

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From Westminster Question Book.)

LESSON X.

March 11, 1883. [Acts 6: 1-15.]

THE SEVEN CHOSEN.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 6-9.

(Revised Version.)

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them; and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people. But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law; for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us. And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."—ACTS 6: 3.

TOPIC.—Helpers in Church Work.

LESSON PLAN.—1. HELPERS NEEDED, vs. 1-4. 2. HELPERS CHOSEN, vs. 5-7. 3. STEPHEN ARRANGED, vs. 8-15.

Time.—A.D. 34-36. Place.—Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTORY.

The council, on hearing the defence of the apostles, were greatly enraged against them, and were bent on putting them to death. But Gamaliel, a lawyer of great influence, sought to calm the tumult. His advice prevailed. But some punishment must be inflicted to justify this third arrest, so they had the twelve stripped to the bare back and whipped. Again they were commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then they were let go. But there is only one way to keep such men silent—to kill them. They went out of the council with bleeding backs but radiant faces, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name, and they ceased not openly to preach Jesus Christ.

But a new danger now threatened the church. Jealousies arose among the disciples, leading to murmurings against the apostles themselves. Our lesson tells us how wisely the apostles met these murmurings and provided against any future cause of complaint.

LESSON NOTES.

GRECIANS—Jews who spoke the Greek language and used the Greek Scriptures. HEBREWS—Jews speaking the Syro-Chaldaeic language and using the Hebrew Scriptures. The large increase of the church had increased the number of those needing aid. V. 2. NOT REASON—"not pleasing" to us, as entrusted with a higher ministry. SERVE TABLES—care for feeding the poor. V. 3. OF HONEST REPORT—of a good clear reputation. V. 6. PROSELYTES OF ANTIOCH—Gentile of that city who had embraced the Jewish religion, and had now become a Christian. V. 6. LAID THEIR HANDS—seeking for them God's blessing and setting them apart for their work. This is generally regarded as the institution of the office of DEACON. V. THE WORD OF GOD INCREASED—was preached with new power and effect upon the hearts of men. WERE OBEIENT TO THE FAITH—received Christ and his gospel for their salvation. V. 8. POWER—miraculous power, the gift of the Holy Ghost. V. 9. SYNAGOGUE—a Jewish assembly for prayer, Scripture-reading and exposition. Also the place where such services were held. LIBERTINES—Jewish freedmen who had been slaves at Rome; and the descendants of those who were carried captive by Pompey and afterward liberated. V. 10. THE SPIRIT—the Holy Spirit. He spoke with wisdom, for he spoke by inspiration. V. 11. SUBORNED—got them to testify falsely. Benten in argument, they tried fraud. BLASPHEMOUS—words of contempt or railing, whether against God or anything sacred. V. 13. FALSE—because they gave his words a meaning he never intended. V. 14. THIS JESUS OF NAZARETH—language of strong contempt. CUSTOMS—the Jewish rites and ceremonies. This was true, but it was only because the old system was to be fulfilled in the new. As they told it, and in the use they made of it, it was a lie. V. 15. THE FACE OF AN ANGEL—lighted up with the radiance of heaven.

TEACHINGS:

- 1. It is the duty of the church to provide for the poor.
2. Church people, and especially church officers, should be above reproach.
3. Great faith gives great power.
4. A statement may be false though the words be true.

5. We may expect help from God is bearing testimony for him.

LESSON XI.

March 18, 1883. [Acts 7: 51; 8: 4.]

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 51-63.

(Revised Version.)

Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—REV. 2: 10.

TOPIC.—Dying for Christ.

LESSON PLAN.—1. THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN, vs. 51-60. 2. THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH, vs. 1-4.

Time.—About A.D. 36 or 37, in immediate connection with the last lesson. Place.—The council-hall in Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTORY.

Stephen, having vindicated himself from the charge of blasphemy, showed the council how the Jews had always rejected the messengers that God had sent to them. He then boldly and directly charged his hearers with the same wilful and wicked spirit. Their fathers resisted the Holy Ghost; so did they. Their fathers persecuted and slew the prophets of Jesus; they betrayed and murdered Jesus himself. Our lesson to-day tells us how they wreaked their vengeance upon this faithful witness for Jesus who so boldly set their sins before them.

LESSON NOTES.

