



LESSON,—SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1909.

## The Gospel in Samaria.

Acts viii., 14-25. Memory verses 14, 15.  
Read Acts viii., 4-25.

### Golden Text.

The multitude gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did. Acts viii., 6.

### Home Readings.

Monday, February 22.—Acts viii., 4-25.  
Tuesday, February 23.—John iv., 27-42.  
Wednesday, February 24.—Matt. x., 23-35.  
Thursday, February 25.—Psa. lxxxix., 7-16.  
Friday, February 26.—Isa. lii., 1-10.  
Saturday, February 27.—I. Cor. i., 18-31.  
Sunday, February 28.—Rom. i., 1-16.

#### FOR THE JUNIORS.

Which one of you will tell me the story that we studied last Sunday about Stephen and how he died? Do you remember the name of the young man who was watching the other men stone Stephen and who took care of their coats while they did it? Yes, his name was Saul and he hated the Christians bitterly. So did the Jewish rulers, and they gave Saul the right to go and hunt out the Christians wherever he could find them and carry them away to prison. He put so many of the Christians in prison and treated all the Christians so badly that they were forced to leave their homes in Jerusalem and go away into the country round about. Did these Christians say 'Now that we have got safely away from Saul let us keep very quiet and hide ourselves so that he won't be able to find us'? No, our lesson says that they acted just the other way; it says 'they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the world.' Suppose that you boys built a great big bonfire in the field and then you saw that it was getting so big you didn't know what to do with it. You wouldn't take a rake and pull the blazing branches out and scatter them all over the field, would you? That would only make new fires start burning all around. It was something like that when the Jewish rulers started persecuting the Christians. As they drove the Christians out of the city they were just like the blazing branches drawn out of a bonfire, wherever they went they started preaching and teaching about Jesus and new Christian communities gathered round them. One of these Christians who were driven out of Jerusalem was Philip, one of the other deacons who was chosen at the same time as Stephen, and Philip went up north into a city of Samaria. What does our golden text say about how successful he was in his preaching and work for Jesus?

#### FOR THE SENIORS.

It seems inevitable but that the church will throughout her history continue to encounter the same difficulty that attacked the church in Samaria. There will continue to be those who will join the church from faulty motives; because they feel the emotional waves of some special services, waves that do not really enter the heart but only wash the hearer for a time off his feet; because they feel it is the 'respectable' thing to do, since others of their 'set' are church members; because it will serve as a cloak for business practices when are not all they should be; because, and this the missionaries more particularly have to contend with, there is a promise of assistance in times of need. Simon seems sincerely to have believed that Philip possessed a greater power than did he himself. If Philip claimed that this power came from faith in a certain person called Jesus who had, during His lifetime, performed similar miracles, it were well to get into line with the possibility of him-

self receiving this miracle working power. The whole trouble was that Simon was not convinced of sin and his heart touched by Christ's love, but rather he admitted Philip's evident superiority and his mind was convinced that if he were to retain the attention of the crowds he must do what he could to obtain a power at least equal to Philip's. He was so far sincere in his wish to join the church, as with many nominal adherents to-day it was a matter of reason and convenience. That kind of bond with the church visible secures no right of admission into the real Church of God. In this connection see Christ's own words in Matt. vii., 21-23. Simon doubtless would gladly have worked numerous miracles in the name of Christ in order that he himself might get the glory, but the Christian is to let his light so shine that men may see through his good works and beyond him to God (Matt. v., 16), and God is the same as ever of old, he looks not on the outward seeming but on the heart (I. Sam. xvi., 7). However, Simon's mistaken ignorance was not a sin commensurate with the deliberate attempt at deception on the part of Ananias, and although Peter recoiled with horror from Simon's words, he did not shut him out from all hopes of forgiveness (verse 22). The lesson to-day in its missionary aspect is distinctly a home mission one. Philip sought first to reach the alien people who nevertheless called his own native land their home. We in the new great lands of America have a special field for home missionary work. Do we as we go out from the warmth of our own church homes carry with us, among the alien peoples with whom we come into contact, the light of God's gospel, the fire of our zeal for His cause? The inherited Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans (John iv., 9) was overcome in the attempt to do something for them. There is really no better way to overcome such racial prejudices. The missionaries in foreign lands soon grow not only to love their charges for Christ's sake, but to respect them for themselves in spite of differences in view points on many subjects.

#### (SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE'.)

Good comes out of evil for the servants of God. (Verses 3, 4).

