



LESSON IX.—Feb. 28.

**The Disciples Dispersed.**

Acts, viii., 1-17. Read chapter viii., 1-25.  
Commit vs. 5-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.

'They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.—Acts viii., 4.

**Home Readings.**

- M. Matt. 10 : 16-42.—Persecution Foretold.
- T. Acts 9 : 1-22.—Saul the Persecutor.
- W. Acts 8 : 1-17.—The Disciples Dispersed..
- Th. Acts 11 : 19-30.—Whither they went.
- F. Mark 16 : 14-20.—Miraculous Powers Promised.
- S. Acts : 8 18-25.—The Sorcerer's Covetousness Reproved.
- S. Psa. 118 : 1-29.—'The Lord is on my Side.'

**Lesson Story.**

At that time, probably on the same day as Stephen's death, a great persecution arose against the Christians, and, as they had been commanded, (Matt. x., 23), the disciples went out to all the regions of Judea and Samaria and spread the Gospel among all the people there. The apostles did not go; probably feeling it their duty to stand by those who remained and to still further bear witness in Jerusalem.

Religious men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him, and Saul, who was to be his great successor, burning now with religious zeal and seeking to work off the uncomfortable impression left by the martyr's last prayer, entered into every house where a Christian might be and dragged men and women to prison, persecuting and tormenting them in every way.

Philip, another of the deacons, went down to Samaria, the capital of Samaria, and there preached to the people about Jesus. And the people all listened to him as they heard and saw the wonderful works which God wrought through him—lame and palsied men were healed, devils were cast out, the blind received their sight, and to all was the Gospel preached. 'There was great joy in that city'—there is great joy wherever Jesus comes and is received.

But there was in that city a sorcerer named Simon who had had great power over the people, because they thought he had power from God. Now, when they saw the miracles wrought through Philip they cared no more for Simon but were baptized in the name of Jesus having repented of their sins. And Simon seeing that he had no more power over the people was baptized also.

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Gospel, they sent down Peter and John to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Now when Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given to the people through the laying

on of the apostles' hands, he tried to buy from them the power of conferring the gift. But Peter said—'Thy money perish with thee,' and explained to him that the gift of God could not be purchased with money, and could not be obtained in any way for private or selfish ends. He exhorted him to repent that God might forgive him. Then Simon begged the apostles to pray for him, not that his heart might be changed, but that no evil should come to him.

When the apostles had testified and preached the word of the Lord in the city of Samaria, they returned to Jerusalem preaching at many of the Samaritan villages by the way.

**Lesson Hints.**

Saul was probably a member of the Sanhedrin and an influential man on account of his culture and zeal. He had given his vote in the Sanhedrin for the stoning of Stephen and was in full sympathy with the persecution which instantly followed. Being, indeed fully authorized to do everything in his power to 'destroy this new religion—as he sorrowfully confessed later, 'I persecuted this way unto the death.' As we have seen before that persecution only strengthened the Church, so we still see God making 'all things work together for good to them that love God,' and the seed of the Kingdom being scattered in all directions. The apostles stayed at Jerusalem—they were not afraid of the persecutions, and it has been pointed out that these Hellenistic Jews of whom the Church was so largely composed, were more fitted to spread the Gospel in other countries than were the apostles who had spent all their lives in their own country, and who would be apt to be more stiff and conservative than those who knew something of the nature of the people to whom they must deliver their message. 'Simon . . . used sorcery and bewitched the people'—knowing nothing of God's power, he must have had this power from Satan. There are still many jugglers, mesmerists and spiritualists who have a strange power of bewitching the people. The people all gave heed, supposing him to have power from God, but when they saw the true power of God manifested through Philip, they turned from what they had thought to be light in Simon to 'the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

Simon, 'giving out that himself was some great one,' had drawn all attention and homage to himself—Philip 'preached Christ unto them' and wrought miracles simply in the name of Jesus Christ, taking no merit of any kind to himself. And as the magicians of old could not stand before Moses, so now the sorcerer could not stand before Philip, the messenger of God to the Samaritans. Simon himself acknowledged the greater power, and to all true Christians is the lesson sent—'Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.'—I. John iv., 4.

Simon, appears to have had no true repentance of sin, and to have been filled with hypocrisy. A hypocrite is Satan's forgery—the devil's handiwork stamped with a Christian name. The word 'Simony' still indicates that spirit of sordid meanness which seeks to buy with money those spiritual powers which can only be obtained by giving up our very lives to God.

Peter and John prayed that the Samari-

tans might receive the Holy Ghost. This was the test by which to judge whether any but Jews should be received into the Church. The Samaritans, were neither Jews nor Gentiles, but they were made the connecting link between the two nations.