V. 51. CUT TO THE HEART—greatly enraged, GNASHED ON HIM—snapping at him, like a dog or beast of prey. V. 53. LOOKED UP—fixed the eye of faith on "the things above." If he had only gazed at the madmen around him, he would have missed the glorious vision. If we would see what is bright and beautiful, we must "look up." THE GLORY OF GOD—some glorious manifestation of God himself, like that on Sinai (Ex. 24: 16) or in the tabernacle (Ex. 40: 34). V. 58. THE SON OF MAN—this name is nowhere else in the New Testament applied to Christ except by Christ himself. This same council had heard these very words from the lips of Christ (Matt. 26: 34); and now Stephen testified that he whom they had crucified was actually exalted as he had foretold. V. 53. STOPPED THEIR EARS—in token of abhorrence at his alleged blasphemy. V. 58. STONED HIM—a savage, mob-like proceeding, without legal sanction, for it was not lawful for the Jews to put any one to death. John 8: 31. THE WITNESSES—they were required by law to cast the first stones (Deut. 17: 5-7); so they laid aside their loose outer garments to be more free in throwing. AT A YOUNG MAN'S FEET—for safe-keeping, and probably because of his official authority. ACTS 26: 10. SAUL—the first mention of one whose name has since filled all the world. V. 59, 60. Stephen prayed to the Lord Jesus as he died—first that he would receive his soul, and then for his murderers. Compare these dying prayers and Christ's. Luke 23: 46, 34. V. 60. In the midst of so much violence all was as peaceful to him as if he had slept his life away. God's people SLEEP in the grave for a night, to wake in the glorious morning. CH. 8: 1. CONSENTING—agreeing, acting in concert with the murderers. AT THAT TIME—on the very day of Stephen's death and burial. EXCEPT THE APOSTLES—they remained, doubtless, by divine direction, to hold the place for the Church. V. 3. MADE HAVOC—ravaged and wasted like a fierce wild beast. V. 4. EVERYWHERE—compare Acts 11: 19. It was a fierce and terrible persecution. See Paul's own account of it in Acts 22: 4, 28; 9: 11. PREACHING THE WORD—every exile became a travelling missionary. The persecuting Jews thought to stamp out the fire, but they only scattered the burning coals through the wood.

TEACHINGS:

- 1. It is better to suffer or die for the truth than to betray it.
2. The spirit of truth is the spirit of forgiveness.
3. Saints on earth sometimes get a glimpse of heaven's glory.
4. Loss is gain and death is life to those who love God.
5. If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him. 2 Tim. 2: 12. (See also Golden Text.)

UNEXPECTED RESULTS.

I know a man who, when a boy, heard a sermon from the old prophet's inquiry, "Is it well with thee?" The discourse was pronounced by a kindly Christian minister unknown to fame, and who has always remained in obscurity; but his heart was full of love for souls, and his life full of humble labor for the Master. He so rung the changes on that enquiry, "Is it well with thee?" and

so pressed the enquiry home, that that boy never forgot it. Twenty years after that sermon was preached, that boy, then a man, was spending a day on business in a town in Northern Ohio when he learned that his long-ago pastor was in charge of a church in an adjoining town. It was winter, and there was no convenient way of securing a conveyance; so that man trudged through the snow several miles to tell that minister about the seed long ago dropped and forgotten; and it was affecting in the extreme to witness the thankful joy and tearful surprise with which the good man and his faithful wife received the recital.

I could tell you about a man who was diligent in Sunday-school work for more than a score of years, who one day made sad confession that, so far as he knew, no soul had ever been led to Christ by his direct instrumentality. No one had ever said or intimated to him that he had helped that one into the kingdom. He had held on to the work on general principles, but had received no special encouragement. The lane turned finally. There came a revival in that Sunday-school, and every class (but the infant class and a class of adults who were all members) furnished converts; and the next communion saw an addition to that little body which more than doubled the number of its membership. After that event several came to him with the longed-for announcement that to his personal endeavor they owed, under God, their conversion.

How very little we realize the growth of a small stream of influence, whether for good or evil. This same man several years ago was telling a lady friend of some plans of activity in which he had engaged. It was a casual evening conversation as they met socially, and was soon forgotten by him. The lady returned to her home in a thriving western city, and calling a circle of young women about her, announced her determination of leaving her old church and finding another where they were "doing something," unless the latent forces there would organize and "do something." "What shall we do?" was the eager response; and that lady was startled to find herself in the position of a leader. She rose to the exigency, however, and the result was the formation of a society for mission work. They groped about the home-field, doing some good work and making some blunders; but experience brought wisdom, and now their well-directed efforts are supporting two native missionaries abroad and a Bible reader in their own city. Their success stimulated the formation of a children's society in the same church; and by-and-by the young men formed another association; and out of it all came church activity, mission-schools, home and foreign work, increased knowledge and zeal, internal improvement, and external growth.

