

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubeta's Notes.

Second Quarter, 1903.

APRIL TO JUNE.

Lesson XII. June 21. Paul's Charge to Timothy.—2 Timothy 3: 14 to 4: 8.

GOLDEN TEXT.

There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.—2 Tim. 4: 8.

EXPLANATORY.

The Circumstances. In A. D. 64, "a few months after Paul's release, there burst forth at Rome that frightful conflagration which raged for six days, and laid a vast region of the city in ashes." The Emperor Nero "enjoyed the dreadful sight from a turret of his palace, singing and dancing the mime of the 'Burning of Troy' during the progress of the national catastrophe." It was rumored that the imperial monster had himself caused the fire, and to avert this dark suspicion Nero laid the charge on the innocent Christians. "Multitudes of every age, of every sex, were arrested. They were slain with the sword; they were exposed in the amphitheater; they were covered with the skins of wild beasts to be torn to pieces by dogs; they were wrapped in sheets of pitch, tied to stakes and set on fire. Nero drove about among the people in his chariot by the flare of these hideous human torches."

Paul was probably arrested on some charge connected with this persecution. He seems to have suffered from the winter's cold, for he sent to Ephesus for his cloak, which, in the suddenness of his arrest, had been left at Troas. He sent also for his few books, for he was very lonely, Luke alone remaining with him. On his preliminary trial (2 Tim. 4: 16) all men had forsaken him.

Under these sad circumstances Paul wrote to Timothy this Epistle, "the most touching of all the Pauline writings." Its purpose was to instruct him in his work, and to urge Timothy and Mark to come to Rome. But before they could reach him, the great apostle was beheaded.

Timothy and Paul. Timothy, born probably in Lystra, Asia Minor, was converted by Paul, most likely in his first missionary journey. He went with Paul to Europe on his second missionary journey, and was the apostle's comrade and helper the rest of his life, becoming like a son to him, joining in the salutations of many of his Epistles, laboring with him during the three years at Ephesus, and finally sharing his first imprisonment. After Paul's release Timothy was placed in charge of the important church at Ephesus, and worked there till his own martyrdom under Domitian (before A. D. 96) or Trajan (A. D. 109).

The pastoral epistles of Paul, the two to Timothy, and one to Titus, are so called because they are addressed to young pastors in charge respectively of the churches at Ephesus and Crete. These Epistles are of the highest value to Christian work.

THAT'S THE TIME

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There is a reason.

A dessert that helps the body, that's the thing! Any number of them in the little recipe book in each package of Grape-Nuts.

ers, because they discuss, in a familiar and practical way, the best methods of Christian work.

Our lesson is a wonderfully comprehensive view of Christian work, its foundation, purpose, hindrances, and rewards. It may be summarized under four rules.

I. FIRST RULE: ABIDE IN THE BIBLE.—Vs. 14-17. Scripture-knowledge is the foundation of Christian work. Paul congratulates Timothy on his home training in the Bible.

14. BUT CONTINUE THOU (R. V., "abide thou"). In contrast with the evil men Paul has been describing. IN THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST LEARNED BIBLE truths including the gospel Paul had taught him AND HAST BEEN ASSURED OF. Timothy had been assured of these truths by the witness of the Spirit in his heart, the experience of his life, the witness and experience of other Christians like Paul and Barnabas. KNOWING OF WHOM THOU HAST LEARNED THEM namely, his good mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1: 5), and Paul himself. What a host of noble men and women testify to us that the Bible is true!

15. AND THAT FROM A CHILD (R. V., "a babe"). "Early infancy. The aptitude mention five as the age at which Jewish children are to begin to read the law."

THOU HAST KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (R. V., "the sacred writings") The Old Testament, thus instilled in his youth, and now the New Testament, as the writings appeared from time to time. WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE THEE WISE UNTO SALVATION. The Old Testament, through its many prophecies of the Saviour; the New Testament, through its witness to the Saviour's life and death. THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS faith reposed in Christ.

16. ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY THE INSPIRATION OF GOD (R. V., "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable," etc). Both translations are possible, and both are clear declarations of the inspiration of the bible.

AND IS PROFITABLE. Paul names four ways in which the bible is of service: (1) FOR DOCTRINE (R. V., "for teaching"). For instruction—not in science or history, but in the truths of revealed religion. FOR REPROOF. For conviction of wrong ways of living or thinking. (3) FOR CORRECTION. For bringing men back to right ways of living and thinking. (4) FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (R. V., "for instruction which is in righteousness") The training and discipline that belongs to and produces a righteous life.

17. THAT THE MAN OF GOD. The Christian pastor, dedicated to God and under his authority. MAY BE PERFECT (R. V., "complete"), in all the qualities and powers needed for his work. THOROUGHLY (R. V., "completely") FURNISHED. "A soldier with full accoutrements, or a workman with tools." UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS. "All those generous and self-sacrificing acts to which in these Epistles to Timothy so many references have been made."

II. SECOND RULE: TELL OTHERS ABOUT CHRIST.—Vs. 1-4. Having congratulated Timothy on the foundation for work already laid in his character, Paul goes on to define that work, prescribing his definition with a charge that shows its importance.

