



LESSON III.—JANUARY 18

Paul at Thessalonica and Berea.

Acts xvii., 1-12. Study Acts xvii., 1-15.

Golden Text.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet.—Psa. cxix., 105.

Home Readings

Monday, Jan. 12.—Acts xvii., 1-15.
 Tuesday, Jan. 13.—John v., 32-39.
 Wednesday, Jan. 14.—Deut. vi., 1-9.
 Thursday, Jan. 15.—Ps. cxix., 1-12.
 Friday, Jan. 16.—Ps. cxix., 52-60.
 Saturday, Jan. 17.—Ps. cxix., 97-106.
 Sunday, Jan. 18.—Ps. cxix., 129-140.

Suggestions

1. 'Now when they.' Paul, Silas, and Timothy (Acts xvi., 1-3, 25). The change from 'we' of Acts xvi., 10-15, to 'they' implies that Luke was left at Philippi. 'Through Amphipolis,' southwest from Philippi and Apollonia. Thirty miles further on toward Thessalonica. The missionaries did not stop long, probably overnight only, in either of these places. It was not wise to remain so near Philippi as Apollonia; in neither city was there a synagogue as a basis of operations. 'They came to Thessalonica,' about one hundred miles from Philippi. 'Thessalonica,' the largest city of Macedonia, named Thessalonica after the sister of Alexander the Great. 2. 'And Paul, as his manner (custom) was.'—To the Jew first was his wise custom, because they had been trained in the Scriptures and were best prepared to receive the fulfilment of the promises in Jesus Christ. 'Three Sabbath days.' That is, three weeks with their Sabbaths. This undoubtedly refers to the period of work within the circle of the synagogue, before he had to seek outside places for his work, as at the house of Jason. Three things show that his residence in the city must have been much longer. (1) His great success, as related in v. 4. (2) His own statements in his letter to the Thessalonians, chaps. 1, 2, imply a long and successful work there. (3) Although he supported himself in part by working with his own hands (1 Thes. ii., 9), yet he remained there long enough to receive help twice from Philippi, a hundred miles away, and it is reasonable to think of some interval between the gifts. 'He reasoned with them.' He showed his reasons for believing as he did, in the form of a dialogue or conversation. 'Out of the scriptures.' Paul set forth the arguments that proved that the Christ (the Messiah they were looking for) must needs have suffered. He is so pictured in the Scriptures. And any one claiming to be the Messiah, who did not suffer as foretold in Isa. liii., could not be the true Messiah. The absence of this mark would prove him an impostor. This portion of the Scriptures needed to be 'opened' and 'set forth' to them. For in dwelling upon the Messiah as a Deliverer, a Mighty Prince, they had neglected their other descriptions of him, for they could not put the two descriptions together. But Paul showed them that only by suffering could the Messiah be a Prince and Deliverer, and found the kingdom of heaven among men, and then he showed them that it was equally necessary that he must have risen again from the dead, for only as a living Saviour triumphant over death could he be the promised Deliverer and King. And that this Jesus exactly and perfectly fulfilled these conditions and was therefore the Christ. (4) And some of them (of the Jews) believed, or were

persuaded to accept of Jesus as their Messiah (v. 5). 'Lewd fellows of the baser sort,' loafers in the market-place (v. 6), 'Jason': Without doubt the host of Paul and Silas, a Thessalonian and a Christian convert. We possess no other information respecting Jason. Bring them out to the people. The mass of the people assembled in the public square, or market-place, so that the excited mob might inflict summary vengeance on them.

6. They drew (dragged with violence) Jason (as a Christian and harbinger of Paul) and certain brethren, as the nearest substitutes on which to vent their passions, perhaps hoping to make them reveal where the missionaries were hidden, or to induce Paul and Silas to give themselves up in order to save their converts. These that have turned the world upside down. A testimony to the power and extent of Christianity. Christ foretold this result (Matt. x., 34; Luke xii., 53). Are come hither also. From Philippi, where similar opposition had been aroused. The business of the gospel is to turn the world upside down. It turns the world upside down because the wrong side is up, and the gospel has come to put the moral world right side up. A Yorkshire local preacher using for his text, 'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also,' divided his sermon thus: (1) The world at first was put right side up. (2) Sin came and turned it upside down. (3) The world has got to be set right again. (4) We are the chaps to do it. V. 11. These were more noble, of more noble character. This nobility expressed itself (1) in that they received the word with all readiness of mind. Their minds were open to all truth from every source. They were not afraid of it because it was new. (2) And searched the scriptures. They did not take things by hearsay, but sought the truth for themselves. 'Search for the truth is the noblest occupation of man.' Such searchers are noble because they are governed by the highest qualities of mind and heart, and because they receive the truth only on good evidence.