This winter that lady was again on a visit in this city, and recalled to her old friend the evening conversation of years ago, told him the above story with its delightful details, and fairly paralyzed him by declaring that it all was the immediate result and outgrowth of the stimulating words which he had spoken.—American Messenger.

AN INTERESTING LETTER.

We have received many letters about the pictures which were sent as premiums to those who obtained new subscribers for the Messenger and all are favorable. We have room for but one of these letters this number and we publish it in full. A list of the pictures and directions how to obtain them may be read in another column on this page.

TORONTO, Jan. 20th, 1883.

DEAR SIR:—We were all pleasantly surprised when the beautiful pictures came. I am sure I don't deserve such a large compensation. It was no trouble to get subscribers; only two of all I asked refused. It was because I wanted to work for Jesus, and I think in circulating the Messenger I would be doing something for Him that has done so much for us. I am a little girl only seven years and twenty days. I have taken the Messenger three years past. I have been a bright sunbeam in our home in the past and now we need it more than ever since, last Christmas, the Lord has seen fit to take our dear papa to heaven. He wanted to go so much and said the Lord would take care of us and He will, although we are lonely and sad. If Jesus was not with us we would not want to stay here. I have three little

brothers younger than myself, five, three and one year old. I gave "Moses" to baby (he is just such another), and "At Home" and "In Captivity," one each, to the other two boys. We are going to save all our copper to have them framed; They are too pretty to spoil by putting them up without. I give all my Messengers away to my little companions, after we have learned by heart all we can remember, so we know all about it then. I wanted them to take it. Mother says it will be a good idea to take them to school this year and give them one each to all the girls in my class. I wanted to keep them for a book. Mother says we must not be selfish, as we get so many useful lessons we must help others all we can. Many thanks for the beautiful pictures.

EFFIE CAMERON,

70 Conway street, Toronto, Ont.

OUR PICTURE GALLERY.

1.—THE INFANT MOSES. This beautiful and celebrated picture by Da La Roche shows in the foreground Moses, a chubby little baby, lying in his cradle made of bulrushes. He is a beautiful, lively, little fellow with eyes wide open, and looking seriously, as if before them were passing all the events of his future history. If the original Moses were but as interesting in appearance as this picture represents him to be, it is no wonder that Pharaoh's daughter took such an interest in him. Just behind the cradle and half hidden in the reeds that are growing on the bank, stands his sister Miriam looking earnestly across the river.

2.—THE BUGLE CALL AFTER THE BATTLE. is a scene of a different nature. On an eminence in the dead where the battle had been fought, the bugler on horseback sounding the call to form into line. The horses of a cavalry brigade bearing the call, of themselves, respond and gallop into line, some of them wounded, some of them unhounded, but all rldierous. It is a touching picture—and an animal counterpart of the Roll Call.

3.—LASSING WILD HORSES. is another exciting horse picture. The herd of wild horses are dashing down a slope pursued by the Mexican rangers who are throwing the lasso around the necks of some of them. There is life in every line of this picture.

4.—SIMPLY TO TRY CROSS I CLING. This is an old favorite. Most of our readers have seen it in one form or another. The cross surrounded by a flood of light, the figure clinging to it with untamed face full of hope, the waves crashing against the rock on which the cross stands, and the dark hand pulling away the piece of wreck that might have been a support. But holding to the cross she is secure—safe above the dashing waves.

5.—HARBOR SCENE AT NIGHT.—This is one of the most striking of all. It cannot be described. The play of light and shadow is exquisite.

6.—AT HOME—IN CAPTIVITY. This pair of pictures represents the orang-outang first, in his native jungle as ferocious an animal as well can be imagined, and in his cage in the menagerie having a grand frolic. This pair of pictures will just suit the boys.

8.—AFTER DUCKS. This represents an Irish spaniel dashing through the reeds after a duck and makes a very pretty picture.

9.—GOING TO SCHOOL. is a very pretty picture of a Normandy peasant girl dressed in the picturesque costume of her country with books and basket going to the school.

10.—PORTRAIT OF ROBERT BURNS.—This excellent portrait we presented last year to subscribers of the Witness on certain conditions. WHO CAN GET THESE PICTURES? Everybody who sends one new subscription to the Messenger will receive one of these pictures neatly done up in a roll so that it will not be creased or in any way injured; and a picture will be sent for every new subscriber obtained. The subscriptions of Two Old Subscribers in addition to one's own will count as one new one.

CLUB RATES.

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