

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH.

(Quarterly Review, March 21.)

The quarter's lessons describes the expansion of the early church. The main points are:

1. The cause of the expansion. This was the descent of the Holy Spirit, Lesson II. The ascension of Jesus (Lesson I. was preparatory to the coming of the Spirit. Every lesson bears most emphatic testimony to the Spirit's presence and working. The church began (Lesson III.) in His power. The lame man was healed (Lesson IV.) in the name of Jesus who had sent the Spirit. Peter and John were acquitted (Lesson V.), because it was evident that the Spirit of Jesus was upon them. The true brotherhood was the outcome of His indwelling, and He judged the false professors, Lesson VI. The suffering apostles rejoiced in His conquering power, Lesson VII. He gave to Stephen the enrapturing vision of Jesus, Lesson VIII. In Samaria He broke down the prejudices between Jews and Samaritans, Lesson IX. He led Philip to the Ethiopian, Lesson X. By His power Aeneas was healed, and Dorcas was raised from the dead, Lesson XI.

2. The expansion territorially. The map is necessary (see page 123). The gospel had spread to Jerusalem, to Samaria and throughout all Judea.

3. The expansion in organization. The local church in Jerusalem, over which the apostles presided, became the mother church, and long held an undisputed supremacy.

(a) At Jerusalem the first step was the division of the work of the church. The apostles were set free, by the appointment of the seven "deacons" to the oversight of temporal affairs in the church, to give themselves wholly to prayer and preaching, ch. 6:1-6.

(b) The fact of apostolic supervision. When persecution arose, the leaders remained at Jerusalem, but frequently visited the churches, going to Samaria (Lesson IX.), and throughout all Judea, Lesson XI. Thus, in addition to local organization, there was a recognized bond of unity in the supervision of acknowledged leaders.

4. The expansion in the understanding of the truth. Contrast the view point of the apostles before the ascension and at the close of the first ten years of service in the church. Note:

(a) Their attitude towards Jesus. In prospect of His death, sorrow had filled their hearts, Luke 22: 45. At His ascension, the predominate note was joy, Luke 24: 52. Henceforth their thought is of His glory and supremacy. "In His name" they work miracles, they appear undaunted before councils, they rejoice in tribulations. The Epistles show how their knowledge of Him grows in ever fuller measure.

(b) Their conviction regarding themselves. After the crucifixion, Peter and other of the disciples returned to their nets, John 21: 3. After the ascension, they gather together, pray and wait until the Spirit comes, when the lifelong day of service and suffering begins. They would gladly suffer (Lesson VII.), and die (Lesson VIII.), for they were transformed men.

(c) Their attitude to the world's need. They felt that ignorance and error must be met by the truth as found in Jesus. This is their explanation of Pentecost (Lesson II. and Lesson III.), and their defence before the Council, Lessons V., VII. The world's want and disease must be met by plenty and healing, Lessons IV., VI., XI. This was the practical side of the gospel.

(d) Their exaltation of the Spirit and practice of brotherhood. This is seen in its joyousness and freedom (Lesson III.) in its real intensity (Lesson VI.), and its universality (Lessons IX., X.). The spirit of social service is beautifully shown by Dorcas. It is worthy of repeated emphasis, that the success of the church in the non-Christian world was largely due to the beneficent mission of the gospel. Thus, within ten years, the church had attained to a true view of the Person of Jesus, acquired an adequate organization, manifested a vigorous and growing life, and ushered in the dawn of a universal brotherhood.

FROM A PASTOR'S PRAYERS.

