



LESSON XI.—DECEMBER 12.

Paul's Last Words.

II. Timothy iv., 1-8, 16-18. Read verses 1-22. Commit verses 6-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.

'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.'—II. Tim. iv., 7.

Home Readings.

- M. 2 Tim. i., 1-18.—'Timothy, my dearly beloved son.'
- T. 2 Tim. ii., 1-16.—'Thou, therefore, my son, be strong.'
- W. 2 Tim. iii., 1-17. — Paul commends the scriptures to Timothy.
- Th. 2 Tim. iv., 1-22.—Paul's last words.
- F. 1 Cor. ix., 16-27. — 'So run, that ye may obtain.'
- S. Jas. i., 1-27.—'He shall receive the Crown of Life.'
- S. Heb. xii., 1-13.—'Let us run with patience'

Lesson Story.

Paul, a few months, probably, before his death, writes his last letter. To 'Timothy, my own son in the faith,' as he affectionately terms this young disciple, Paul writes many words of advice, instruction, and doctrine.

He adjures him before God, and in the name of Jesus, who shall one day judge the living and the dead, to preach the gospel. In view of the judgment, Christ's coming, and his kingdom, he charges Timothy to neglect no opportunities for furthering Christ's kingdom. A pastor's duty is not only to preach, but to reprove and rebuke sin, and with patience and sound teaching to exhort to righteousness.

'For the time will come,' prophesies Paul, when men will not endure sound teaching and plain speaking, but will seek those teachers of self-indulgence whose smooth words will please their ears. They will turn from the truth of God's word, and be carried away by fables of man's devising. The true pastor must guard against these errors, being watchful, patient and humble. Doing the work of an evangelist—simply making known the glad tidings of the Word of God, fulfilling the work God has given him.

Paul knows that his earthly life is soon to end, he rejoices that he can look back on a well-spent life, a well-fought fight, an untarnished faith. He goes to receive his well-earned 'crown of righteousness,' a reward which is to be given to all those who love the Lord, that they put forth every energy of their lives for the furtherance of Christ's coming and kingdom.

Paul remembers with loving gratitude the many times that the Lord stood by and protected him, when all men had forsaken him. 'And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.'

Lesson Hints.

Paul, a prisoner at Rome, shortly to meet a martyr's death under the cruel emperor Nero, writes to Timothy at Ephesus. He longs for a sight of his beloved young comrade, in his cold, dark dungeon he feels the need of the cloak he had left at Troas, and begs Timothy to bring it with his books and parchments. 'Be instant in season, out of season,' be constantly urgent for men's salvation. Some of King David's most prized soldiers were those who 'could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows,' (I. Chron. xii., 2). Those that lost no opportunity, but were ready if one hand's missile failed, to use the other. Natural timidity would find very few favorable seasons in which to present the gospel. The Holy Spirit alone can teach

us the seasonable moment to speak to a soul, and give us the words to speak.

The time has come when many will not 'endure sound doctrine,' they flock to hear popular preachers who regale them with theories and fables in which the true is so cleverly mixed with the false, that they cannot detect the evil. They swallow these pleasant tasting mixtures which gradually poison them, and destroy all the true faith they ever had. The man who does not preach the Word of God, pure and simple, is not following Christ's example (John vii., 16-18; xiv., 10, 24.) and cannot but lead his hearers away from the truth, (Matt. xv., 8-14.)

'Lusts' — unholy desires. 'Itching ears' — wishing to hear pleasant words and novel theories. Beware of those who preach lifeless theories and fables instead of the living Christ.

'Ready to be offered'—as a sacrifice. He had long before presented his body as 'a living sacrifice,' now his life was to be 'poured out as an oblation' before God.

Primary Lesson.

To-day we are to learn some of the last words of an old man who served Jesus. Paul had a beautiful life to look back on, he could truthfully say that he had always tried to serve God as well as possible. It is true that for a long time he did not now that he could only please God by following Jesus. It was his zeal for God that made Paul hate the followers of Jesus, because he did not know that Jesus was God. But when Jesus revealed himself to Paul, saying that Paul in persecuting the Christians was really persecuting his Lord, Paul was very sorry, and gave himself to Jesus to serve him all the rest of his life.

When Paul looked back on his life, he must have felt very sad to think that he had not known Jesus sooner. It had been a great mistake to think that hurting the Christians would please God, but he had thought at the time that he was doing just right. And as soon as he learned how to serve God rightly, by love and obedience, he hastened to do it.

