

LESSON VIII—February 21st, 1897.

The First Christian Martyr. Acts 6: 8-15; 7: 54-60.

(Commit to memory verses 57-60).

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

PROVE THAT—We should forgive our enemies. Acts 7: 60.

SHORTER CATECHISM. Question 89. *How is the word made effectual to salvation?* A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading but especially the preaching of the word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

LESSON HYMNS. *Children's Hymnal*—Nos. 36, 69, 188, 192.

DAILY PORTIONS. *Monday.* The first christian martyr. Acts 6: 8-15. *Tuesday.* The first christian martyr. Acts 7: 51-60. *Wednesday.* The roll of honor. Heb. 11: 32-40. *Thursday.* Our example. Heb. 12: 1-6. *Friday.* More than conquerors. Rom. 8: 31-39. *Saturday.* The eternal glory. 2 Cor. 4: 7-18. *Sabbath.* A crown of life. Rev. 2: 1-11. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections*).

EXPOSITORY NOTES.

INTRODUCTORY. The distribution of the common fund to which Barnabas and Ananias had been contributors was a very delicate business. The apostles were unable to give it their personal supervision and it was not always judiciously managed. Accordingly at their suggestion seven men were chosen who should act as "Deacons" and attend to the department of church charity and finance, allowing the apostles to give themselves exclusively to their spiritual duties. Of these new officers Stephen seems to have been one of the ablest and he was soon singled out by the Jews as a special object of hatred. Our lesson contains the story of his martyrdom and the cause of it.

LESSON PLAN. I. Faithful unto death. vs. 8-15. II. The Crown of Life. vs. 54-50.

8. And Stephen full of faith (R. V. grace) and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people—It is here divine grace, and includes faith as one of the chief graces, or free gifts of God's Spirit. "Power" is the divine power promised by Jesus Christ to his disciples (1: 8) as manifested by working miracles and speaking boldly and effectively.

9. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen—The Libertines were "freedmen," children of Jews who had been carried captive to Rome, but who had been freed by their masters and now dwelt at Jerusalem. They had their own synagogue there. The Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and the province of Asia, also had each a separate congregation and place of worship. The "disputing" was of a

captious character like that of the pharisees (Mark 8: 11) and the scribes (Mark 9: 14) with Jesus. The same word is used here.

10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake—His "wisdom" refers to his skillful use of quotations from the Scriptures and the writings of the rabbis. He met his opponents on their own ground and vanquished them as Paul did afterwards. Perhaps his discomfiture by Stephen in some of these encounters shewed him how to wield the sword of the Spirit against his old friends afterwards. The statement in verse 3, that Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost," requires us here to understand that Stephen spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God—To "suborn" in law, means to procure a person to take such a false oath