



LESSON,—SUNDAY, AUGUST 1, 1909.

### Close of Paul's Second Missionary Journey.

Acts xviii., 1-22. Memory verses 9, 10.

#### Golden Text.

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. John xvi., 33.

#### Home Readings.

- Monday, July 26.—Acts xviii., 1-11.
- Tuesday, July 28.—I. Cor. ix., 13-23.
- Wednesday, July 29.—II. Cor. xii., 10-19.
- Thursday, July 30.—I. Cor. iv., 1-16.
- Friday, July 31.—Jer. i., 7-19.
- Saturday, July 31.—John xvi., 25-33.

#### FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

What men they were to work those first missionaries who went to tell the news of God's love and Christ's coming. Here in this very chapter we have been reading is the story of how Paul worked in Corinth. Have you read it carefully, and can you tell whose house he stayed at, and how the master of the house earned his living. Every Jewish boy had to learn a trade no matter how rich his father was, and Paul had been taught to make tents, and when he found that Aquila and his wife made and sold tents he worked for them and lived with them. It was not easy work and there was not always enough of it, and he was hungry and poor, and the people jeered at him and pushed him out of their way roughly when he tried to talk to them. But he did not give up. He worked all week and on the Sabbath went to the Synagogue and tried to teach the Jews. He did not succeed, for they would not believe, and at last he turned away from them and went out to the Gentiles. God helped him and told him not to be afraid but speak out, and many believed and became followers of Christ. For a whole year and half of another he stayed until they were sure they understood. And all that time he worked hard with his hands as well as his head and heart, and he did not stop because he was ill or because he felt blue. His work was not hateful to him, for he did it with all his might, and work you put your whole heart into is the best kind of pleasure. There is no mere certain way of having a good time than by working with all your might at the things you know Jesus would have you do.

#### FOR THE SENIORS.

From Athens, the centre of learning, literature, and art, to Corinth, the centre of government, commerce, and business. Paul followed the leading of the Spirit. The poor Jewish tentmaker unable to earn enough to keep him from hunger, and the eloquent cultured bearer of a great message, he was unwelcome in either capacity. The great city was full of its own doings. People came from all over the world to enjoy its wonderful climate; young men gathered to its famous Isthmian games, and older men clustered round the government offices where riches could be gained by dishonesty and oppression. Everywhere vice and profligacy held high revels with a shamelessness consecrated by the rites of their false gods. But Corinth gave him what was better than a welcome, it gave him a great opportunity. The Jewish law that every boy be taught a trade had made of Paul a tentmaker, and he found work and shelter with Aquila, a Jew lately come from Italy, and his clever wife Priscilla. While he was still working and preaching to the Jews, Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. They had been left at Berea when Paul was compelled to leave

(Acts xvii., 13-15). Timothy had been sent to Thessalonica (I. Thes. iii., 6), and from Philippians iv., 15 we judge he had visited Philippi also. Paul was cheered by their presence and Timothy brought him glad tidings of the faith and love of these churches as well as substantial gifts. He had been depressed in spirit, weak, sick, discouraged, 'in weakness and in fear and in much trembling' (I. Cor. ii., 3). In II. Cor. xi., 9, he speaks of being in 'want.' His rough experience at Philippi, his small success at Athens, his being driven from place to place, his loneliness without his accustomed helpers, the intense worldliness of Corinth and the slow success there at first, and the bitterness of the Jews against him, all tended to depress and weaken him. The coming of his friends, their aid, the good news they brought, enabled Paul to be 'wholly possessed by and engrossed in the word.' He entered upon his preaching with new zeal and earnestness. The result was that the Jews (verse 6) opposed themselves, and blasphemed. That was a sign that the gospel was becoming a power in the community. But it was wise to leave that part of his work. Still he made one more effort to save them. He shook his raiment so that no dust of the synagogue should cling to him, according to the command of Christ, 'Shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.' This was not an act of anger, as some say, but of warning, 'exasperating' indeed, but in order to break through the crust of prejudice and let the truth reach their hearts. Henceforth, so long as he remained in Corinth. 'I will go unto the Gentiles.' Another result was that (verse 8) Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, became a Christian, together with his household; besides a number of the Corinthians who were not Jews.

Verses 7-22.—Paul's next Preaching Place was in the house of a man named (verse 7) Justus, one that worshipped God, a Gentile believer in the one true God, but not a Jew, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. Here would be a perpetual invitation to the Jews, while at the same time the Gentiles would feel welcome to go there. Then spake the Lord (Jesus) to Paul in the night by a vision, as at other crises of his life (Acts xvi., 9; xxii., 17; xxvii., 23). As we have seen this was one of the most trying crises of Paul's life. Sick in body, striving against the bitterest organized opposition, looking in the face of difficulties like black mountains in a dark night, Paul needed a fresh, clear, undoubted revelation of God's will and God's presence.

