

## THE BIBLE CLASS.

### PAUL'S FINAL RETURN TO JERUSALEM.

(For Aug. 8th.—Acts xx. 3b—xx. 16 \*)

BY PHILIP A. NORDELT, D.D.

Paul's plan to sail directly from Corinth to Syria was thwarted by the hostility of the Jews. As soon as his intention became known to them they apparently contrived that a considerable number of his deadly enemies should take passage on the same ship. This would be unlikely to awaken suspicion, as a vessel sailing for Syria at that season of the year would probably be thronged with Jewish pilgrims going up to the feast in Jerusalem. Safely out at sea Paul could not escape, and a story to the effect that he had leaped overboard, supported by many witnesses, would find ready credence. Fortunately for Paul the plot so skilfully conceived was revealed, and frustrated by a total change of his plans at the last moment. His friends who were to accompany him were sent on to Troas, where he arranged to meet them after himself going to Philippi, whether by land or water is not known. It is encouraging to note how God overrules the designs of His enemies against His servants as long as He has more work for them to do. He makes their wrath to praise Him. Had not Paul been turned aside from his purpose to sail straight for Syria we should have missed the series of incidents that occurred by the way, and notably the address to the Ephesian elders which have thrown a great flood of light on the character and motives of Paul's ministry.

FROM CORINTH TO MILETUS.

At Philippi, the home of so many of Paul's most devoted friends and the place of so many sufferings for Christ's sake, he tarried a week, and in sweet communion with the church celebrated the holy days of the Passover. Here he was rejoined by Luke, destined to prove himself henceforth and amidst appalling persecutions the one heroic friend whose presence cheered the Apostle's way to martyrdom. At Troas another delay of seven days occurred, due probably to failure to find at once a merchant-ship sailing in the direction he wished to go. The last night there was spent in a solemn service with the church. After celebrating the Lord's Supper Paul continued his discourse until midnight. The occasion was one that all who were present were glad to prolong as far as possible. The incident in connection with Eutychus, which for a while threatened to shroud the church with gloom, was made an occasion for a surprising and comforting display of divine power. The young man, whom Luke the physician, pronounced "dead," was restored by the power of the risen Christ working through His servant Paul.

THE ADDRESS TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS.

By far the most important event on Paul's return to Jerusalem was his interview with the elders of the church in Ephesus, whom he had notified to meet him at Miletus. Its importance is due to the fact that Luke has preserved the substance of Paul's address on this occasion. In his Epistles he seldom or never speaks of himself or of his own work except as he is forced to do so by his detractors. This address on the contrary overflows with references to his ministry in Ephesus, and yet not a word is spoken for the purpose of glorifying himself, but all for the honor and glory of Christ. He seems to have been divinely guided into this description of his work that it might serve as an example and inspiration to all Christian ministers of what they ought to be in the service of their Master. Every subsequent age has been helped and stimulated by the knowledge here given of what Paul was and did in his apostolic work. Every age needs the admonition administered by such a picture of fidelity and love.

We see here Paul's conviction that the work which had engaged his utmost energy was not one taken up by himself, but that it had been laid upon him by the Lord. The address presents a summary of what should at all times constitute the staple of preaching, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." From these themes a whole system of theology may be developed. They lie at the root of every form of human activity. In preaching faith toward Christ he must of necessity "testify the gospel of the grace of

God." Of this grace Paul was himself a conspicuous example. It showed that God was not a severe Judge, as men had too often apprehended Him, but one whose mercy and love had been revealed in an act of amazing self-sacrifice for the saving of the lost. As a servant of Christ Paul was as ready to go forward to suffering as to victory. He doubted as little that in going up to Jerusalem to meet an unknown but apparently evil fate he was following divine guidance, as when, in obedience to the Macedonian call at Troas, he carried the Gospel into Europe. His ministry was one for which he could not only claim the approbation of God, but of men. It covered several years, and was exercised under a variety of circumstances. It had been marked by a spirit of earnestness and humility that had gone after man, from house to house, "warning every one night and day with tears." No spirit of self-aggrandizement had actuated it, for he had coveted no man's "silver or gold or apparel," preferring to supply his own personal needs by hard toil at his craft. Unselfishness was the characteristic of all his work, and in thus giving himself and the best he had the Apostle had realized the truth of that sweet saying of Christ, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

From Miletus to Jerusalem Paul's progress was marked by a series of gloomy prognostications respecting his fate at the hands of his country-men. Undeterred by predictions of evil, not unmoved by the tearful pleadings of loving friends but triumphing over them through conviction of duty, Paul like his Master, set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem. He had braved persecution and incurred the peril of death too often to falter in following what he was persuaded was the lead of the divine Spirit. In any event for him to live was service for Christ, and to die was eternal gain.

## CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—Working and waiting for Christ.—1 Thess. iv. 1-14

Second Day—"Let us watch and be sober."—1 Thess. v. 1-28

Third Day—Deliverance out of affliction promised.—Isa. lii. 1-17.

Fourth Day—Living for God's Glory.—1 Pet. ii. 1-25.

Fifth Day—"Therefore be ye also ready."—Matt. xxiv. 29-51.

Sixth Day—"The day of the Lord will come."—2 Pet. iii. 1-18

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, Aug. 8.—Matt. xxv. 31-46

### THE BENEVOLENT FUNDS.

The topic for Aug. 8th is "The Benevolent Schemes of the Church."

"There is room for benevolence. 'The poor ye have always with you,' and the heart and hand receives a benediction that remembers that it is 'more blessed to give than to receive.' Let us not forget the close relationship subsisting between Christ our Master, to whom we owe allegiance, and His dear servants, nor that relationship in the basis of Judgment presented by Christ 'Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.'"

What do we owe to aged ministers? They taught our fathers the way of life: carried the glad tidings to many a weary soul, soothed many a sorely burdened life. Often amid difficulties maintained the ordinances of God's house which have brought and continued blessing to a community, and kept it from sinking down to the low level of mere secularism. It is right to be benevolent to those who have been faithful; but let us be more than merely benevolent, let us be fair and honorable in finding out how much we owe to the Lord—and preserve our contributions from the character of a mere doler of charity. The Church has many aged ministers who quietly do a good work yet for Christ as opportunity offers. The allowance granted by the Church is too small, but is all that the funds will allow. Any Christian Endeavor or Young People's Society would obtain any needed information by dropping a note to the Rev. Wm. Burns, Secretary, Room 90 Confederation Life Building, Toronto.

## THE LITTLE FOLK.

### HOW NIGGER JACK DIED FOR ME.

THE STORY OF A SLAVE'S DEVOTION.

BY MRS. E. RAYMOND PITMAN.

(Continued from last week.)

The fortune of war led us, after some time, past one of the old coffee and cotton plantations, some hundred and fifty miles north of the spot where I had rescued Nigger Jack. As usual, the place was fast running to ruin; the owners had gone to join in the rebellion; some of the slaves had fled, determined to seek freedom for themselves, and others had enlisted into coloured regiments. But there was always a residuum—a class of hands too old and too

\*An Exposition of Lesson 32 in *The Bible Study Union Sunday School Lessons* on "The Three Great Apostles."