

July 30. PAUL AT EPHESUS.

Lesson, Acts 19: 1-12 Gold. Text, John 16: 13
Memory vs. 2-5. Catechism, Q. 70, 71.

Paul remained at Corinth for a year and a half and founded a large church. Leaving Apollos there to preach, he returned to Jerusalem and to Antioch, thus completing his second missionary journey, of about two years, in length of which three fourths had been spent in Corinth.

Early in the year 51 A.D., at the age of 52, he started on his third missionary journey. Traveling northward until he reached Ephesus, he remained there three years, revisited Greece and Macedonia, returning to Jerusalem in 58 A.D., making a tour of nearly 4 years.

At Ephesus and Corinth were his two longest ministries, in the former three years, in the latter half that time. Both were among the most influential centres of the ancient eastern world, rich, gay, thronged, voluptuous. In both, the work was blessed, and large churches founded to which afterward were written some of his letters.

This lesson tells of the beginning of his work in Ephesus.

I. The Gift of the Spirit, vs. 1, 6.

Disciples—Men who had heard of the preaching of John, and of the coming Saviour, had accepted the message and believed, but had not heard of Pentecost or the later preaching. *Holy Ghost*—This refers, not to the common operations of the Spirit by which men's heart are renewed, but to the special gift of tongues, prophecy, etc., that specially marked these early days. That this is the case is seen from v. 6, where was repeated on a small scale the scene of Pentecost.

II. Preaching the Gospel, vs. 8, 10.

Synagogue—This afforded a beginning for the Apostles in all the chief cities, pointing out to the worshippers that the prophecies which they were reading had been fulfilled, that the long looked for Saviour had come. Three months of his ministry was thus spent, but as in other places, the Jews did not receive the message and set up a bitter opposition and then Paul, leaving the synagogue, hired a hall, and for two years conducted service in it, along the lines that our missionaries do in frontier towns, or in heathen fields, where they have to meet question and argument and opposition.

III. Working miracles, vs. 11, 12.

This was one of the features of these early days. Special gifts were bestowed to confirm the message which the preachers gave, to prove that it was from God.

For the character of Paul's ministry at Ephesus, read Acts 20: 15-21, and for its wonderful success, see vs. 13, 20 of chap. 19. Paul was about leaving, to revisit other churches, when quite a storm arose, see 19: 30, 40.

1. These disciples whom Paul found were true believers but had little knowledge, showing that one may be a christian and yet ignorant of many things.

2. No one should remain ignorant when they have an opportunity to learn.

3. We all need, and may all have, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

3. People sometimes deprecate argument in religion, but all discussion that aims to bring out truth is helpful.

4. We have to-day gospel miracles as great as in olden time. The drunkards are made sober, the vicious reformed, liars are made truthful, the bad became good.

Aug. 6. PAUL AT MILETUS.

Les., Acts 20: 23-25. Gol. Text Heb. 13: 7.
Mem. vs. 31-32. Catechism, 72.

Last lesson saw Paul at Ephesus. Review his work there.

After his departure he revisited Macedonia and Greece, and the churches that he had founded five or six years before and then returned to Jerusalem. On his return he had not time to revisit Ephesus, but yet did not wish to pass them without any word, so he landed at Miletus a few miles distant and sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him there, and to them he gives his faithful parting counsels.

1. His prospects, vs. 22, 25.

Bound. Impelled by a sense of duty. *Not Knowing*—He knew not what the result would be, he only knew that duty lay before him. And he followed that. *Every City*—What a reception! Bonds and affliction everywhere. Looking at it naturally one would suppose such a life a very wretched one, but "none of these things move me." He feared not. Yea more, his life was a glad one, a joyous course, see next verse. These three verses sum up a grand life, a noble example of heroic faith and service and trust.

II. His past work among them, vs. 26, 27.

Pure—How few there are who by neglect or by actual wrong doing, have not influenced another for evil or failed to influence for good. *Not shunned*—The promises of the Gospel, the threatenings of the law, the whole counsel of God is intended for man, and should be, must be, declared if teachers would be guiltless.

III. Paul's charge to them, vs. 28, 31.

Take heed—Two objects of care, themselves and the church. They must watch their own hearts, lest they should decline in their own christian life, and must watch their own lives lest they should be stumbling blocks to others. Further, they must feed or teach that church. *Overseers*—A responsible position. This is a solemn lesson for teachers. Then there are dark days coming that make the watchfulness all the more necessary. From without and within will evil come.

III. His own past example, vs. 31, 35.

As an additional incentive to duty, he reminds them of his own example. How earnest and watchful, v. 31. How unselfish vs. 33, 34. How thoughtful of others, v. 35.

The whole lesson is one full of grandest beauty as setting forth the ideal christian life.

1. Be sure you are right, then go ahead and leave results to God.

2. The life that follows God is a life of joy no matter how great its trials.

3. The life that is faithful in its practice and teaching is clear of the blood of souls.

4. The duty of teachers, elders, etc., to watch over others especially over those committed to their trust.

5. True christian service is unselfish. It seeks rather for the good it may do than for the reward it may get.