How many of us can look back on our short lives and say honestly we have always tried to serve and please God? There may have been many mistakes in our own lives, Paul made mistakes, but Jesus covers all our mistakes and forgives all our sins if we ask him. Think of looking back over sixty years of trying to please God, and knowing that God was satisfied with our work for him! Is it not glorious to think of pleasing God for sixty years! Some of you may live sixty years more, shall they be sixty years for God?

Again, some of you may not be here more than one year more, for God calls home the little people as well as the old. Suppose you could only stay a few more months on earth—what kind of months would you like them to be?

Some little people think that they must have their own way while they are young, and then, when they have had 'lots of fun,' they will be Christians when they grow old. Will it be any pleasure to them when they get to be sixty, to look back and say—there were thirty, forty or fifty years wasted — just wasted out of life, leaving no peaceful, happy reminiscences. Serving the world and pleasing self does not bring joy or peace, it does not make our old age happy as does the memory of service for Christ.

Some people prepare for old age by putting money in the bank, others spend all their money as they get it, and have nothing to fall back on when they get old and can not work. It is never too soon to begin to prepare for old age, if you want to be happy then you must learn now the happiness of pleasing God. God's first command is — 'My son, give me thine heart.'

Practical Points.

A. W. CAMERON.

Timothy would never forget this solemn charge of his spiritual father. The young preacher was not asked to preach politics, literature, science or art, but simply 'the word.' No opportunity of speaking a word for the Master was to be lost, while words of reproof and counsel were always to be seasoned with tenderness and wisdom. Verses 1, 2.

The people with itching ears are found in the pews of many churches to-day. They want a man that will not denounce their

sins and urge them to flee from the wrath to come. One that will fill the house though he may neither fill the pulpit nor be filled himself, with the Holy Spirit. Verses 3, 4.

Paul's idea of the model evangelist may be thought old-fashioned by some, but no evangelist can fulfil his ministry without patient consistency in well doing; verse 5.

The old veteran cannot lay his armor down without a shout of triumph; verses 6-8.

Beautiful is Paul's spirit as he forgives those who deserted him in the thickest of the fight; verse 16.

How deeply the aged warrior appreciates the guardianship of his great Captain; verse 17.

'Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.' This is the language of Faith, who with one hand clings to the cross and with the other waves the palm of victory; verse 18.

Tiverton, Ont.

SUGGESTED HYMNS.

'Forever with the Lord, 'How firm a foundation,' 'Christ for the world, we sing,' 'Jesus shall reign,' 'Victory through grace,' 'Saved by grace.'

Search Questions.

Contrast the character of Paul in his later life with what we know of his character before conversion. Give references.

Christian Endeavor Topic.

Dec. 12. — One thing I have learned from Paul's life or writings. — Acts ix., 1-22. (A memory meeting suggested.)

Junior Prayer-Meeting Topic.

Dec. 12. — One thing I have learned from Paul. Acts ix., 1-9. (A memory meeting suggested.)

Preparation Necessary.

Now, if you are prepared you have a definite line of thought; you are master of the situation. Even if the plan of the lesson does not suit your scholars, it will not trouble you much. You have so mastered the materials that you are able to run them into any mould that is presented, or that you have to choose to suit the temper of your class. Your lesson is thus a real lesson, and not a talk on everything or nothing.

Secondly, your brain will be on your side and help you. Preparation gives assurance, assurance gives success. A most miserable being is an unprepared teacher, one who feels he might have done better. Do your best, poor as it may be, and the mind at once becomes your helper. It will furnish you with illustrations and helps as required; it will suggest new ideas. It does wonders when the teacher knows he has honestly prepared; it deserts you to the fury of your class if you have not prepared.

Thirdly, it is only by real preparation that God will be glorified. A teacher prepared is a teacher with a definite aim. He is not there to endure the hour and a half of school. He is there, God helping him, with a definite message from God to his class. It is the lesson he teaches, not a bit of twenty lessons that have been given. He arrests attention by the freshness; he encourages thought in the children; he makes the one message of God clear and definite: in this way God is glorified. These are some of the advantages of real preparation. What possible good, dear teacher, can your lesson do that was prepared ten minutes before you came to school? You need to let the truth reach your heart before you declare it to the children. Head knowledge is useless. It must reach the heart, and go from your heart to the scholars.

Now preparation such as I suggest is possible for every teacher. You all can give fifteen minutes daily. Try it and you will find it a blessing. — 'Sunday-school' Chronicle.

'Do you know God?' This question should be pressed upon the members of our class in the Sunday-school. They should know him not merely by name or by repute, but by experience, as a God who saves from sin, and who directs, protects and blesses all who put their confidence in him.—'Evangelical Sunday-school Teacher.'