

51. *They shook off the dust of their feet against them.* Following a custom of the East which our Lord had especially recommended to his followers as furnishing an eloquent symbol of personal responsibility. *Came unto Iconium.* The capital of Lycaonia, a city more than fifty miles away. It was a desolate and dangerous mountain road over which they went, but nothing is told us of the incidents of their journey.

HOMILETICAL AND

THE GENTILES.

The issue of this attempt of Paul and Barnabas to persuade the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia to accept Christ as the promised One of Israel was similar to many others which will be narrated hereafter. The most immediate effect was a schism among the Jews themselves, the majority of whom refused to accept such an interpretation of the attitude of themselves and of their countrymen as would involve them in condemnation. In reading the addresses of the apostles we at once see that there was no attempt made to make the Jews feel flattered by the invitation to believe the Gospel. Almost invariably the Scriptures were unfolded in such a manner as to make the guilt of the Jews stand out in bold relief. No strategy was resorted to, for the case required the boldest move possible. The presentation of the Gospel in any other terms than those which make the sinner feel his guilt, his personal guilt before God, is a betrayal of a great trust. Aside from the substance of the preaching of the apostles at Antioch of Pisidia, the spirit in which the truth was declared is of the first importance.

A feeble minority, reinforced probably by the proselytes of the gate, who would have a special interest in the message of Paul, accepted the Gospel, and these probably formed the nucleus of a Christian church. The account of Luke here seems to indicate that in respect to the relation of the law to the Gospel the second sermon was more explicit than the first, because then the opposition manifested itself in overt acts of hostility. Another motive is indicated; it is the presence in large numbers of Gentiles, the manifestation of whose interest and pleasure in what they heard must have been a source of unspeakable irritation to the Jews. That interest would also accentuate the statements made by the apostle in reference to the guilty part the Jews had in judging themselves unworthy of life.

OPPOSITION.

From a variety of motives, an account of which probably many of the Jews never stopped

52. *The converts in Antioch were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.* These are two unflinching characteristics of Christianity. Persecution and the banishment of their beloved apostles did not discourage them. In their hearts had been planted a hope that glorified all earthly calamity. "Great is the power of Christian joy," says Dr. Whedon, "especially if it be the joy of those filled with the Holy Ghost."

PRACTICAL NOTES.

long enough to give, an inveterate opposition to the preaching of the apostles was developed. Now, opposition which has its source in sound conviction can be overcome, provided it can be shown that the mind is misinformed, or that our processes of reasoning are faulty. This kind of opposition always yielded to the arguments of the apostles. But opposition which will neither reflect upon its grounds nor be friendly to information is always arrogant, vindictive, cruel. No one now reading even the fragments of Paul's preaching, which is all we possess of it, can fail to see what an immense advantage he had over all his opponents whenever the discussion turned upon reasons of his faith and preaching, as those reasons were led back to the ground and substance of the law and the prophets. Doubtless, if the leaders of the Jews would have been more pliant, and would have set the example of investigating the teaching of the apostles, there would have been different results of Paul's Pisidian preaching, with vital and most significant gains for the Jewish people, and for the Christian Church.

Attitudes of opposition to religion, to Christ as the Saviour of the world, can be accounted for only upon the ground of insufficient knowledge, or of a heart predisposed to rebellion, or of both. The logic of Christianity is direct, its forms of address are simple, its tests are so plain and full that it is hard to conceive of a difficulty which if honestly met will not easily be removed. Assuming all that the Jews professed to believe concerning the Messiah, the acceptance of Christ as Paul preached him was the inevitable course for them to take in order to maintain their own consistency.

DESTINED.

The phrase "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" is one of those phrases which seem to express most crudely the idea of individual predestination, but this statement occurs in close connection with this other: "since ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life." But here the statement of religion turns ab-

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