**Search Questions.**

1. Name the two magicians who withstood Moses ?
2. Who was called the 'master of the magicians,' and why ?

**Primary Lesson.**

Last week we learned about Stephen, one of the seven deacons. To-day we are to learn about another of the deacons called Philip, the evangelist. Evangelist means one who carries the good news of Jesus' love to men.

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached to the people there about Jesus. Now there was in that city a wicked man named Simon, who made the people believe he had great power like God because he did all sorts of tricks which looked like wonderful miracles. But when Philip came and God worked through him real miracles upon the people, healing the lame and all the sick people in Jesus' name, then they saw that Simon had been only a sham and that Philip had the real power of God because he lived for Jesus. Then all believed in Jesus, and were very happy as they gave their love to Him and were baptized in His name.

Simon was baptized, too, but he did not really give up his sins, he loved himself better than he loved Jesus. We know this, because, when the apostles prayed and the people received the Holy Ghost, he offered money to the apostles for this power. He wanted to make money out of the gift of the Holy Ghost. You see, he could have found many people who would have been willing to give him money if he could give them the Holy Spirit. It was dreadful for him to think of such a thing for a minute. Could a thousand dollars make you feel happy and good if you had told a lie or taken something which did not belong to you ? If you gave all the money there was in the world to God would it make up for disobeying Him ? or would it make Him love you any more ? Oh, no ! It is not our money that God wants. He wants our love, and if we don't love Him and obey Him just because we love him, nothing else can make up for it. He loves us so much.

**Suggested Hymns.**

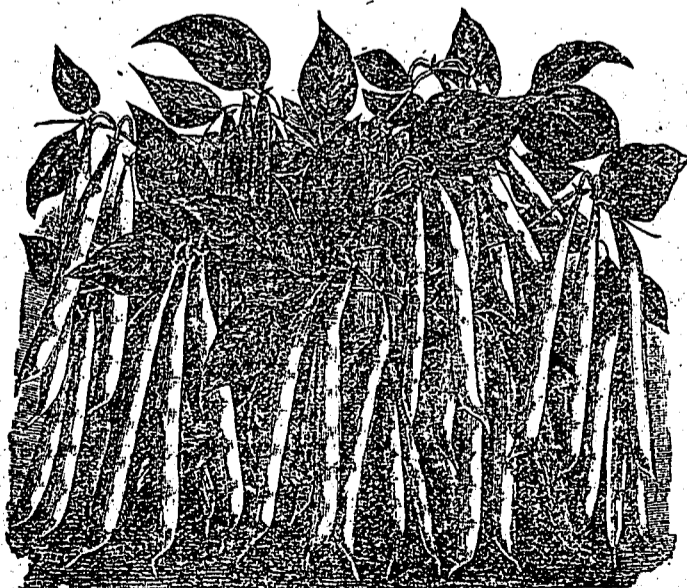
'Almost persuaded,' 'Not far from the Kingdom,' 'Call them in,' 'I need Thee every hour,' 'You're starting, my boy,' 'Jesus shall reign,' 'Not all the blood of beasts.'

**JUNIOR PRAYER-MEETING TOPICS.**

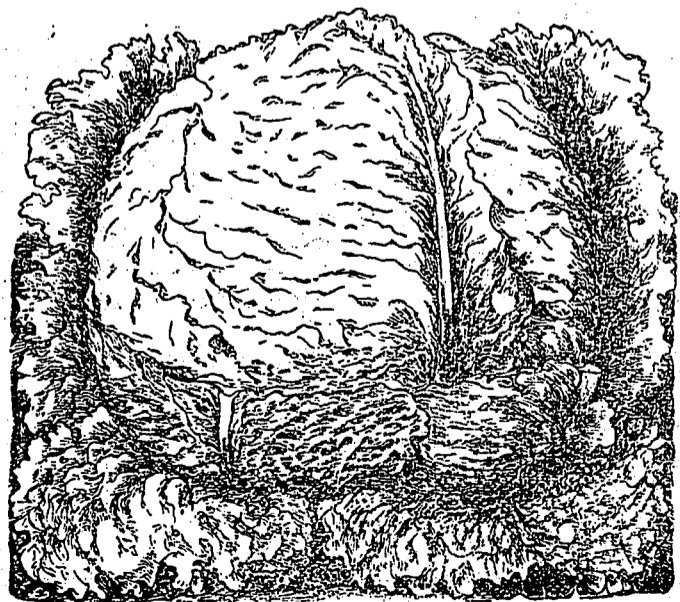
Feb. 21.—Our little worries : what are they ? how can we get rid of them ? Ps. 121 : 1-8; John 14 : 1.

**CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPICS.**

Feb. 21.—Our little worries, and how to get rid of them.—Ps. 121 : 1-8; John 14 : 1.



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