



LESSON.—SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1909.

Philip and the Ethiopian.

Acts viii., 26-38. Memory verses, 29-31. Read. Act. viii., 26-40.

Golden Text.

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. John v., 39.

Home Readings.

- Monday, March 1.—Acts viii., 26-40.
Tuesday, March 2.—Isaiah 53.
Wednesday, March 3.—Psa. lxxviii., 26-35.
Thursday, March 4.—Psa. cxix., 9-18.
Friday, March 5.—Luke xxiv., 13-31.
Saturday, March 6.—Matthew 3.
Sunday, March 7.—Rom. vi., 1-11.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

You all know that hymn we sing which begins 'There were ninety-and-nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold.' Which one of you can tell the story that Jesus told about that? This story about the one lost sheep that the shepherd went after until he found, teaches us that Jesus, like that shepherd, cares for each one of us and knows when any one of us goes away from Him or when we need His care, especially. We have a lesson to-day that is something like that story of the ninety-nine sheep and the one that was lost. It comes right after our last Sunday's lesson. Does any one remember what we learnt about Philip last Sunday, and who he was? He was one of the first deacons of the Christian Church in Jerusalem and he had to leave the city during Saul's persecution. He went as a missionary then to the Samaritans, and who can tell me whether he was successful or not? Yes, very successful. So many people believed in Jesus and became Christians, that a message was sent to Jerusalem for more helpers, so we see Philip was doing very good work. To-day we are to study how God took him away from teaching and preaching to all these people to go and look after just one man.

FOR THE SENIORS.

This lesson may be very helpfully taken up in the older classes along the lines suggested for the juniors, i.e., as an example of God's care for, and knowledge of, the individual. This solitary man from a far country, groping for God in darkness is seen and known of God (Psa. cxlv., 18; Isa. lix., 1) who has promised that whosoever seeketh shall find. Philip, too, was known of God as being the one most suited to help the man in need. God chose his instrument with care, even taking him from a field where he seemed, to human understanding, to be greatly needed. Another point of view from which to look at this lesson is the light that prophecy casts on Christ's birth and life on earth. To-day, how many a beautiful passage in the Old Testament a preacher can take and 'beginning at that same scripture,' can preach unto his hearers, Jesus, the Saviour of men, the Messiah of the Jews, the fulfiller of prophecy. Philip had a great precedent for his powerful sermon (Luke xxiv., 25-27). Very convincing must have been the words of the evangelist for such a practical man as the custodian of the Ethiopian queen's treasure, to have given the exhortation instant obedience. Viewed as a missionary lesson this is of a great appeal. Moreover, it is the lesson specially recommended by the Missionary Committee in the preparation of these lessons for treatment as a missionary lesson. Philip has been doing most successful missionary work in Samaria, work taken up also by the two apostles Peter and John themselves (verse 25), but God

would send His light still further out into the darkness of the world. The Ethiopian is to be His messenger in this case, but Philip must do the preparing. How God made His will so plainly evident to Philip, whether by visible messenger, audible voice, or inward consciousness, the sense of God's guidance is trustfully acknowledged by many of His true children to-day. 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,' said Christ (John vii., 17), and it is the ready acting on the revealed will of God, that will always bring the further light so earnestly desired. The slight difference that may be seen by comparing verses 32, 33 with Isaiah liii., 7, 8, is owing to the fact that the quotation in to-day's lesson is taken from the Greek version of the scripture, the Septuagint, in which it was most natural for this foreigner to be reading. The Greek language was the language of world culture at the time, and a man of such power and rank would be sure to know it. It is the language in which the New Testament is written.

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

'Search the Scriptures.'—A student in one college was confessing to me that he did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but in answer to my question he admitted that he had never spent a connected hour in weighing evidence on this subject. In Australia I noticed that they often found the gold dust on or near the surface, but that as a rule the nuggets were discovered by digging. In the gold districts of our western states the largest output of gold is the result of a cyanide process in connection with which the ore is crushed and by various processes the precious metal is extracted. So to-day the men who are bringing the richest treasures from the mines of God are those who are giving themselves to the most thorough-going processes of meditation. There is no symmetrical, constant, healthy development of the spiritual life apart from reflection upon the truth of God. The absence of this explains why so many Christians are not growing, but rather standing still or going back spiritually.

