

BIBERAN NOTES.

A. D. 35-37. LESSON VII. SAUL'S EARLY MINISTRY. Nov. 12.

HOME READINGS.

MONDAY—The Lesson. Acts 9, 19-30. TUESDAY—Preaching at Athens. Acts 17, 22-34. WEDNESDAY—Preaching at Jerusalem. Acts 22, 31-35. THURSDAY—Preaching to the Gentiles. Acts 26, 13-32. FRIDAY—Preaching righteousness. Psa. 40, 1-17. SATURDAY—Righteousness in Christ. Phil. 3, 1-14. SUNDAY—The crown of righteousness. 2 Tim. 4, 1-8.

TOPIC.—New Work for the New Convert.

GOLDEN TEXT.—He which persecutest us in times past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed. Gal. 1, 23.

DOCTRINE.—The gospel ministry. Luke 10, 1, 2; Acts 20, 24; Rom. 12, 6, 7; 1 Cor. 9, 16.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus (1) to win him for his disciple, and (2) to make him a preacher and an apostle. Its Title is, therefore, Saul's early ministry. The Topic also aims up the whole story, only in other words, New work for the new convert. The Golden Text shows us what report went out among the churches in Judea about his new work. The outline points out two places where Saul did his work: 1. AT DAMASCUS; 2. AT JERUSALEM. The doctrine of the lesson is the Gospel ministry.

BIBERAN NOTES.

Saul was well aware that the appearing of Jesus was for a purpose. His question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" verse 6, had brought him the response, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness," chap. 26, 16; which was confirmed by the words of Ananias, chap. 22, 15. This complete revolution in all the plans and work of his life was promptly made, and all things that he had counted dear were freely forsaken for Christ, Phil. 3, 8.

19.25. New Work at Damascus.

19. MEAT.—Food. For three days he had been without food or drink, verse 9, and was plainly faint and exhausted by the abstinence and intense mental struggle. Taking food strengthened him. His friend Judas, in whose house he was, and those with whom he was associated, were Jews, who would therefore despise him as a Nazarene. He must change associates, and find those who are like-minded with himself and lovers of Jesus. So should young converts always do. There were DISCIPLES in the city, residents at DAMASCUS. To these Saul joined himself, Ananias doubtless vouching for him by telling the story of his conversion. He had come to destroy them, and now he makes them his chosen friends. CERTAIN DAYS.—A few days.

20. STRAIGHTWAY.—Immediately; while with the disciples. There is a beauty in this convert's prompt confession of Christ, and a heroism in his doing it in the SYNAGOGUES. He had come, a commissioner, with letters to the Jewish authorities, and he has to tell them of his changed views and plans. It was not an easy thing. But more: he PREACHED CHRIST, rather Jesus, to them, showing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God instead of the blasphemer they had thought him.

21. ALL...AMAZED.—Well they might be. It was a marvel of grace that these Jews could not understand. The sudden and complete change of creed and conduct in him who had DESTROYED all he could lay hold of at Jerusalem, and who had come to Damascus on the same errand, was astounding.

22. IN STRENGTH.—At the bottom was his experience of salvation. No arguments or jeers could overcome this. Then his committal to Christ was hearty and forever. He "conferred not with flesh and blood," (Gal. 1, 16) that is, with his own sinful nature or earthly friends. He gave all for Christ. Opposition only strengthened him. The arguments of Stephen in the synagogues he now brings forth to the Jews of DAMASCUS, PROVING to them from the Old Testament Scriptures, with which, as a Jewish Rabbi, he was familiar, that Jesus is the true Messiah. What was the result? As to them, he CONFOUNDED THEM; they could not answer and would not yield; as to himself, his spiritual life depended and his soul gathered strength.

23. MANY DAYS.—Luke is narrating Saul's early ministry as related to the church, and not his personal history. He, therefore, omits mentioning his going in to Arabia. Paul himself tells us of it, (Gal. 1, 17, 18), and that three years elapsed before the return to Jerusalem. It was after this return that the Jews conspired to KILL HIM. His powerful arguments they could answer only by assassination.

24. WATCH THE GATES.—Luke tells only of the Jews' share in the plot. But Paul (2 Cor. 11, 32, 33) informs us that the ethnarch, or governor, under Aretas, king of Arabia, who at the time held Damascus, was in the plot with them. His

guards were placed at the city gates to arrest him, while the Jews were on hand to kill him without arresting.

25. BY THE WALL.—The plot became KNOWN to both SAUL and the DISCIPLES. Their love outwitted and triumphed over Jewish hate. They took him secretly in the darkness of night to a house so built that it projected over the city wall, as many houses in Damascus do now, and placing him in a basket, let him down outside through a lattice window to the ground.

26-50 New work at Jerusalem.

26. JERUSALEM.—Three years after his conversion. His object in going was to "see Peter," that is, to make his acquaintance. Gal. 1, 18. Saul the disciple, no longer Saul the Pharisee, was an outcast from his old friends; his natural associates were THE DISCIPLES, and he sought them. But they distrusted and were AFRAID OF HIM. They knew his old hate; and, whatever rumors they had heard, they did not believe in his conversion.

