

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Adapted from Hurlbut's Notes.

Third Quarter.

Lesson IX.—Aug. 29. Acts 19, 21-34.

PAUL OPPOSED AT EPHESUS.

[Read chapters 19, 1 to 20, 3.]

GOLDEN TEXT.

Take heed, and beware of covetousness. Luke 12, 15.

I. PAUL, VERSES 21, 22.

21. AFTER THESE THINGS WERE ENDED—Read the first twenty verses of this chapter. PURPOSED IN THE SPIRIT—Strongly determined. WHEN HE HAD PASSED THROUGH MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA—Two European provinces west of the Aegean Sea, where Paul had planted the Gospel on his second missionary journey. The reason for his resolution was that he had received news of dangerous divisions in the church at Corinth, to which he wrote at this time the First Epistle to the Corinthians. TO GO TO JERUSALEM—The church at Jerusalem. At this time it was probably suffering acutely from poverty. MUST ALSO SEE ROME—Later he saw Rome, but it was as a prisoner in chains. See Rom. 15, 28, 29.

22. SENT INTO MACEDONIA—To gather money. TWO OF THEM—A company of Christian workers had gathered around Paul as his helpers in the Gospel (Acts 20, 4). MINISTERED—Aided him in his work and gave care to his physical needs; for his health was delicate. ERASTUS—It is quite probable, that this was the same Erastus who is called the chamberlain (or treasurer) of Corinth in Rom. 16, 23, and is named (2 Tim. 4, 20) long afterward. STAYED IN ASIA—The special reason for this prolongation of his sojourn is thought to be found in the Ephesian games, celebrated in May.

II. DEMETRIUS, VERSES 23-28.

23. NO SMALL STIR—The word "stir" is elsewhere translated "tumult," Acts 12, 18. ABOUT THAT WAY—Or, as in the Revised Version, "the way," which was a common term for Christianity, used among the early disciples, and referring to it as a pilgrimage or path in life.

24. DEMETRIUS—A leading spirit among the Ephesian shrine-makers. MADE SILVER SHRINES—Small models of the shrine of Diana, with a miniature figure of the goddess, purchased by pilgrims for worship at home. NO SMALL GAIN—And that gain was the motive of their opposition to the Gospel, just as now the temperance reform finds its bitterest enemies among those who make money by liquor selling.

25. WHOM HE CALLED TOGETHER—The entire image-making fraternity, and doubtless all other trades depending upon the temple of Diana, were gathered. SIRS—Literally, "Men," or, as we would say, "Fellow-citizens." BY THIS CRAFT (business) WE HAVE OUR WEALTH—He wastes no words, but goes to the real motive at once.

26. YE SEE AND HEAR—The fact was patent to the observer; a great tribute to the preaching of Paul and the power of the Gospel. THROUGHOUT ALL ASIA—Proconular Asia Minor is meant, the province bordering on the Aegean Sea. In this wide territory all sorts of men had become subjects of the power of the Gospel. THIS PAUL—Contemptuously expressed: a poor Jew, a tent-maker. TURNED AWAY MUCH PEOPLE—Secular history informs us that within fifty years from this time the temples in the adjoining province of Bithynia were deserted, and the priests complained that no offerings were brought to them. NO GODS, WHICH ARE MADE WITH HANDS—Philosophers might speak of the idol as a symbol, as intelligent Roman Catholics now regard the crucifix; but the ignorant mass of heathen worshippers regarded it as a god. Note that Paul's success at Ephesus was chiefly among the heathen.

27. OUR CRAFT IS IN DANGER—"Our business interests" would convey the meaning more accurately. The craftsmen are reminded that the success of the Gospel means loss of employment and starvation for themselves and their families. The fact is that the foundations of idolatry were being sapped. TO BE SET AT NAUGHT—"To come into contempt," literally; just as the American traveller in China smiles as he sees the sign, "Gods made here." ALSO THAT THE TEMPLE—Under a show of religious public spirit he pretended that loss of personal gain was subordinate to the honor of Diana. So today brewers' associations are wondrously concerned for the liberty and enjoyment of the people. WHOM ALL ASIA—All the provinces of western Asia Minor united in rebuilding the temple of Diana after its destruction by fire on the night when Alexander the Great was born; and each of its one hundred and

twenty great columns was the gift of a city. The annual festival of the goddess, held for a month, attracted thousands of people from every part of the Roman empire. The Ephesians became so proud of their temple that they refused to inscribe on it the name of Alexander the Great, though he offered them the whole spoil of his eastern campaign if they would do it.

28. FULL OF WRATH—The verb in the original signifies that the anger grew as they listened. GREAT IS DIANA—Probably a tumultuous procession marched through the streets, drawing the multitudes and crying out the name of their goddess.

III. THE MULTITUDE, VERSES 29-34.

29. FILLED WITH CONFUSION—Nothing spreads so quickly as the spirit of a mob, and oriental cities are often under its power. CAUGHT GAULUS AND ARISTARCHUS—Gentiles both, which may account for the fact that in the end they suffered no violence. Both men were faithful friends of Paul.

30. PAUL WOULD HAVE ENTERED—Though feeble in frame, his courage was majestic. Before we judge him rash in his courage let us consider the wonderful power with which he quieted a similar mob in the temple at Jerusalem, and compelled it to listen to the story of his conversion. THE DISCIPLES—They had seen the storm gathering, and had conveyed their beloved apostle from his usual abode to a place of safety. They would, of course, tell him what was going on, and it was on hearing this that he wanted to go and address the crowd.

31. THE CHIEF OF ASIA—In Greek "Asiarchs," officers appointed to provide at their own expense for the annual games at Ephesus. They were men of great wealth and of the highest social standing. WHERE HIS FRIENDS—Everywhere men of high rank were won to friendship with Paul as Sergius Paulus, Felix, Erastus and Julius the centurion. But the direct influence of Paul's preaching may be inferred from the fact that the very officers who were chosen to preside over the sacred rites of the gods and to advance their honor by public games were now on Paul's side.

32. THE MORE PART KNEW NOT WHEREFORE THEY WERE COME TOGETHER—They had a vague sense that something was wrong, but were ignorant of the cause of the trouble. Much of the opposition of men to the Gospel arises from ignorance. Let us never be led astray by popular opinion, which is as apt to be wrong as right.

33. ALEXANDER—Here named evidently as a well-known man and as an enemy of the Gospel. It is probable that he was the "Alexander the coppersmith" whom Paul named in 2 Tim. 4, 14 as a dangerous opposer. THE JEWS PUTTING HIM FORWARD—The Jews feared lest the mob in its unreasoning zeal might confuse them with the Christians (as at that time there was little distinction between them in the popular mind), and therefore put forward Alexander to explain that he and his fellows had no more sympathy with Paul than had the heathen multitude.

34. GREAT IS DIANA—An expression of loyalty, and a formula of worship such as may even now be heard from Brahmans in India, who will repeat a similar form of words for days together.

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"Ah, saire, but look at this bill."

"Your bill? Yes; but what of it? demanded the astonished proprietor."

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