



LESSON III.—APRIL 20, 1902.

Peter and Cornelius

Acts x., 34-48. Memory verses, 34, 35. Read Acts x., 1-48.

Golden Text.

'God is no respecter of persons.'—Acts x., 34.

Home Readings.

Monday, April 14.—Acts x., 1-16.
 Tuesday, April 15.—Acts x., 17-29.
 Wednesday, April 16.—Acts x., 30-48.
 Thursday, April 17.—Matt. viii., 5-13.
 Friday, April 18.—Eph. iii., 1-12.
 Saturday, April 19.—John iv., 1-14.
 Sunday, April 20.—Gal. iii., 7-14.

Lesson Text.

(34) Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: (35) But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. (36) The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) (37) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; (38) How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (39) And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: (40) Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; (41) Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. (42) And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. (43) To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (44) While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Notes from Peloubet.

Cornelius was a member of an ancient and distinguished Italian family, the Cornelian gens, or family, of which the famous Roman generals, the Scipios and Sulla, were members.

Position. He was a Roman centurion, that is, captain of a company of one hundred men, the Italian band, probably volunteers from Italy.

A man in the position of Cornelius had abundant opportunities of becoming acquainted with the Jewish religion, their one true God, and the loftiness of their code of morals. Cornelius, like the Roman centurion at Capernaum, received the truth, and worshipped God in spirit and in truth, but did not become a Jewish proselyte, accepting all their ritual and forms of worship. He was (1) a devoutly religious man; (2) worshipping the one true God, and in the best way he knew, fasting and adopting the Jewish hours of prayer. (3) He was openly religious, his whole household going with him, and his kinsmen and intimate friends feeling his influence (v. 24). (4) He expressed his piety in almsgiving, helping his fellowmen. (5) He was honest and upright in his dealings (v. 22). (6) Doubtless, like the most devout Jews, he was looking and longing for better things, for fuller truth, for higher life. He felt like Goethe whose dying cry was 'More light'; and added the deeper cry, 'More love.' What he prayed for with the earnestness of fasting can be seen by the sequel, for the answer to the prayer shows what the heart of the prayer was.

In answer to his prayer, and the memorial

of his love expressed in acts of kindness and love, there stood by him in a vision, one day at the three o'clock hour of prayer, an angel in the form of a man in shining raiment, who bade him send to Joppa and ask Peter to come to him. This was the way to the light, and a test of the faith of Cornelius.

The meaning of Peter's vision is not that 'all forms of humanity, though debased in ignorance and vice,' are clean, but that all of them whom God hath cleansed are clean, and are to be received into the new kingdom on equal terms with the Jews, without their becoming Jews. We should 'see in every human being, a soul for which Christ has poured out his cleansing blood,' and do our utmost that he may receive the divine cleansing. And when he is cleansed, he is our brother, be he native or foreigner, black or white, ignorant or educated, from the slums or from a palace.

Peter was still in perplexity as to the meaning of his vision, when the three men from Cornelius reached the house of Simon the tanner, and inquired for him. The Spirit bade him go with them. The next day Peter, with six leading disciples of Joppa (Acts xi., 12), accompanied the three messengers to Caesarea. They reached Cornelius's house on the fourth day, at three o'clock, and found the Roman centurion with relatives and friends assembled and waiting. The centurion welcomed Peter, and Peter inquired why he had been sent for. V. 29 is a good text for a minister who is called to a parish, or a teacher who is asked to take a class. Cornelius tells why he sent for Peter, and asks him to speak.

God is no respecter of persons. (1) All men alike need salvation. (2) God loves all men and wants all to be saved. (3) There is one and the same condition of salvation for all. (4) Those who honestly and earnestly seek shall certainly find.

But in every nation, Jew or Gentile. He that feareth him, and worketh righteousness. These two particulars include the observation of both tables of the law. Is accepted with him. If the things done were good in themselves, they were equally good, whoever did them. 'Peter shows a belief that there were some men who feared God, and worked righteousness among non-Jewish races and nations, who were accepted of God.'—President Woolsey. God's only test is what a person really is in moral character. All must be saved in the same way, on the same conditions, subject to the same penalties if they refuse, and open to the same blessings if they repent and believe.