In 1859 a converted Jew was sent by the Episcopal Church of America to Shanghai as a missionary, and about twenty years later he was made Bishop of Shanghai. Six years afterwards he became paralyzed, and had to give up his episcopal jurisdiction. Till 1906 he lived almost helpless, but the use of the middle finger of each hand was left him, and with these he wrote on a typewriter a translation of the Old Testament into the Mandarin language, the chief Chinese dialect, and then the whole Bible into Easy Wenli, the more popular form of their written language. Dr. Shereschewsky was especially fitted for this work, because as a young man he had been educated in 'all the wisdom of the Jews.' Two hundred and fifty million Mandarin-speaking Chinese have been enabled by his labors to read the word of God. How much vaster a work he accomplished thus, than he could have accomplished in his duties as a bishop!

There is a Divinity that shapes our Ends.—Morrison wished to be sent as a missionary to Africa, but was sent to China; Livingstone wished to be sent to China, but was sent to Africa. 'Solemn, sedate Robert Morrison never could have won the love of the emotional Africans as Livingstone did, and Livingstone, the active worker, who hated book-making, never could have sat cooped up twelve hours a day deciphering Chinese.'

Verse 20. Peter's indictment is really a reproof of our generation: we men of the twentieth century have imagined too often that success is a matter of financial resource, that happiness and power can be quoted at marked rates, and that the things that are excellent are knocked off to the highest bidder.—W. H. P. Faunce.

Verse 21:—

Nae treasures, nor pleasures  
Could make us happy long;  
The heart ay's the part ay  
That makes us right or wrong.

—Burns.

(FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES'.)

The Samaritans are now 'a single small community, numbering less than two hundred souls. They live at the base of their sacred

mountain, Gerizim. They receive as their law only the first five books of the Bible.'

'At the World's Sunday School Convention, held in Jerusalem in 1904, many dramatic events marked the gathering of Christian people from many lands to the city associated with more of religious interest than any other on earth; but the crowning incident was the coming to Jerusalem of the Samaritan high priest, who brought an official greeting from his ancient, although now feeble, sect, ending with "May the God of Israel bless you in your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and for ever. Amen."

'Perhaps no other man now living can trace his ancestry so far back as the high priest. Jerusalem has been destroyed again and again, but Mount Gerizim has maintained from the days of Nehemiah an unbroken line of priests, whose descent from Aaron is undoubted.'

Verse 4. The Broadening of the Church.—Many were set to work who would otherwise have remained comparatively useless. Going into a new church, having several small churches instead of one great one, moving from an old, thickly settled country into new regions—these things develop many a person, and reveal in him powers and characteristics that had before lain dormant. New work and new circumstances would develop new graces and new powers, and complete their Christian character. 'Instead of a short-lived, narrow sect, the church became a world-wide power for salvation.'

Verses 6 and 12. Maclaren well points out that 'the language of Luke is singularly discriminating as to the effects of the two weapons. The miracles roused attention, making the Samaritans "give heed" to messenger and message. They caused great joy, as demoniacs, palsied, and lame were healed and given back to their beloved. But it was the preaching that led the Samaritans to "believe." Miracle is "the great bell before the sermon," but the good tidings is what evokes the faith that saves.'

Verse 18. From this action of Simon his name has won an immortality of infamy, since the crime of 'Simony' is named after him, i.e., the crime of obtaining preferment or place or office in the church by purchase with money instead of being fitted for it, and seeking only to use all spiritual gifts for the good of men.

'At the devil's booth are all things sold,  
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;  
For a cap and bells our lives we pay;  
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking,  
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,  
'Tis only God may be had for the asking.'

—Lowell's Vision of Sir Launfal.

### Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, February 28.—Topic—Mohammed's followers in Egypt and the Holy Land. Acts iv., 12. (Missionary meeting.)

### C. E. Topic.

Monday, February 22.—The sower and the seed. Matt. xiii., 3-9.

Tuesday, February 23.—A missionary call. Jer. i., 4-10.

Wednesday, February 24.—A missionary message. Isa. xl., 1-11.

Thursday, February 25.—The missionary's strength. Ezek. iii., 4-11.

Friday, February 26.—Achieving impossibilities. Ezek. 37.

Saturday, February 27.—Missionary hardships. II. Tim. ii., 1-7.

Sunday, February 28.—Topic—Home missions: Present-day pioneers. Eccl. xi., 1-4.

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