Lord Jesus, take us with thee into dark days, into darkened homes, into the dark places of the earth. We would know the glory of that light that shineth in the darkness. We would learn how to find joy in sorrow; how to lead the troubled into paths of sunshine and peace. . . . Perhaps it is easy to be good when all goes well; help us to find the glory of fidelity and patience when everything seems to go amiss, when the clouds are thick about us. . . . If we find it easy to go in company with the prosperous, teach us how to seek out the unfortunate and distressed, in thy name. Save us from the selfishness that picks out only agreeable companions and congenial friends. Grant us the desire and the power to bring good to disagreeable people, to mingle with the uncongenial, and to generate light and truth in unlikely places. . . . Lord, we would follow in Thy footsteps. How didst thou come to seek us out? With all our follies and frailties we must be uncongenial to thee; yet thou dost pursue us with Thy grace and enfold us with Thy love. Blessed be thy name that thou didst not pass us by, and hast not given us up, though we still dash so with sin and steep ourselves in foolishness. . . . Is there some like work with others that we can do? Show it to us, Father, that we may be thy children in deed and in truth, and may bring back some of thy wandering ones to thee.

A LAW OF GROWTH.

Self-denial does not mean impoverishment of soul. On the contrary, the principle, wisely applied, produces spiritual enrichment, strengthening and refining every noble faculty of one's nature. Meyer says:—"All our outgoings into wider ministry, nobler life, greater responsibility of blessedness, are due to the precious action of sorrow, self-sacrifice, and pain. There is no gate into the life, which is life indeed, which he not cost us dear." There is indeed a surrendering, or a repression of that which has been counted dear, but this very surrendering is found to be a process of transmutation of the less fine into the finer metal. Is it not a peculiarity of Christian attainment that the higher is reached by rising superior to the lower, or the more precious is secured at the cost of the less: it is a law that pertains to man as man. The higher is rotted and nourished in the decay of the lower. The purest joy flourishes in the atmosphere of self-renunciation.

The true secret of a victorious life can never be a philosophy; it must be a theology. For earthly life we need heavenly help. Only that can fit us for the life which now is, which will fit us for the world to come.

TURNED BACK IN TIME OF BATTLE.

By Rev. L. M. Zimmerman, D.D.

Not only in olden times were there those to be found who called themselves soldiers and yet cowardly turned back in time of battle, but today there are also those who, having started with great enthusiasm, are never-the-less numbered among those who flee and run away when it comes to a time for hard fighting and great personal sacrifice. It is a great difference between marching and keeping rank when on dress parade amid huzzahs and shouts of praise, or fronting the foe at arm's length in the face of death. It is one thing to swing always on to the winning side right or wrong, but to stand alone for the right in defiance of the marshalled forces against you when you know it means defeat is quite another thing. It is one thing to sleep and dream that life is beauty, but those who are wide awake learn from experience that life is duty. It is one thing to sit and sing on Sunday at public worship and then eat the Lord's Supper, but it is quite a different thing to devour widow's houses on Monday morning. It is one thing to say you will work and worship and give, but to do all these things is an altogether different proposition. It is one thing when lying on the sick bed to promise God that if life be spared more time will be given thereafter to serving God; but it is a sad contrast when the same person restored to health, proves himself untruthful in not keeping his promise as made upon the sickbed. It is one thing to be armed with the weapons of Christian warfare, but it looks very different to see the same persons run away from duty when God wants them to serve him in active service. It is one thing to be possessed with privileges and opportunities, but it is a sad commentary upon Christian experience to deprecate these privileges and waste these opportunities. The servant who knew his master's will and did it not was beaten with many stripes. How about those who, living in a Christian land, whom God has blessed with this world's goods, who knowing what is their duty, yet refuse to work, give and serve! What of those who being called upon of God to stand up as brave soldiers of the cross, yet turn back in day of battle! What of the moral cowards! Will such receive the plaudit, "Well done thou faithful servant," or will it be "Depart from me ye accursed!"

Wherefore, put your armor on, use it for God and the right, be courageous in the day of battle, be stronger than your foe whether from within or from without, that having done all you may stand ever firmly on the Lord's side.—*Lutheran Observer.*

OUR FAILURES.

In many things we all err. We try the bypaths, and the gleaming ways which seem to lead upward to the heights, seem to scale heaven by a short and hazardous climb. It is something if the thunder breaks and drives us down, or some tale of the barren summit makes us wiser in time, so that at any rate before death falls we find ourselves within the wicket-gate, on the right road, though far away. It is by failure more than by successes that God produces that result. A and therefore the true success, in his eyes, is often what passes here as failure.