1. I CHARGE THEE. A solemn word in the Greek,—I adjure. THEREFORE Paul's adjuration includes four motives to fidelity, applicable to us as well as Timothy: (1) BEFORE (R. V., "in the sight of"), GOD. God's all-seeing eye was upon Timothy, to note his faithfulness or unfaithfulness. (2) AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO SHALL JUDGE THE QUICK (the living—those that are alive at his coming) AND THE DEAD. The second motive is the certainty and solemnity of judgment; and the Judge is to be Christ, who cannot err. (3) AT HIS APPEARING (R. V., "and by his appearing")—a third division of the adjuration. (4) AND HIS KINGDOM. Timothy should do his work well because it would help to establish Christ's rule on earth, his kingdom of peace and righteousness.

Now follows Paul's famous definition of a Christian preacher, which is also applicable to all Christian workers. There are seven particulars, but the last six are forms of the first.

2. PREACH, proclaim like a herald, THE WORD, the gospel. "the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5: 19). Proclaiming it is the Christian's chief business. It must be done: (1) Faithfully. BE INSTANT. Literally, "stand by"; that is, be ready for any opportunity. IN SEASON, CUT OF SEASON. "Take opportunity or make it." (2) Searchedly. REPROVE. Convict them of their errors. (3) Powerfully. REBUKE. In the original the verb has a thought of threatened penalty. (4) Encouragingly. EXHORT. The Greek word is the same as "Paraclete," Comforter. (5) Patiently. WITH ALL LONG-SUFFERING. Timothy's hearers would be

stupid, obstinate, perverse, abusive; he would need long-suffering, patience. (6) Wisely. AND DOCTRINE (R. V., "teaching"). Timothy must teach and not scold; use reason and argument, not arrogance and bluster.

FOR. The reason why Timothy should be urgent in delivering his message; the opportunity is brief; for THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE (R. V., "the sound doctrine," literally, "the healthful teaching," the well-known one). BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS SHALL THEY HEAR TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS (invite teachers en masse) HAVING ITCHING EARS (R. V., "but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts").

4. AND SHALL BE TURNED (R. V., "and turn aside") UNTO FABLES. "Traditional supplements to the law, allegorical interpretations, Jewish stories of miracles, Rabbinical fabrications, false doctrines generally, etc."

III. THIRD RULE: ENDURE HARSHIPS BRAVELY.—Vs. 5-6. Timothy could not carry out these injunctions without making enemies. Paul now tells him how to meet that opposition.

5. BUT WATCH THOU (R. V., "be thou sober") IN ALL THINGS. "Keep awake, alert, all your senses about you." ENDURE AFFLICTIONS. The notice of Timothy's release from an imprisonment, in Heb. 13: 23, is a hint of the young pastor's hardships. DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST. An evangelist was, technically, an itinerant preacher. MAKE FULL PROOF OF THY MINISTRY. Fully perform the task set thee; heap up a full measure of work.

6. FOR I AM NOW READY TO BE OFFERED. Paul knew that Nero might kill him at any moment.

AND THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE IS AT HAND. Departure is "release" from life, as a ship is let go from its moorings or as a camp is broken up for marching away. See Phil. 1: 23.

IV. FOURTH RULE: REMEMBER THE REWARD.—Vs. 7, 8. Paul's closing words bids Timothy, in the midst of all discouragements, look forward to the joys of the eternal reward. Paul's own assurance of this was the best argument he could give.

7. I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT. An athletic contest, Paul's life-struggle against evil. I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE. The race course, the work God had laid out for him. I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH. As if the faith were a precious deposit, committed to his care.

8. HENCEFORTH. Paul's life-struggles were over; there remained only to receive the reward. THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME. "Deposited, reserved, put by in store out of the reach of all enemies." A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The leaf-garland of the Grecian games, taken by Paul as a symbol of his eternal reward in heaven. WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, "in strong contrast to that unrighteous judge who had condemned Paul and in accordance with whose unjust sentence he would presently suffer a painful death." SHALL GIVE ME AT THAT DAY. The day of Christ's second appearing (v. 1). AND NOT TO ME ONLY. Paul would not seem for an instant to exalt himself among his brethren. BUT UNTO ALL THEM ALSO THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING, that look longingly forward, with love of Christ, to his second coming.

These are Paul's last words to the churches, for the remainder of the Epistle is occupied with personal greeting. Thus passed away one of the greatest of men, a man of affairs, an orator, a statesman, a diplomat, a great traveler, the pioneer missionary, the greatest of theologians, a masterly writer, a profound philosopher, founder of churches, leader of men, faithful pastor, loving friend, humble follower of Jesus Christ. And though he died a prisoner, he passed away as all Christians may pass away, with a song in his heart, words of cheer upon his lips, and shining in his eyes the reflected light of heaven.

A MILE WITH ME.

Oh, who will walk a mile with me,
Along life's merry way?
A comrade blithe and full of glee,
Who dares to laugh out loud and free,
And let his frolic fancy play.
Like a happy child, through the flowers gay
That fill the field and fringe the way,
Where he walks a mile with me.

And who will walk a mile with me,
Along life's weary way?
A friend whose heart has eyes to see
The stars shine out o'er the darkening sea,
And the quiet rest at the end of the day—
A friend who knows, and dares to say,
The brave, sweet words that cheer the way
Where he walks a mile with me.

With such a comrade, such a friend,
I ain would walk till journey's end,
Through summer sunshine, winter rain,
And then? Farewell, we shall meet again!
—Henry Van Dyke.

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