



LESSON,—SUNDAY, MAY 9, 1909.

Paul's First Missionary Journey—Antioch in Pisidia.

Acts xiii., 13-16, 38-49. Memory verses, 38, 39. Read Acts xiii., 13-52.

Golden Text.

The word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. Acts xiii., 49.

Home Readings.

- Monday, May 3.—Acts xiii., 13-25.
- Tuesday, May 4.—Acts xiii., 26-41.
- Wednesday, May 5.—Acts xiii., 42-52.
- Thursday, May 6.—Luke iv., 14-30.
- Friday, May 7.—Ezek. iii., 4-11.
- Saturday, May 8.—Zech. vii., 8-14.
- Sunday, May 9.—II. Cor. v., 11-21.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Did you ever start out to go anywhere or do anything, and then get frightened and give it up? Perhaps you only did that kind of thing when you were smaller and you are all now ashamed of being afraid. Of course, the only thing we really need to be afraid of in this world, is doing what is wrong. We don't need to be afraid of the dark, or afraid of anything if we are doing what is right. But the Bible tells us about all sorts of people, and it tells us about a young man who was afraid. He started out to be a missionary, and so long as everything went along well he kept at it. He used to live with his mother in Jerusalem, and his uncle was that splendid man Barnabas that all the early Christians loved so much, and that we have often heard about in our lessons. One day Barnabas had to go to Antioch and he took his nephew, John Mark, with him. You remember how Barnabas found everything going so well in Antioch and so many people becoming Christians. Then last Sunday, you know, we learned about how Barnabas and Saul started out to be missionaries, and went to preach to people who had never heard about Jesus. Well, this young man, John Mark, went along with his uncle and Paul, and on the journey everything still went well, and I suppose John Mark, thought being a missionary and having so many people become Christians was just fine. He still went along with Paul and Barnabas when they got on to a ship and sailed away to another country to go on preaching. But here he didn't find it nice at all, for the city that they came to was very hot, and ever so many people had bad fevers, some people think that Paul himself got the fever here, and it was a kind of fever that would keep on coming back to you often afterwards if you once got it. Then John Mark heard that the road that they would have to go over next was very rough, all over big mountains, and there were a great many bands of cruel robbers hidden away in these mountains, so he just turned round and went back home to Jerusalem. It was a pretty nasty kind of a place to leave any one in, just when he was more needed than ever, and Paul didn't think much of him for quite a long while after that. However, we are glad to learn that by-and-by John Mark started out again as a missionary and did such good work that Paul asked to have him come and help him in his work. Meanwhile, however, what did Paul and Barnabas do? Did they get afraid of going over that hard road where there were so many robbers? No, for they remembered that God would take care of them and that God Himself had sent them along that way. So they went on and soon came to another city, much nicer and more beautiful than the last, another city called Antioch, the same name as the city from which they had started out.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The defection of John Mark at Perga we know to have been considered by Paul a fault

so grave as to warrant a separation from Barnabas when the latter was inclined to overlook it (Acts xv., 37-40), but it is pleasing to find that the clemency of Barnabas was justified in the young attendant's later life and that Paul and John Mark later became laborers together in warm friendship (Col. iv., 10, 11; II. Tim. iv., 11). There seems to have been no long stop in the low lying unhealthy city of Perga, but that was not out of any selfish consideration, as the road on which the missionaries then travelled to reach Antioch was one of the worst in the Roman Empire, and it is thought that his experiences on this road are referred to by Paul in II. Cor. xi., 26. This Sunday's lesson is of particular interest for the fact that it contains the first reported sermon of St. Paul. Although this is in all probability greatly condensed, yet there is sufficient to give a good idea of his method, his reliance on Scripture, his appeal to familiar ground, and his forceful personal application of the truth. It might profitably be compared with the earlier sermons which we have studied to show how much the apostles leaned on God's word for their authority and how their topic was always 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' The sense of the word 'ordained' in verse 48 is not necessarily an arbitrary ruling of God; it may perhaps be better understood by a comparison with our own word 'disposed.' This conveys to us one of two meanings; we may be 'disposed' quite apart from our own will, by a command or a superior officer, in the sense of being placed or arranged in a certain place or way, and we may be 'disposed' in the sense of being entirely guided by our own inclinations. The word rendered 'ordained' in verse 48 will admit of either meaning.

SELECTIONS.

Paul told the Jews at Antioch that they had condemned themselves. It was not his fault; it was not God's fault. The word of God had been spoken to them, but they would not accept it. They thrust it from them, and in so doing passed sentence on themselves, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life. 'Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life,' said Jesus once to the Jews of Capernaum; this is what the Jews of Antioch did. 'And these are they which bear witness of me'; he continued. This the Jews of Antioch would not believe. 'And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life,' sorrowfully added the Giver of eternal life; this was the sin of the Jews of Antioch, the sin by which they judged themselves unworthy of that life, judicially decided themselves unworthy, these men who thought that they alone of all the nations were worthy.

It was the same word of God that was preached to the Gentiles, and they accepted it gladly; by their faith they judged themselves worthy of eternal life. The two expressions, 'unworthy of eternal life' and 'ordained to eternal life,' as Dr. Maclaren points out, are negative and positive sides of the same thought.

'The testimony of the apostles was a savor of life unto life or of death unto death' comments St. Augustine. 'The same fire reddens the gold and burns the dross; under the same threshing-sledge the grain is cleaned and the chaff is crushed out; by the same press-beam the oil is separated from the dregs.'

The most awful and the most splendid fact in human life to me is this, that God puts the reins of my destiny in my own hands, and neither holds the reins before nor behind me.—Lyman Abbott.

He came unto his own and his own received him not; these words are an assertion of the awful ultimateness of the power of free will in man.—Phillips Brooks.

'If a man is not a missionary Christian, he will be a "missing" Christian.'—A. F. Gordon.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, May 9.—Topic—The bonfire at Ephesus. Acts xix., 17-20.

C. E. Topic.

Monday, May 3.—Picture of a preacher. I. Tim. iv., 6-16.

Tuesday, May 4.—The dusty room. Rom. vii., 7-15.

Wednesday, May 5.—Passion and patience. Jas. v., 1-6.

Thursday, May 6.—The fire and oil. Zech. iv., 1-6.

Friday, May 7.—Valiant and despondent. Acts xiv., 20-23; Luke viii., 13.

Saturday, May 8.—The dream of judgment. Rev. xx., 11-15.

Sunday, May 9.—Topic—Pilgrim's Progress Series. IV. The House of the Interpreter. Eccl. xii., 9-14; Jas. i., 19-25.

Sunday-school Truths.

Training is more than teaching. Every child is naturally religious, though some people do their best to make religion and the child unnatural.

Children are not little men and women; they are boys and girls. And the difference between these notions of childhood is very great.

Teach when you can. The time may come when, though you would give anything to teach to-day's teachable child, he will not be taught.

Help the Sunday-school to be better than its reputation.

No one is too old for Sunday-school whose mind is still sound.

Sunday-school workers are the biggest body of unpaid workers in the world, except mothers.

When boys don't like to go to Sunday-school, there is something wrong—with the school.

Decision Day is a great day. But there must be many days of yearning love before it, and many days of loving help after it, or it will do infinite harm to immortal souls.—Selected.

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