education in today's rural, urban, and suburban areas. She stood up to the task of coordinating and designing programs for the fledgling Center for Human Relations during a difficult time of restructuring of the NEA and more recently through drastic changes in the White House and on Capitol Hill."

Sam M. Lambert, executive secretary of the million-member NEA, was among those who attended a memorial service for Mrs. Willis on April 2. "As one who not only worked with Rosena, but counted her as a close personal friend, I will feel her loss keenly. I know that I express the sentiments of the entire staff who liked and highly respected this lady," Dr. Lambert said.

J. Rupert Picott, national president of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and assistant director of the NEA's Membership Development Section, noted that "a large share of the national promotion for Negro History Week was due to Mrs. Willis' efforts. Through her some 9,000 local associations were encouraged to observe this national week of recognition of the contributions of black Americans to this country and to the world. Because of her concern, millions of children, black, white, red, yellow and brown, could pause for a moment and focus their attention on the inherent dignity and worth of all men and women." Dr. Picott and Mrs. Willis were co-workers at the Virginia Teachers Association for 10 years.

In addition to working closely with the Center's Internal Council, composed of unit heads representing all of the NEA's divisions and affiliated departments, Mrs. Willis represented NEA at meetings of such major civil and human rights organizations as the Afro-American Educators, the Urban League, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. A week before her death she had coordinated a regional workshop on student unrest, a meeting cosponsored by the NEA, the Parent-Teachers Association and the National Council of Christians and Jews. Student unrest was of particular concern to her. Last October she designed and coordinated a week-long conference on the subject in collaboration with the Community Relations Service.

One of the first, and one of the last, things she did was to initiate bibliographies on textbooks and other instructional materials having to do with the treatment of minorities. One hundred thousand copies of "The Negro American in Paperback," a bibliography of several hun-

This Week's Sunday School Lesson

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL BEGINNING WHERE YOU ARE

Some years ago a network radio newscaster would at times preface his daily report, "Oh, there's good news tonight!" What would you consider "good news"? What report over radio or television would send you to the phone to share that news with your family and friends? I am not thinking of personal news, like the recovery of a sick loved one or a much desired business or professional advancement. What would you consider good news for the whole world?

Would the triumph of your candidate in a close election fill you with joy? Suppose news came that Russia, China, and the United States had settled their differences. What if the great powers agreed to convert all atomic armaments to the uses of peace? Would you consider any of these events cause for great rejoicing?

Suppose you were burdened with intense feelings of guilt and failure and were obsessed with fear of God's punishment. And suppose someone you trusted told you that you were forgiven, that God had already done what was necessary to restore you, that all you had to do was accept the fact of his love. Would this be good news? Further, suppose you learned that this release was available not only to you but to everyone in the world. Would this strike you as news you ought to share with friends who were in the same condition as you?

This was precisely the gospel (that is, the "good news") that the early Christians spread to burdened and hopeless people around the Roman Empire. The gods these people knew demanded labors, sacrifices, and gifts from their worshippers. They were selfish and jealous gods, each striving to advance his own glory. Or, worse, there seemed to be no gods at all, and life was a dull routine ending in oblivion. To all these people the Christian faith was good news.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The Scripture for this lesson is Galatians 3. Selected verses are printed below.

Galatians 3:7-14, 26-29

7 So you see that it is men

of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.

10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them." 11 Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "He who through faith is righteous shall live"; 12 but the law does not rest on faith, for "He who does them shall live by them." 12 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree"—14 that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

26 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29. And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. Memory Selection: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:28

EXPLORING THE QUESTIONS

The unit beginning with this lesson will examine the story in Acts of the way the new faith reached out from Jerusalem to Samaria, into Asia Minor, and finally into Europe. However, in this first lesson we turn from Acts to Galatians to try to understand the nature of the gospel the Christians proclaimed.

Galatians is a letter of controversy, written in the heat of the first conflict that rocked, and might have wrecked, the young church. Here, as nowhere else, Paul reveals the passionate concern and deep

conviction of his nature.

On an early missionary journey Paul had founded a church or churches in the region of Galatia. The Galatian converts were gentiles; and Paul did not require them to submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision or to obey Jewish dietary laws. They were expected to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, to be baptized in his name, and to live lives of moral purity.

Paul himself, a strict orthodox Jew in his youth, had tried without success to find inner peace through rigorous observance of all the laws. Therefore, at the heart of his message Paul preached that men were saved not by legalism but by the grace of God received through faith in Jesus Christ.

FINDING HELP WITH YOUR QUESTIONS

Basic to Paul's thought are three great convictions which underlie Galatians.

1. In the gift of Jesus Christ, God has done what is necessary to free us from slavery to sin and death.

2. Men cannot earn this gift by their good deeds; it is received by faith.

3. This salvation is not the possession of a favored few; it is available to all men.

Let us look briefly at each of these assertions.

1. The Crucifixion and Resurrection were for Paul the central facts of salvation. He referred to these events in his salutation. He declared that in his sermons to the Galatians he had "portrayed" Christ as crucified and that he would glory in nothing except the cross of Christ.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul did not discuss the way the cross brings about salvation. We have read Romans for a fuller development of his ideas. He did suggest that by accepting the curse of crucifixion Christ lifts the curse of the law from us. By his obedient death and glorious resurrection, Christ has freed us from the claims of sin and the grave.

2. But how is this benefit to be claimed? All religions in the time of Paul assumed that man had to earn God's favor by arduous labors, good deeds, and sacrifices. Judaism, the highest religion of the empire, held that men were dedicated to God and marked as his by circumcision and that they earned his favor by obeying both the moral law of good deeds and the ceremonial law of dietary and cleansing regulations. As we have seen, the occasion for writing the Letter to the Galatians arose from the demand that gentile Christians observe these legalisms.

Paul's new insight was revolutionary: God did not want to be propitiated or cajoled; he wanted to be loved. God's favor did not have to be earned; he already loved men and desired to give them every good gift.

Crucial to Paul's argument was the realization that if acceptance by God depended upon our reaching moral and legal perfection, we would all be doomed. Paul had tried this

(Continued on Page 3)

dred books for secondary schools, were sold the first year Mrs. Willis joined the NEA staff.

A native of Virginia, she attended school in Richmond, received her B.S. degree from Bluefield State College in West Virginia, and her M.A. degree from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. A teacher in Bromwell, W. Va., she later taught in Prince Edward County, Va., where she became one of the original educators displaced when the county discontinued public education rather than desegregate, as ordered by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1954. The Prince Edward situation was publicized throughout the nation.

Active in educational affairs for many years, Mrs. Willis was secretary of the Bramwell teachers association and local association president in Prince Edward County. She also served for 10 years as field secretary for the Virginia Teachers Association.

"In death as in life," Etheridge said, "Mrs. Willis primary concern was for her fellow human beings. She devoted a great deal of time to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation. Her family has asked that donations in memory of Mrs. Willis be sent to that foundation in care of the Center for Human Relations."

The Center is at the National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036.