12. Therefore, as the result of this study, many of them believed; also of honorable women. Of good position, rank and wealth, as in Thessalonica, v. 4. Paul seems to have remained some time at Berea, but after a time unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica came and stirred up so much opposition that it seemed best for Paul to leave, and he departed to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy for a while longer at Berea.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Jan. 18.—Topic—Endeavorers in training for church work. Acts ii., 17, 18; Prov. ii., 1-8; Mark i., 16-20.

Character Will Shine.

(L. A. Banks.)

A jeweller in a Western town recently found a precious treasure in a peculiar place. His home coffee mill was broken, and he took it apart to find what was the trouble. He discovered that it had been wrecked by the action of a stone of some sort that had even cut its way into the metal of the grinders. He took the stone to his jewellery store, and putting it under a microscope, discovered that it was a large diamond of the blue tint variety, and worth about two hundred dollars. It is thought that the diamond got mixed up with the coffee when the grain was screened in South Africa, where the coffee was raised. The diamond was about the size of a coffee grain, and had the same dull color.

What a striking illustration of the value of reality over sham and pretense! The diamond was plain and unpretentious, but being a diamond, wherever it was found, no matter how humble the circumstances or associations, it was a precious treasure. So true character will ever come to its own in the end. It may be neglected and forgotten for a while, but genuine manhood and womanhood, however humble their associations, will make themselves felt, and God will honor them in his own good time.



The City of Utopia.

(A Stanley Brussell, in 'The New Voice.')

In the course of my travels, I happened,
 one day
 To be in a city some distance away;
 I liked its appearance, and made up my
 mind
 That a while I would stay, if attractions
 I'd find.

I strolled through a neatly paved, clean
 little street,
 Filled with noises of business and patter
 of feet.
 The people, tho' busy, seemed happy and
 gay,
 And went at their work in a satisfied way.

Said I to myself: 'It's the very first town
 That I've struck where the people don't
 all wear a frown;
 Here there must be no trouble or sadness
 or woe,
 Like the place up above, where we all
 hope to go.'

Then after some strolling, I thought
 'twould be best
 To sit in their neat little park and take
 rest.
 It was at noon, and the children from
 school
 Were romping at play in the broad sha-
 dows cool.

And I couldn't help notice how clean and
 how neat,
 The youngsters were dressed from their
 head to their feet;
 Their faces were washed and their shoes
 had a shine,
 I couldn't help saying: 'Well, isn't that
 fine?'

And the working men, each going home to
 his cot,
 Were a fine-looking, cleanly, respectable
 lot;
 Their faces were smiling, they talked
 without oath,
 They seemed happy and healthy, and
 plenty of both.

Then I sat there and mused, and I let my
 thoughts roam
 Back to the great city wherein was my
 home;
 'What a difference,' thought I, 'twixt
 that city of vice,
 And this neat little place where all seems
 so nice.

'There the streets are so dirty, the people
 so gruff,
 And the laboring-man's ignorant, filthy,
 and rough.
 There the low, fallen women are brazen
 and bold,
 And there's real joy in nothing, save
 chase of the gold.'

I woke from my reverie deep, just to see
 A bright-looking officer walking toward
 me.
 He swung his club gaily and whistled a
 tune,
 As evidently happy as birds are in June.

I called out to him and beckoned him
 nigh,
 For I wanted to find out the real reason
 why
 All things seemed so good in this part of
 the land,
 And I asked him this question while
 shaking his hand:

'Now, friend, will you tell me, I'm anx-
 ious to know,
 Why things in this city just seem to be
 so?'