

The Quiet Hour.

Paul Crosses to Europe.

S.S. LESSON. ACTS 16, 6-15. June 15, 1902.

GOLDEN TEXT: ACTS 22: 15.—*Thou shalt be his witness unto all men.*

Throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia v. 6. "So little done, so much to do," was the expression uttered again and again by Cecil Rhodes on his death bed. In the presence of the millions of our fellow-men who have not yet heard the gospel, the same feeling often comes over the heart of Christ's followers. And yet the greatness of the task should not unnerve us and cause us to sit down idly in despair, but should inspire us, as it did the apostle, to continue with earnest effort to spread the gospel over the whole world. When every follower of Christ does his part in this great work as diligently as Paul did his part, it will not be long

"Till each remotest nation
Has learnt Messiah's name."

Forbidden of the Holy Ghost, v. 6. These words indicate in their simple and forcible way the ruling principle of Paul's life—to go or do as God led him. In him we have a beautiful example of what our Christian life should be, just a simple following of God's Spirit every day—to see that God has a will towards me, and through me to the world; to know that I have but to find that will in the impulses within my heart, in the needs of my fellow-men and in the circumstances of my life. To find God's leading and to follow it faithfully—that is the Christian life.

They assayed to go into Bithynia, v. 7. God shows us the way one step at a time. He does not reveal to us the whole course of our life, but shows us the path for each day as it comes. Our business is to do the next duty which God points out, and trust Him for the future.

A vision appeared to Paul in the night, v. 9. Paul's dreams, ideals, and visions were the secret of his greatness. The brute beast never dreams of better things, and so remains a brute beast to the end. Some men also are content to eat and work and sleep. They never look up to God; they are never visited with divine ambitions and dreams of what they may yet be and do by God's grace. Like the beast of the field they live; like the beast they die, "finished, finite clods, untroubled by a spark." But the great of the earth are those who are discontented with the present; who dream of great things for themselves and the world. Paul, who dreamed of a converted Europe; Columbus of a discovered America; Chatham of a British Empire—these are among the great of the earth, and with them every one may claim kindred, who dreams dreams and sees visions of something greater and better than ever before brought to a home, a church or a country.

Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, v. 10. We should imitate the courage of the apostle. As soon as the path of duty was made clear, he no longer dreamed about it, he did it. The church and world are in need of those who will boldly and unhesitating enter into any open door of service. As Kingsley has said, we should "do noble things, not dream them all day long."

We spake unto the women which resorted thither, v. 13. These women were richly re-

warded for their attendance at this prayer meeting. They heard the gospel from the lips of the great apostle. So we may expect to receive blessing from our diligent attendance on such means of grace. We have the promise that we shall meet in such assemblies with the Lord Himself, and hear Him speak to our hearts. We often miss this great blessing, by keeping away from the gathering of God's people for prayer.

And a certain woman named Lydia . . . heard us, v. 14. In this humble place of prayer, frequented chiefly by women, Paul found hearts prepared for the gospel. Lydia was baptized with all her household, and when Paul left Philippi, there had been established a little church, which meant, not simply so many souls brought to Christ, but also that the day was drawing nigh when the city and the whole Roman empire would become Christian. God does not visit us with high ambitions, great ideals and dreams, just to delude us, but when we go out and try to reach them, the very God who gave them to us will open the way to their attainment.

Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended, v. 14. In our Lord's parable of the sower, the "good ground" hearers are those who receive the word "in an honest and good heart," who "keep it," and who "bring forth fruit with patience," Luke 8: 15. Lydia had all these qualities of a good hearer of the word. If we would have "an honest and good heart," the same Lord who "opened the heart of Lydia" will give it to us in answer to prayer.

Thanksgiving.

Am I to thank God for everything? Am I to thank him for bereavement, for pain, for poverty, for toil? Must I lift up my hands over my head and say, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast taken away my friend"? Is it pleasing to my Father that loss should be pleasant to me? Is it good that I should be told to give thanks in everything? Be still, my soul, thou hast misread the message. It is not to give thanks for everything, but to give thanks in everything. It is not to praise God for the night, but to bless him that the night is not deeper. I have read of the Son of Man that he gave thanks over the symbol of his broken body. Not for the pain, but for the mitigation of pain, did the Son of Man give thanks—not that his body was broken for me. In thine hour of sorrow give thanks like Jesus.—Matheson.

A Priceless Sentence.

"From the lips of Jesus Christ, when he was here among men, fell these words of priceless meaning: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That sentence is a cube of the purest gold, that may be minted into the current coin of a daily exchange, as it makes possible a true Christian socialism; or fashioned into the ornaments which befit the children of a king, as the doctrine of God, our Saviour, is adorned in all things; or held as the token which will admit a sinful creature into the pure and radiant life of heaven. Few words are used, but each word finds its interpretation in the Holy Scriptures, whose

main purpose is 'the unveiling of God's character.' So that we may know and believe that the same God who is announced in the Book of Genesis as the Creator of 'the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them,' is he who has 'loved us with an everlasting love.' This love is the source of every redemptive blessing. The initiative is with God. 'He first loved us.'

"There are two kinds of religion, and only two," remarked President Seelye, as he addressed the educated Hindus of India. The one begins with man, and seeks by human endeavors after a divine fellowship. The other begins with God, and by a way wholly divine seeks after man. In this is the peculiarity of the Christian, in distinction from all other systems of religion, and in the revelation of this doctrine is the distinction of the Bible from all other books. The salvation which the Christian religion announces is procured wholly through a divine work, and is offered to man, not in the least because his obedience or service can merit it, but solely through the free exercise of divine mercy." The little word 'so' covers all that is distinctive in the gospel message, 'God so loved the world. The so is grace, and grace, so far as we are aware, is God's especial love for this, our world. He may have, and has, other love for other beings and for other worlds. But for us God's love is grace, unmerited favor. When he loves the world God is 'kind unto the unthankful and the evil.'—Rev. Henry Martyn Booth, D. D.

Is it Safe to Follow Our Inclinations.

Inclination and preference may be a result of good work, and when they are so, they may be commendable. But inclination and preference as a guide in the choice of one's work are not to be compared to duty or need. A young person, in planning or choosing his sphere of life work, ought to do what he ought to do, rather than what he naturally inclines toward. Inclination may be a hindrance to a young man's best doing; it will be if it swerves or tempts him away from duty, or from the special sphere to which God calls him. Many a man has done his best work in the world, and has come to his highest and best attainment, by training himself against all his natural and most positive inclinations. What we ought to do, rather than what we incline towards, is the first question to be settled in choosing our sphere.—Sunday School Times.

Prayer.

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We give ourselves to Thee in daily oath. We would live in the spirit of perpetual consecration. God bless us, God help us. When the heart is sore, Thou knowest where the balm is that can heal the wound and bring back the peace; and when life is entangled in one great perplexity, Thou knowest the road out, Thou hast the key of every gate, Thou knowest where the bridge is that spans the river—where it is widest, and where it foams and boils most.

The Lord grant unto us all we ask in so far as it is good, wise, useful to our true growth and our perfecting in the purity and loveliness of heaven. Lead us to the cross; lead us to the fountain of the Saviour's blood. Give us heart-cleansing; make us white as snow untrodden; and in thine own time and way bring us to the gates of gold beyond which is the summer of Thy heaven. Amen.