Hold not thy peace. Keep right on, for you are right, you are doing my work.

10. For I am with thee. 'One with God is a majority.'

Paul could not be harmed till his work was done. So a great man once said, 'I am immortal till my work is finished.' 'Paul had the pleasure of changing impure and sinful souls into pure brides, whom he conducted to Christ, and to some of whom he could afterwards say, "Ye were thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; but ye are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"' (I. Cor. vi., 9-11).

A year and six months was probably the whole period of his ministry at Corinth; but during that time a strong, important church was built up, and Paul wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians.

The Lesson of Paul's Mood. We have in this great champion of the faith, in this strong runner of the Christian race, in this chief of men, an example of the fluctuation of mood, the variation in the way in which we look at our duties and our obligations, and our difficulties, the slackening of the impulse which dominates our lives, that is too familiar to us all. It brings Paul nearer to feel that he, too, knew these ups and downs. It is the prerogative of God to be immutable, men have their moods and their fluctuations. Kindled lights flicker, the sun burns steadily. An Elijah to-day beards Ahab and Jezebel and all their priests, and to-morrow hides his head and says, 'Take me away, I am not better than my fathers.' There will be ups and downs in the Christian vigor of our lives, as well as in all other religions, as long as men dwell in this material body and are surrounded by their present circumstances.

But Christianity has for one of its objects to help us to master our moods, and to bring

us nearer and nearer, by continual growth, to the steadfast, unchangeable attitude of those whose faith is ever the same.—Alexander MacLaren, in 'The Victor's Crowns.'

#### Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, August 1.—Topic—The greatest thing in the world. I. Cor. xiii., 1-13. (Consecration meeting.)

#### C. E. Topic.

Monday, July 26.—The need of the Spirit. Acts i., 1-8.

Tuesday, July 27.—Turning to God. Acts ii., 37-42.

Wednesday, July 28.—God is not mocked. Acts v., 1-11.

Thursday, July 29.—Spread of the seed. Acts viii., 1-8, 34-40.

Friday, July 30.—A chosen vessel. Acts ix., 10-19.

Saturday, July 31.—An epoch-making speech. Acts xvii., 22-31.

Sunday, August 1.—Topic—Life lessons for me from the book of Acts. Acts xxvii., 18-44. (Consecration meeting.)

#### Meeting the Scholar's Doubts

Sunday-school teachers are not infrequently pained and bewildered with the problems they present for solution. In the lesson on God's care of Elijah, when told that Elijah went to heaven in, or accompanied by, a chariot of fire, a boy of twelve said, 'That is like the stories in my "Greek Heroes"; but we don't have to believe it,—do we?' When he was assured that this was a Bible story, and that we could believe it, he sat for a moment with parted lips, looking at his teacher, and then said, with a deep-drawn sigh, 'I don't, anyhow.' 'John,' said the discomfited teacher, 'God is God, and he can do anything.' 'Yes, but He don't,' was the unabashed reply. Then a dear fellow, who could believe just because he had been taught to do so, came to the rescue with the reproof, 'John ought not to talk so, because this is in the Bible.' But the teacher honored John's lack of faith, as the Lord Jesus did the doubting Thomas's; for John was not caviling,—he was thinking, inquiring, growing.

Had the teacher been an electrician, he might have invited the boys to witness some electrical phenomena in which horses of fire would have been prominent performers. Being only a plain person, with little spare time, and less knowledge of things unseen, he said: 'John, who invented the lightning rod?'

'Franklin.'

'What is it runs down the rod?'

'Electricity.'

'Let me quote you a verse:

"'Twas Franklin's hand that caught the horse,

He was harnessed by Professor Morse,  
And then, to make old Ocean yield,  
They gave the rein to Cyrus Field."

Now what was the "horse" mentioned?'

'Electricity,' said John. 'Do you think it was electricity that took Elijah to heaven?'

'I think,' said the teacher, 'it was some power that God knew how to use. God, who made all these forces which we do not understand, has power to use them as he pleases, and I think we are always safe in believing what God tells us.'

Later there came the lesson of 'Elisha at Dothan,' and the 'horses and chariots' again. This time there was no 'I don't believe.' The boy's mind was ready to picture the grandeur of the scene. He did not battle with doubt. His face lit up with worshipful wonder as the panorama passed before his mind.

Then, in the application, when the class was shown how temptations encircle them every morning as they go out, but how God's hosts encamp within and nearer still to aid than the enemy to destroy, John said, 'Then we ought to pray in the morning, when we get up, instead of at night,—oughtn't we?'

By repeatedly listening to John's doubts, and respecting them, he has been gradually taught to rise above them, and he is finding it possible to do what we all crave to do,—believe our God, and trust He will open our eyes to see wondrous things out of his law.—Sunday School 'Times.'