

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON I.—FIRST CONVERTS IN EUROPE.—JULY 4.

(Acts xvi. 6-15.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"The entrance of thy words giveth light."—Psalm cxix. 130.

TIME AND PLACE—"A. D. 52; Philippi in Macedonia.

INTRODUCTION—After Paul and Barnabas separated, Barnabas took Mark with him, while Paul chose Silas, one of the delegates from the Jerusalem church, for his companion, on his second missionary journey. Now, Timothy, a convert of Lystra, on the first journey, joins the party. He was the child of Lois and Eunice, taught the Holy Scriptures from his youth, trained to a religious life, and prepared, through the providence of God, by the sight of Paul's sufferings, to be his comfort, support and companion. Luke joined the company at Troas.

V. 6. "Throughout Phrygia"—An undefined region round about Antioch of Pisidia, to the north, east and west. It included the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Thyatira. "Forbidden of the Holy Ghost"—Either by some special providence, or by direct communication of the Spirit, in order to lead them into a wider and more important field, the very heart of civilized heathendom. The restraint was only temporary. Three years later, Paul came to Ephesus and for two years preached to Jews and Greeks in Asia, "Asia"—Not the continent, nor Asia Minor, but the Roman province, bordering on the Aegean Sea, of which Ephesus was the capital.

V. 7. "Come to Myia"—Come over against Myia, a province on the Aegean Sea. "Bithynia"—Northeast of Myia, on the southwest shore of the Black Sea. "The Spirit suffered them not"—The Spirit sent by Jesus, according to His promise—the Holy Spirit. Our Lord, by irresistible intimations, restrained Paul, so that no other route remained open except the one on the seacoast, and thence to Europe.

V. 8. "Came to Troas"—A noted seaport, where travellers from the upper coasts of Asia commonly took ship to pass into Europe. Here Paul and his assistants, Silas and Timothy, were joined by Luke, the writer of this history, and a native of Antioch.

V. 9. "A vision"—This was the third supernatural revelation; not a dream, but a waking vision. "A man"—Not an actual Macedonian, nor their actual representative, stood before Paul, but only a vision. The heathen do not present themselves before us, but God casts a shadow of their need, and Himself calls us. Not lack of visions, but lack of obedience is ours. An angel, in the form of a man. "Macedonia"—This most celebrated country lay to the north of Greece. Thessalonica was its capital. It had numerous flourishing cities, of which Philippi, Thessalonica, Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Berea are mentioned in the Acts. It now constitutes a part of Turkey; and notwithstanding the oppression of the Turks, Christianity, though in a poor condition, exists to this day. "Come over"—Understood by Paul to be a call from the Lord to preach in Macedonia.

V. 10. "Immediately"—The vision, the voice, and the call for help, were all God-sent, and Paul was ready the moment the way was made plain. "Endeavored"—By seeking for a ship in which to cross the Aegean Sea. "Assuredly gathering"—Concluding, from the Spirit's denial to remain in Asia, that this was the open door to the field of labor, which God appointed.

V. 11. "Samothracia"—An island in the Aegean Sea, halfway between Troas and Neapolis. "Neapolis"—Naples, the seaport of Philippi, sixty-five miles from Troas.

V. 12. "Philippi"—About ten miles from Neapolis; built by Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, who named it after himself. "A colony"—Founded by Augustus. The civil magistrates and military authorities were Roman. The inhabitants did not settle as they pleased, but were sent out by authority from Rome.

V. 13. "We"—Paul, with his fervent soul and strong intellect; Silas, with his zeal and prophetic gifts, Luke, with his scholarly culture and professional attainments, and Timothy, with his youthful earnestness. "A riverside"—The Gangas, a small stream close to the city, especially chosen because it served for the ablutions connected with Jewish worship. "We sat"—The posture of teachers. "Spoke unto the women"—Claudius had banished from Rome and her colonies all men known to be Jews, and so there were only women in attendance at this Hebrew service.

