



LESSON,—SUNDAY, JULY 25, 1909.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey.—Athens.

Acts xvii., 22-34. Memory verse 29. Read Acts xvii., 16-34.

Golden Text.

God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. John iv., 24.

Home Readings.

Monday, July 19.—Acts xvii., 16-34.
 Tuesday, July 20.—Isa. xl., 9-17.
 Wednesday, July 21.—Isa. xl., 18-31.
 Thursday, July 22.—Jer. x., 1-16.
 Friday, July 23.—Psa. l., 1-15.
 Saturday, July 24.—John iv., 19-29.
 Sunday, July 25.—II. Cor. v., 1-11.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Our lesson to-day is one that has a lot about God in it, so just let us all bow our heads and ask Him to help us understand it.—Do you think God heard our little prayer just now? Yes, because He has told us to pray to Him when we need help and He will help us. You all know what it is to pray to God, don't you? We kneel and ask Him to care for us every night and morning all our life long, although we never see Him. We don't need to see Him to know that He loves and takes care of us, because Christ came to earth and told us so, and now we can read all about it in the Bible. But there are some people who don't know anything about God and never heard of Christ, and who do you think they worship and say prayers to? Some of them pray to animals, some pray to the sun, moon, and stars, and some make gods of wood and stone which they worship and pray to. They all know that somewhere there is a God, and some think that there must be lots of gods, because there would be too many things for just one god to look after. So these people say there is a god of the wind and a god of the waters; gods of the mountains and gods of the valleys, and away over in India they have a great many more than three million different kinds of gods. Of course, they can't worship them all, all the time; that would be impossible; so one day they have a feast for one, then another day they worship another, and one day in the year they have a big feast for all the other gods they haven't worshipped already, in case any one of these gods should get jealous and try to hurt them. Paul was in a city once where the people were somewhat like the Hindus in India to-day, for they worshipped ever so many gods and then got frightened that they might have forgotten or not known about one that might be important, too, so they built an altar and said it was in honor of an unknown god. Wasn't that a funny thing to do? Paul was walking along the street in this city called Athens one day, and being very sad about all these poor people not knowing about the only true God, when he saw this altar and found it gave him a good chance to preach a sermon and tell the people about God and Jesus.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The missionary company that set out by ship from Troas is now very broken up. Luke appears to have remained at Philippi, as it is from this point that he later rejoins the apostolic company (Acts xx., 4, 6); Silas and Timothy were left at Berea, and Paul was alone in Athens. This was not for long, however, for Silas and Timothy soon rejoined him, to be soon again despatched, Timothy to Thes-

salonica (I. Thes. iii., 1, 2); and Silas so far, as it can be judged, to Luke at Philippi, so that Paul was again alone at Athens (I. Thes. iii., 2). Timothy, it is true, returned to him there from Thessalonica (I. Thes. iii., 6), but seems to have been almost immediately sent back, probably with the letter in which Paul speaks of his return, for Silas and he returned together to Paul from Macedonia after he had left Athens (Acts xviii., 5). All this coming and going during the brief time of Paul's stay in Athens shows how strong was his interest in the churches which he had been instrumental in founding, for, much as he seemed to need his friends and helpers (Acts xvii., 15) he had rather manage as best he could without them than fear any harm to the little struggling churches. In Athens he found plenty to occupy his time, and his frequent open air addresses (verse 17) brought him the great chance at last of addressing the chief council of Athens. His tactful courtesy in the opening address is somewhat spoiled in our English translation, for the word translated 'too superstitious' (verse 22) indicated not the offense that it conveys to us, but an earnest appreciation of their active religious feelings. Nor did the word translated 'ignorantly' (verse 23) carry the offence the imputation of ignorance would to-day. He simply acknowledged the very fact they themselves had admitted that there was a God who was to them unknown, but after Whom they nevertheless sought. His appeal to them as 'men of Athens' with acknowledgment of their religious zeal, and on ground on which their own well-known poets had stood shows the Apostle's courtesy and culture. He seems to have been brought up rather shortly by some of the audience when the question of the resurrection was introduced, but there can be little doubt that this account of Luke's gives but a short portion of the whole address.

(FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES.')

'We learn from Pliny that at the time of Nero, Athens contained over three thousand public statues, besides a countless number of lesser images within the walls of private houses. Of this number the great majority were statues of gods, demi-gods, or heroes. In one street there stood before every house a square pillar carrying upon it a bust of the god Hermes. Every gateway and porch carried its protecting god. Every street, every square, nay, every purlieu, had its sanctuaries, and a Roman poet bitterly remarked that it was easier in Athens to find gods than men.'—G. S. Davies, St. Paul in Greece.