27. BARNABAS.—Perhaps an old friend at Tarsus. APOSTLES.—Peter and James, the Lord's brother, (Gal. 1, 18, 19), probably the only apostle then in the city. Barnabas was able to certify to his having SEEN and been SPOKEN TO by the LORD JESUS, and his earnest, outspoken preaching at Damascus. And this was sufficient.

28. SPEAK BOLDLY.—Following in the steps of Stephen. Chap. 6, 1. GENTILES.—Hellenists; Jews born outside of Judea, and speaking Greek. Chap. 6, 1. Saul's debates with them were in the synagogue, and, unable to match him, they undertook to SLAY HIM, as their brethren at Damascus had done. He doubted not that, knowing his former history, they would surely listen to him; but in a trance, while praying in the temple, he learned from the lips of Jesus (chap. 22, 17-21) that they would not receive his testimony.

30. BRETHREN.—Jesus commanded him to go, and they, knowing his danger, helped him away. This visit lasted fifteen days. Gal. 1, 18. TARSUS.—Saul's boyhood home, where for a time he remained. Chap. 11, 25.

LESSONS. 1. We learn how true ministers are made. Saul was called of Jesus, and "put into the ministry." He saw the Lord alive, and so could testify that He was truly risen. He was thus fitted to be an apostle. The gospel ministry is a divine institution. No man is at liberty to enter it unless moved thereto by the Holy Ghost; and when thus moved he must obey. 1 Cor. 9, 1, 16; 2 Cor. 3, 6; Gal. 1, 16; Eph. 3, 8; 1 Tim. 1, 13. 2. The love and care of the brethren for Saul shows us how we should regard Christ's ministers. Matt. 10, 40; Phil. 2, 13, 17. 3. Not every new convert is called to preach, but he is called to do new work for Jesus. He is converted for this purpose. And if he does not work he will backslide, while if he does he will grow. Teachers, leaders and pastors should find work for young Christians to do. Matt. 5, 16; 21, 28; Acts 22, 15; Gal. 6, 2, 10; Eph. 2, 10; 1 Thess. 5, 15; James 2, 14, 18.

The following card stands in a prominent place in a religious exchange. We quote it verbatim, to show why we quote it all. It is an advertisement, intended, no doubt, to arrest the reader's attention for good. But we question its propriety. The very Scriptures from which these texts are selected, speak, plainly directly from beginning to end. There is no sarcasm, nor double dealing, nor is there any attempt at startling emphasis, nor the least approach toward deception of any sort, even to make a good point further on. The word of God is "yea, yea, nay, nay," without circumlocution, and without trifling with the eye or ear.

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THEOLOGY. Hope's Theology, Watson's Institutes, Farley Lectures, Treffry's Sonship of Christ, Butler's Sermons, Chalmers's Natural Theology, Fairbairn's Typology of the Scriptures, McCosh on the Method of the Divine Government, Rawlinson's Historical Evidence, Liddon's Bampton Lectures on the Divinity of Christ, Farrar's History of Free Thought, Bushnell's Nature and Supernatural, Young's Christ of History, R. Payne Smith's Prophecy a Preparation for Christ, Ecce Deus.

MENTAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY. Noah Porter's Human Intellect, Hamilton's Metaphysics, McCosh's Defense of Fundamental Truth, Wayland's Elements of Moral Philosophy.

CHURCH HISTORY. Neander's History of the Church, Schaff's History of the Apostolic Church, Schaff's History, Smith's Table of Church History, Milman's History of Latin Christianity, Stanley's Lectures on History of Jewish Church, Shedd's History of Christian Doctrine, Stevens's History of Methodism, Mission and Propagation of Reformation, Moister on Missions, Dr. Smith's Old and New Testament History, Stanley's History of Early Christianity.

HOMILETICS & PASTORAL THEOLOGY. Farrar's Life of Christ, Robert Hall's Sermons, Thomas Arnold's Sermons, Wesley's Sermons, Robertson's Sermons, Bushnell's Sermons, Fish's Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence, Spencer's Pastor's Sketches.

SECULAR HISTORY. Cox's History of Greece, Gibbon's Decline and fall of Roman Empire, Merivale's General History of Rome, Hallam's Middle Ages, Howe's England, Macaulay's England, Robertson's Charles the Fifth, Motley's Dutch Republic, Motley's United Netherlands, Bancroft's United States, Prescott's Mexico.

BIOGRAPHY. Augustin's Confessions, Tyerman's Life of Wesley, Stanley's Life and Letters of Thomas Arnold, Brooke's Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson, Memoir of Francis Wayland, Southern's Cowper, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Arthur's Gideon Ouseley, Thomas Jackson's Life and Times, Coley's Life of Collins.

NATURAL SCIENCE. Hugh Miller's Footprints of the Creator, Guyot's Earth and Man, Marsh's Man and Nature, Cook's Religion of Chemistry, Sketches of Creation by Winchell, Argyle's Reign of Law, Correlation and Conservation of Forces by Foreman, Peck's Ganot.

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