V. 14. "Lydia"—A woman of wealth and force. She had come from the very province where Paul had been, by the Spirit, forbidden to speak. "Seller of purple"—Lydian women were celebrated for the art of purple dyes and fabrics, the traffic in which was profitable, they being worn chiefly by princes and the rich. "Worshipped

God"—As a proselyte to the Jewish faith. Lydia and her household, worshiping God according to their light, were in the way of salvation. "Whose heart the Lord opened"—Enlightened, impressed by His Spirit, and so prepared to receive the truth. "Attended unto these things"—Believed them, and received them as the doctrines of God.

V. 15. "Her household"—All who may be included in this term joined with Lydia in her new faith. "If ye have judged me to be faithful"—If my present reception of the Gospel of Christ be a proof to you that I have been faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. "Come . . . abide"—We have here the first example of that Christian hospitality which was enjoined, and so lovingly practiced in the apostolic church. "Constrained us"—Impelled us by strong entreaty.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—Paul's second journey begun—Acts xv. 36; xvi. 5.

Second Day—First Converts in Europe—Acts xvi. 6-15.

Third Day—Peter called to the Gentiles—Acts x. 1-22.

Fourth Day—Peter obeying the call—Acts x. 23-48.

Fifth Day—Paul to the Saints at Philippi—Phil. i. 1-30.

Sixth Day—"My Brethren dearly beloved."—Phil. iv. 1-23.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, July 4—CONSECRATED PATRIOTS—WHAT WILL THEY DO?—Deut. 32. 1-18.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright,
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God our King."

The consecrated patriot is one who lives in his country as seeking always a better country, that is, a heavenly.

Many a man who thinks he would give up his life for his country will not give up the little portion of his life the next primary demands.

The patriot cannot know too much of history. Let fire flash through his veins from the lives of all the great men his country has produced.

No patriotism without prayer. How can God direct the country save by directing its citizens in their citizenship?

The song of Moses strikes the keynote of all consecrated patriotism when it says: "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." The true patriot will always remember this truth: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance." Ex. xix. 5, 6; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxiii. 29; Ps. xxiii. 12; lxxxix. 15, 18; cxliv. 15.

The consecrated patriot will "keep himself unspotted from the world," and strive to exalt the pure and undefiled religion of the Son of God as the supreme hope of the individual and of the nation, and make Christianity not only in name, but also in fact, the all prevailing religion of a puissant people zealous of good works, and serving the Lord in sincerity and in truth.

CONSECRATED LIFE.

We must be struck by the words that the Apostle Paul always liked to use about himself, "the slave of Jesus Christ." If Jesus Christ is our Master and our Lord, and we are body and soul and spirit His, His bondservants, His willing slaves, what wonderful blessing, peace and rest comes into the soul. The Word of God says: Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." But do we practically realize it? Do we day by day aim at living as those who are not their own, but have been bought with a price. In these days of haste and worry, we lose so much of blessedness in our life just because we do not get sufficient quiet with the Lord. Some of us who have to be early at business, and in the hurry the temptation will often come to let prayer and Bible-reading go. But see to it at all costs that you have seasons of quietness with the Lord, heart-to-heart communion with Him, lying low in His presence, praying if the Spirit prompt you to pray. Silent of the Spirit lead you to be silent, all the time joyfully conscious of being in the presence of the King.

What the Church of God calls for to day is surrendered lives. We want men and women consecrated Patriots, who are wholly given up to God and who can say with all their hearts, "Whose I am and whom I serve."

Do not be over-anxious to go to the mission field to become a consecrated Patriot for the cause of Christ you can become one at home.

What is serving Christ? Is it not just serving Him in the home, in the office, in the shop, or wherever He sends us? Just as Gabriel and the other angels are ready to do every good work so we want to stand ready. It may be some little act of self-denial or thoughtfulness that no one else knows anything about. Let our life be wholly given up to God, and that life shall be a power of love and blessing in the home, in the Church, in the world, and it will be a life of perfect hope and peace and rest, crowned at last with joy unspeakable and full of glory.