Philo the Jew, who died ten or twelve years before this visit of Paul, says that 'Athens was to Greece what the pupil is to the eye, or the reason to the soul'; and describes a scene in Athens which he probably witnessed. 'The actors were exhibiting tragedy and were reciting those famous lines of Euripides

"For Freedom is a name all precious;
 Even if a man hath little thereof,
 Let him esteem himself to have great riches."

'Then I beheld that all the spectators stood up on tiptoe with excitement, and with loud cheers and sustained cries prolonged their applause of the sentiment no less than their applause of a poet that not only glorified freedom in deed, but glorified its very name.'

All this will enable us to realize more perfectly the atmosphere and environment in which Paul preached the sermon in our lesson for to-day.

Verse 20. For thou bringest certain strange things. Astonishing, novel, startling things. This attracted them, for it was characteristic of the Athenians to spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing, Greek, 'the latest news,' the newest theology, the latest theories, 'the new thought.' Their own orators and poets lashed them for this peculiarity. Aristophanes styles Athens 'the city of the gapers' ('Knights,' 1262). Demades said that the crest of Athens ought to be a great tongue. . . . In the speech of Cleon to the Athenians, given by Thucydides (iii., 38), he says: "No men are better dupes, sooner deceived by novel notions, or slower to follow approved advice. You despise what is familiar, while you are worshippers of every new extravagance."

A modern city of many shrines.—Says William Eleroy Curtis in his 'Modern India':

'No one can realize what an awful religion Hinduism is until he visits Benares. There are in the city two thousand temples and innumerable shrines, twenty-five thousand Brahman priests, monks, fakirs, and ascetics. There are more than five hundred thousand idols established in permanent places for worship in Benares, representing every variety of god in the Hindu pantheon, so that all the pilgrims who go there may find consolation and some object of worship.

'No other city has so many beggars, religious and otherwise; nowhere can so many pitiful spectacles of deformity and distress be seen; nowhere is such gross and repulsive obscenity and sensuality practised—and all in the name of religion.'

(FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

Verse 25. God is not served by men's hands as though He needed anything. Some there are who look upon their Church attendance, their prayer and their praise, as a service done to God. He needs them not, but they need them. From Him they receive everything; through their worship they lift up their souls to Him.

Verse 26. The longer I live, the more clearly I see there is a God who governs in the affairs of nations as well as individuals.—Benjamin Franklin.

Verse 27. 'I hold more strongly than ever to this conviction, deepened and strengthened by long experience, of the reality, the nearness, and the personality of God.'—Gladstone.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, July 25.—Topic—Missionary touring in Paul's time and in ours. Acts xiv., 21-27. (Missionary meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

Monday, July 19.—The ideal Servant. Isa. xli., 1-4.

Tuesday, July 20.—Redemption by units. Isa. xlv., 1-8.

Wednesday, July 21.—A promise to the Orient. Isa. lx., 1-3.

Thursday, July 22.—Good soldiers. II. Tim. ii., 1-9.

Friday, July 23.—A missionary's life. Acts xx., 17-35.

Saturday, July 24.—Love under persecution. Matt. v., 43-48.

Sunday, July 25.—Topic—Heroes of missions in China. Matt. v., 13-16.

Hammered Home.

A nail stuck in a board is not of much service when the big wind comes. To be of service, it must be hammered home. The board is then held tight to the stud, supports it, and is supported by it. To do its best work, the nail needed to be hammered till it was all the way home.

Like the nails, a good idea is no use till it is hammered home. Merely stuck on the outside, it affects no one's heart or mind. What it needs is hammering—careful and judicious hammering, but hammering.

Place the nail on the board, give it a tap ever so adroitly, stop there, and the result is valueless. One tap will not drive a nail home. But a man strikes an idea one tap, and then feels himself aggrieved because it did not do the work. Some boards are thick, and some are hard, and perhaps the nail is a trifle blunt. A good deal of hammering is sometimes necessary.

But the nail will go home, and so will the idea, if the hammering is kept up. In each case the light taps come first. A heavy tap may start the nail wrong, and injure the wood. It is quite as possible to be maladroit in introducing even the best idea. But care in the tapping—gentleness of manner, respect, and sympathy—and the good idea may be driven home.—The 'Christian.'

Sunday School Offer.

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