

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the School.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars and Bible Classes

Among the world's great letter writers Paul stands highest. We do not know how many letters he wrote, but we have thirteen that have attained immortality. In our Lesson, we have the first of the thirteen, written to the church at Thessalonica, some time during Paul's stay of a year and a half at Corinth. Recall the incidents connected with the founding of the church at Thessalonica. (See Lesson III., July 18, Acts 17 : 1-15.) This letter throws a flood of light upon the brief story as told by Luke. It was a flourishing church of Gentile Christians, the members of which were very dear to the apostle. (See 1 Thess. 2 : 8, 17.) The letter is a love letter. Paul longs to see them, and they long to see Paul.

Do not fail to ask the members of the class to read the whole letter at home. Abraham Lincoln's letter to the poor mother in Boston who had lost five sons in the war is very beautiful, but as a letter of sympathy and comfort it is infinitely inferior to Paul's letter to the bereaved ones at Thessalonica, 1 Thess. 4 : 13-18.

In the part of this letter to the Thessalonians which constitutes our Lesson to-day we have :

1. Some things which Paul tells them they ought to do, vs. 12-14, 16-18, 21. These things go far to make life useful and beautiful and enjoyable. Some of these things are not easily learned, but they are all well worth learning. It may take a life time to learn them perfectly, but even a little learning of this kind is not a dangerous thing.

2. Some things Paul tells them they must not do, vs. 15, 19, 20, 22. Ought Christians to live in such a way as to make it necessary to pray day after day, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done ; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done ; and there is no health in us" ? Would Paul have been satisfied with the Thessalonians if they had lived in this way ? He tells them very plainly and lovingly what they ought not to do, and

he would have been sadly disappointed if he had found "no health" in them.

3. This way of living results in perfect life, vs. 23, 24. Paul's ideal is high—the Bible ideals are always high. We must be always striving to live up into perfect life, to live as Jesus lived, to live as Jesus would have us live, in body, soul, and spirit.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

Show the scholars that, to understand and appreciate a letter, one must know who wrote it, to whom it was written, and what led to the writing of it. Have a brief chat, therefore, with the class on Paul and the Thessalonians. Paul was the writer of the letter. It was he from whom the Thessalonians had first heard the gospel, and who had led them to Jesus. The letter was written to the Christians at Thessalonica, whom Paul loved (ch. 2 : 7, 8, 17-20), who were faithful Christians (ch. 1 : 5-8), who were suffering persecution (ch. 2 : 14, 15), who were troubled about the future (ch. 4 : 13, etc.). The purpose of the letter was to comfort, steady, build up. The part which forms the Lesson is packed with wise counsel.

A letter is apt to contain a variety of things. From one friend to another, two or three words on a subject often mean as much as a whole page. Have scholars *sort out* the wise and loving sayings of the Lesson. They will be interested in the list, which should be written down, as the process of sorting proceeds.

1. *How to treat the minister and elders* (vs. 12, 13a). Two things—"know", and "esteem". The verses afford the material for working these out : acknowledge those who bear rule in the church as the Lord's servants, guiding in the Lord's name and in the Lord's work ; love them and honor them because of what they do in the Lord's cause. A cure, all this, for faultfinding and criticism.

2. *How to treat one another* (vs. 13b-15). The exhortation is like a handful of pearls : the class will be interested in threading them into a necklace :—loving forbearance ("be at peace"), loving faithfulness ("warn"), loving gentleness ("comfort", etc.), loving help ("support"), loving longsuffering ("be patient"), loving forgiveness and activity (v. 15). A necklace, this, which brings to