The Gospel came by Jesus Christ. The word (the message) . . . unto the children of Israel, who first received it, and who had been prepared for it by a long training. Preaching. Greek, evangelizing, preaching the good tidings of peace, i.e., salvation. (1) Peace with God; (2) peace from the condemnation of conscience; (3) peace among men, who now become brothers; (4) peace in the soul, whose powers are now all in harmony under one supreme Lord. By Jesus Christ. The divine Saviour. He is Lord of all. Jew and Gentile. Not a mere prophet, but the Lord himself.

The Holy Ghost fell on all of them. The Jews from Joppa and the Gentiles from Caesarea. This was the testimony of the Holy Spirit that God treated Jews and Gentiles alike, and that, therefore, the Christians should so treat them. They all spoke with tongues, and it is probable that there was the same visible manifestation of flaming tongues as on the day of Pentecost; for Peter in his report to the disciples at Jerusalem (Acts xi., 15) says that the Holy Ghost fell on them 'as on us at the beginning.' This was the proof of Peter's saying at the opening of his address (v. 34).

This gift had the same symbolic meaning as on the day of Pentecost; the symbol of the tongue, the symbol of the flame; the gospel for all nations and races, the unity of the church, the new power from heaven, the new life.

Commanded them to be baptized, as the public profession of their faith in Jesus.

Baptism was the method by which this purifying change was conferred. Public confession confirms the resolve, burns the ships behind us, helps to undo the evil example of the past, is an aid to others to change their lives, is one proof that the repentance is real. Dr. Geikie says, 'Ablu-

tion in the East is, indeed, of itself, almost a religious duty. The dust and heat weigh upon the spirits and heart like a load; its removal is refreshment and happiness. It was, hence, impossible to see a convert go down into a stream, travel-worn and soiled with dust, and in a moment emerge pure and fresh, without feeling that the symbol suited and interpreted a strong craving of the human heart.'

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, April 20.—Topic—How can I know that I am saved? John viii., 32; I. John iii., 14; Rom. viii., 1-6; I. John iv., 7.

Junior C. E. Topic.**PEOPLE THAT HAVE HELPED.**

Mon., April 14.—A beautiful necklace. Prov. iii., 3, 4.

Tues., April 15.—The law of kindness. Prov. xxxi., 26.

Wed., April 16.—Quenchless love. Song viii., 7.

Thu., April 17.—'Unto me.' Matt. xxv., 40.

Fri., April 17.—The great debt. Rom. xiii., 8-10.

Sat., April 18.—The Golden Rule. Luke vi., 31.

Sun., April 20.—Topic—People that have helped me, and how. Eph. v., 1, 2.

**Drunkenness in the Land of Beer.**

It is little wonder that German political economists are appalled at their alcohol problem. An article on drunkenness in the sixth volume of Dr. Konrad's Cyclopaedia of Political Economy ('Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften') makes the statement that one-fourteenth of the men in gainful occupations are employed in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors and that one-fifteenth of the arable land is required to grow the materials for these drinks. The government of Württemberg has statistics showing that 18.8 percent of the average income of its inhabitants is spent upon liquor. Throughout Germany the average expenditure for a family of five for drink is sixty-two and a half dollars annually.

We have heard 'there is little drunkenness in Germany,' but Dr. Bode states that 'in Prussia alone 8,163 cases of delirium tremens were treated in the hospitals in 1885.'

He says, 'A great proportion of the epilepsy, idiocy, and mental deficiency are also due to the drunken habits of the parents or of the afflicted themselves.' In 1880 one person in every 1,515 Prussians became insane by means of drink. He mentions that 'prison officials like Baer, Illig, and Krohne estimate that at least half of the crimes and misdemeanors must be attributed to drunkenness, and that 93,576 acts of violence tried in the courts in 1889 were the result of drink.' 'Experts in the care of the poor trace from 50 to 90 percent of the poverty to the drink customs. From 1882-91 there were 44,539 tramps in the German labor colonies; all but 23 percent of these were thus degraded through drunkenness.'—Mrs. J. H. W. Stuckenborg, in 'The Christian Endeavor World.'

A Very Dear Drink.

A passenger in the boat train for Southampton the other day found it necessary to alight at Woking to assuage his thirst. The train started and left him behind. Officials were interviewed, with the result that he ordered a special train, the cost being £24. He had not the money on him in cash, but he satisfied the local bank authorities of his credit, and they accepted his cheque for the amount. The railway authorities appropriated the cheque, and the special conveyed the passenger to Southampton in time to catch his boat.—'Daily Mail.'