



LESSON,—SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 1909.

The Gospel in Antioch.

Acts xi., 19-30; xii., 25. Memory verses 22, 23.

Golden Text.

The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Acts xi., 26.

Home Readings.

- Monday, April 19.—Acts xi., 19-30; xii., 25.
Tuesday, April 20.—Matt. x., 16-23.
Wednesday, April 21.—Matt. xxviii., 16-20.
Thursday, April 22.—Luke x., 17-24.
Friday, April 23.—I. Thessalonians I.
Saturday, April 24.—Acts iv., 32-37.
Sunday, April 25.—Rom. xii., 1-15.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Have you ever seen a field covered with the dandelion heads that are just little round balls of fluffy white, 'clocks' as we call them? And then have you seen the wind come along puffing over it? What happens? Why the wind blows off and carries away with it ever so many of the little dandelion seeds, each under its little fluffy white umbrella, and is that the end of them? Has the wind blown them away and got rid of them? No, indeed, for they are all prepared for just that very thing, and wherever they fall to the ground they get right to work, push their little selves in, and soon we may find another little dandelion plant growing there. But why do you think we have been speaking about dandelions in Sunday School? Well, you will all remember that we have been studying about the Christians in the old city of Jerusalem and how they grew and multiplied there until the Jewish rulers thought there would soon be nothing but Christians if they left them alone. So these men started to persecute them. That was just like a great wind blowing over the field for it scattered the Christians all over the country, but they were quite ready for it, like the little dandelion seeds, and knew just what to do, for Christ had told them that this very wind would come. So wherever they were blown to they settled right down and soon there was another little Christian church growing up. Suppose one of those little dandelion seeds that got blown away should say 'Well, I don't see why I was blown away from all my brothers and sisters. I don't see any other dandelions around in this place. I don't suppose it was meant for a dandelion to grow here. I'll just lie right down and do nothing and perhaps the wind may blow me off to a better place.' That would be very stupid; and some of these Christians in those days long ago might have said 'I don't see why God sent me out of Jerusalem. I don't see any other Christians round here, so I guess I had better do nothing,' but they didn't, and all set to work, no matter where they found themselves and spoke and worked for Christ. And Christ wants us to do just that. You know Jesus told us that we are all like seeds (Matt. xiii., 37, 38) and that He Himself has put us here in the world to grow for Him. Well, we learned last week about the city of Damascus where some of the Christians were blown to by this great wind of persecution, and how they soon had a fine church growing up there. Now, in to-day's lesson we hear about another city to which Christians came, and this city was called Antioch.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The lesson to-day introduces us to a city of large importance in the history of Christianity, for it is not only the city in which

the Gentile Christians first came to great prominence, but the city that was the centre of Paul's missionary work. It has been said that the history of the church as given in Acts centres about three cities, firstly Jerusalem, the city of Jewish exclusiveness, secondly Antioch, the city of Gentile opportunity, and thirdly Rome, the city of world influence. It is the stage of the conquest of the second city that is reached to-day. Antioch was a city of great importance and of needs as great. The gospel entered here unexpectedly. It was not a move from Jerusalem and was contrary to the usual plans of the Jewish Christians. The word 'Grecians' in verse 20 is properly 'Greeks,' and the verse means that whereas the rest of the Christians scattered abroad preached to Jews only (verse 19), these unknown men of Cyprus and Cyrene, that city of northern Africa, had the courage to take a further step and preach to Gentiles also. Whether they had the authority of the church or no 'the hand of God' was with them and success followed their efforts. The round-about rumor reaching Jerusalem, the elders of the church there chose the best possible man for its investigation in the person of Barnabas. The story is simple and straightforward but how much it tells in these few words,—for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of Faith; and much people was added unto the Lord.'

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

Verse 29.—The Greek word translated 'purpose' means literally 'setting forth,' and is the word in Matthew xii., 4 translated 'show-bread,' 'the loaves of the setting-forth,' the loaves set before, or consecrated to, God. Their hearts were to be consecrated to God. The Greek word 'cleave' is translated 'continue' in Acts xiii., 43, and the exhortation is that of Jesus Himself when He said 'Abide in me.' Jesus is the living Lord, ever present with His disciples, to Him they are to cleave, with hearts consecrated to God's service. If Jews and Greeks carried out this exhortation of Barnabas, there would be no trouble among them, for they would all live together in Christian unity, sons of one Father, brothers of one Lord.

How we may cleave to the Lord. One plain way is by habitual direction of thought to Him, by cultivating the sense of His presence. It is hard amid the whirl and press, but it is possible. How do we keep near dear ones on earth who are absent? Only by thinking about them, and we do not need, if we really love them, to be told to think about them; we can not help it. In the same way, if we are to keep ourselves in that close personal relation to the Christ 'whom having not seen we love,' there must be a great deal more actual occupation of our minds and thoughts with Him than is usual amongst professing Christians. The bulk of our lives is necessarily devoted to temporal things, and, unless we can bring about an alliance between daily work and heavenly thoughts, our hold on Christ will be slack. We cleave to the Lord by obedience also. A little disobedience makes a great separation. We cleave to Him by depending on Him, as a cragsman clutches the rope which keeps him from being dashed to pieces on the sharp reef, or drowned in the heaving billows far below.—Alexander Maclaren, in 'Leaves from the Tree of Life.'

The Effect of Giving on the Giver. An artist was once asked how he would portray a dying church. Would he picture a small, scattered congregation worshipping in a building that was falling to pieces? Instead, he said, the canvas should show a magnificent edifice, with a great organ, richly carved pulpit, and beautiful windows. The striking objects within should be two—a large collection plate in the hands of a Church official, and on the wall a small box marked 'Collection for Foreign Missions' with a huge cobweb over the opening! That church keeps its life and its wealth with gives away its energy and its money in noble causes.

To be in relations not with God alone but with one's fellows, and to serve God in serving them, that is to be a Christian.—A. C. McGiffert.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, April 25.—Topic—Preaching Christ in the home land. Acts v., 42. (Missionary meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

- Monday, April 19.—The missionary's passion. I. Cor. ix., 16-23.
Tuesday, April 20.—The missionary's danger. Ezek. ii., 3-7.
Wednesday, April 21.—The missionary's faith. Isa. xlix., 1-5.
Thursday, April 22.—His reward. Mark x., 28-31.
Friday, April 23.—The missionary's joy. II. Tim. iv., 6-8.
Saturday, April 24.—The missionary's triumph. Rev. vii., 13-17.
Sunday, April 25.—Topic—Heroes of African missions. Jer. i. 6-12.

Our New Competition.

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