Have a favorable place of meditation. Have a regular time for meditation. Give sufficient time to meditation. Use the Bible as the basis and guide in meditation.

Without the Bible this process may make one morbid, melancholy, selfish and fanatical, whereas with the Bible it is a most fruitful exercise. The question may present itself, what topics would you suggest for meditation? Every one ought to ponder frequently the facts concerning his own sin and concerning the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to meet all his need. If a man does not do this he is likely to become proud and self-sufficient, and one might spend an hour a day for a month on the Scriptural terms which unfold the secret of forgiveness; or the secret of becoming Christ-like; or the secret of becoming fruitful; or the secret of immortal hope. Ponder Christ's claims about Himself. Study meditatively His character. This in itself is a theme which one could never exhaust. Condensed from an article on 'Religious Meditation' by John R. Mott, in 'Northfield Echoes.'

There is no book that will repay time spent on its pages as will the word of God.—F. B. Meyer.

I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say, Search the Scriptures!—John Quincy Adams.

Let us live our Bibles: do not discuss them so much; put a bit more in at the living.—Gipsy Smith.

The whole hope of human progress is suspended on the ever-growing influence of the Bible.—William H. Seward.

We can never think a text dull or small after we have once looked deep into its depths.—Phillips Brooks.

One of the greatest obstacles with which we have to deal in our Bible-study is the idea that the Bible can be studied somehow without any effort, at any time, without any knowledge.—Charles Foster Kent.

Young man, my advice to you is that you cultivate an acquaintance with and a firm belief in the Holy Scriptures—this is your certain interest.—Franklin.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, March 7.—Topic—Stephen, the first martyr. Acts vii., 54-60. (Consecration meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

- Monday, March 1.—My confessional. Ps. li.
Tuesday, March 2.—My shepherd. Ps. xxiii.
Wednesday, March 3.—My war-song. Ps. lxxviii., 1-6.
Thursday, March 4.—My King. Ps. ii.
Friday, March 5.—My Saviour. Ps. xxii., 1-11.
Saturday, March 6.—My home. Ps. xc., 1-12.
Sunday, March 7.—Topic—Life lessons for me from the Psalms. Ps. xlv., 1-11. (Consecration meeting.)

Removing Stumbling-blocks.

(Arthur E. Storrie, in the 'Christian.')

One of the principal ways in which Hindoos think that they can obtain salvation is by accumulating 'merit.' This thought enters into nearly every detail of their lives, and this word 'merit' is ever upon their lips. There are innumerable ways whereby 'merit' can be acquired. Amongst the more common ways are by repeating the name of a god (Hindoo children are nearly always named after a god, for then, when the parents call the child, they take the name of a god, and so acquire a little merit!); by giving alms (hence the thousands of religious beggars); and by torturing the body.

Occasionally one comes across a new device called into being by the special need of the one who is seeking to store up 'merit' against the evil day. One evening, while going to a village to seek to make Jesus Christ known, I saw in the distance a figure that every now and again bent down. It was an old man, throwing to the side any loose stones that might be lying on the road. I asked him: 'Old friend, why are you doing this?'

'I am a poor man,' he replied. 'I have no money to give to the priests, and so to gain "merit" I am gathering the loose stones off the road, so that others will not stumble over them!'

'And how far have you come?' 'My village,' said he, 'is sixty miles away.' I thought, surely here is a soul who has the burden of sin, and will gladly hear of Jesus.

He would not stay to listen, and so passed on. But if the poor old man would not take my message, he all unconsciously left one with me. Think of that old Hindoo, for a good sixty miles, throwing the loose stones off the road, so that others should not stumble! What a blessed office, to remove stumbling-blocks from the way of others!

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