

## The Quiet Hour.

### The Early Christian Missionaries.

S. S. Lesson, May 18, 1902.

Acts 13 : 1-12. Commit to memory vs. 2,3.

Golden Text—Matt. 28 : 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.

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The church at Antioch, v. 1. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire and had trade relations with every country of the empire. The people of this city were in touch commercially and politically with the whole world. The very position of the church at Antioch laid on its shoulders a heavy responsibility to bear the Gospel to the great mass of mankind, who were still in ignorance and sin. In our own day the fact that we belong to the great British Empire puts on us a similar responsibility to send the Gospel to the heathen world. King Edward rules over more than one quarter of the whole population of the globe. We cannot neglect the spiritual welfare of our fellow subjects, and others who have not the Gospel, without bringing upon ourselves the deepest guilt.

There were . . . prophets and teachers, v. 1. The church which is abundantly supplied with spiritual privileges should be willing to share these privileges with others. Many parts of our own land are but ill supplied with the privileges which abound in other parts, and from foreign mission fields there comes to us, who are so highly favored, a loud cry for help. Both people and ministers require to be roused to a more lively sense of the obligation to cover the whole field and take the Gospel to the whole world.

Manaen, the foster brother of Herod, (Rev. Ver.) v. 2. From the same home came the king who imprisoned and beheaded the Baptist, and a devout preacher of the Gospel. Up to a certain point the pathway of these two was the same. One day there came to each the moment for decision. The ancients compared such a moment to that point in the capital letter Y from which its two branches spread, the one becoming a broad and easy road, the other a narrow and uphill slope. President Garfield used to say that the ridge of a court house in his native state was so situated that the slightest influence would decide whether a particular water drop should make its way to the Gulf of Mexico or the St. Lawrence. So Herod and Manaen came to the point where they must separate, the one to live a life of crime ended by an exile's death, the other to labor for Christ and receive at the last a crown of righteousness.

As they ministered to the Lord, v. 2. The call to higher and wider service always comes to those who are already faithfully attending to the duty that lies to their hands. It is not idlers or shirkers who receive promotion in the kingdom of God.

The Holy Ghost said, v. 2. The Holy Ghost is the administrator of the church. He undertakes to supply the great mission field with laborers. He assigns to each worker his task. He prepares each believer for his special work. If the mission field is not supplied with laborers, it must be because some individuals are not willing to listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost commanding them to go forth, or the church is

not heeding His voice bidding it do its part in providing support for the workers whom He would send into the field. Success, as we think of it, is not promised in every case. The Holy Ghost, who called Paul, the great preacher to the Gentiles, also called Stephen, who was cut off when his work was scarcely begun.

Who desired to hear the word of God, v. 7. John Calvin used to speak of what he called "common grace," by which he meant the influence of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of men even before their conversion, and even before they had heard the Gospel. It was He who put into the heart of this heathen governor the desire to hear God's word.

Elymas withstood them, v. 8. The experience of Barnabas and Saul was not different from the usual. The Gospel cannot enter a country without breeding strife. Against the Gospel the forces of evil—here present in the person of Elymas the sorcerer—will gather their strength to crush it out. When our missionaries go out into heathen lands, the heathen priests and all the forces of darkness stand together to drive them out. It is on record that when our missionaries have gone into neglected mining villages of the Northwest, the liquor dealers and Sabbath breakers and all that stood for wrong, have banded themselves together to drive them out. Jesus said the truth: "I came not to send peace, but the sword," Matt. 10 : 34. When the Gospel is brought to the hearts of men, it awakens a conflict even there. All the bad in them arises to fight the better impulses born of the preaching of the word. Even for the individual soul, the Gospel in the first place brings not peace, but the sword. It is only when the surrender to Jesus comes that peace enters the heart.

The hand of the Lord is upon thee, v. 11. The conflict between Saul and Elymas was really a conflict between good and evil, between God and sin. There can be but one end to the battle between God's people and the children of darkness, between good and evil, God and sin. God and the good must in the end triumph. It is for us to fight for God and righteousness with no wavering and uncertainty, but with sure and strong heart, for the victory must be on our side.

### Thanksgiving.

Am I to thank God for everything? Am I to thank him for bereavement, for pain, for poverty, for toil? Must I lift up my hands over my head and say, "Father I thank thee that thou hast taken away my friend"? Is it pleasing to my Father that loss should be pleasant to me? Is it good that I should be told to give thanks in everything? Be still, my soul, thou hast mis-read the message. It is not to give thanks for everything, but to give thanks in everything. It is not to praise God for the night, but to bless him that the night is not deeper. I have read of the Son of Man that he gave thanks over the symbol of his broken body. Not for the pain, but for the mitigation of pain, did the Son of Man give thanks—not that his body was broken for me. In thine hour of sorrow give thanks like Jesus.—Matheson,

### A Priceless Sentence.

"From the lips of Jesus Christ, when he was here among men, fell these words of priceless meaning: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That sentence is a cube of the purest gold, that may be minted into the current coin of a daily exchange, as it makes possible a true Christian socialism; or fashioned into the ornaments which befit the children of a king, as the doctrine of God, our Saviour, is adorned in all things; or held as the token which will admit a sinful creature into the pure and radiant life of heaven. Few words are used, but each word finds its interpretation in the Holy Scriptures, whose main purpose is the unveiling of God's character.' So that we may know and believe that the same God who is announced in the Book of Genesis as the Creator of 'the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them,' is he who has 'loved us with an everlasting love.' This love is the source of every redemptive blessing. The initiative is with God. 'He first loved us.'

"There are two kinds of religion, and only two," remarked President Seelye, as he addressed the educated Hindus of India. "The one begins with man, and seeks by human endeavors after a divine fellowship. The other begins with God, and by a way wholly divine seeks after man. In this is the peculiarity of the Christian, in distinction from all other systems of religion, and in the revelation of this doctrine is the distinction of the Bible from all other books. The salvation which the Christian religion announces is procured wholly through a divine work, and is offered to man, not in the least because his obedience or service can merit it, but solely through the free exercise of divine mercy.' The little word 'so' covers all that is distinctive in the gospel message, 'God so loved the world.' The so is grace, and grace, so far as we are aware, is God's especial love for this, our world. He may have, and has, other love for other beings and for other worlds. But for us God's love is grace, unmerited favor. When he loves the world God is 'kind unto the unthankful and the evil.'"—Rev. Henry Martyn Booth, D.D.

### Prayer.

Our heavenly Father, draw us away from all bondage into the infinite liberty of thy dear Son. With him thou wilt freely give us all things. Continue to give us according to the need of every day. Refresh us with the dew of morning. Find honey for us in the flowers that open in the noonday sun. At eventide do thou spread our table and make our bed that we may rest. We would give ourselves to thee. When we are weak we are strong. When we lose our life we find it. Lord help us to understand these things, and to throw ourselves with competent faith upon the infinite Arm of thy Providence, and the Infinite Heart of thy love. Lead us from the alphabet of the senses into the deep reading of the spirit. Thou art constantly showing us that we know nothing as it really is until our eyes are opened, and we do not hear the ineffable music of thy life and love until thou dost anoint and open our ears. Bless the hearts that mourn with a little relief from their distress. Dry the tears, lest they blind the eyes that are looking for thee. Put thine arms around little children, and in thy care may we all find perpetual security and peace. And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.—Selected.