

Our Young Folks.

The Goat and the Swing

A little story, with a moral. For young folks who are prone to quarrel old folks are wise, and do not need it, of course they, therefore, will not read it. A vicious goat, one day, had found his way into forbidden ground. When coming to the garden swing, he spied a most prodigious thing...

Birds Work.

God made many beautiful birds, and not without use. It is most interesting, in the beautiful spring-time, to see and observe them. They afford us many lessons, if our hearts are right to learn them. Not long ago we were waiting at a railroad station for the train. The time seemed long. We went to a bridge near by, which spanned a creek running far below...

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

LESSON XXVIII.

TURNING TO THE GENTILES. [LXXII. 42-52.]

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 45, 46, 48. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Matt. xxi. 42; 2 Tim. ii. 3.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 42, read Rom. x. 14, 15; with v. 43, read John viii. 81; with v. 44, read Matt. ix. 36-38; with v. 45, read Acts xviii. 6; with v. 46, read Matt. xxi. 43; with v. 47, read Isa. xlii. 6; with v. 48, read Rom. xv. 9-12; with vs. 49, 50, read Matt. x. 34-36; with v. 51, read Mark v. 11; with v. 52, read Eph. i. 13.

Identify Paul, Barnabas, and the relations between the Gentiles and the Jews; also Iconium.

GOLDEN TEXT.—And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.—Matt. xii. 21.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Abused blessings are forfeited.

It will be recalled from our last lesson that opportunity was given to Paul and Barnabas to preach the Christian doctrine in the synagogue at Antioch (verse 15). We may judge of the effect of the sermon from the results. It was a plain, forcible, pointed, scriptural discourse, of which the substance was the Saviour, and with the offer of forgiveness of sins through Him. It did not fail to warn against neglecting so great salvation (Heb. ii. 3). The three verses with which our present lesson opens show a threefold result.

(a) Verse 42.—The reading of this varies, early copyists having apparently supplied nouns to the verbs, in order to greater clearness. The idea is that "they," i.e., the Jews to whom the synagogue belonged, or the apostles who preached, having gone out, they, i.e., the hearers, whether Jews or Gentile, "besought." Not in the synagogue, but after the service, a desire was expressed for more preaching of the same kind, and for further explanation. The time desired was the next Sabbath, i.e., Jewish Sabbath. This was a good sign.

(b) Verse 43.—When the congregation, literally the synagogue, was broken up on this, or on a second Sabbath, as it might be, or dismissed, and the people going their separate ways, many of the Jews, and religious or devout proselytes, Gentiles by birth, who had in part conformed to the Jews' religion, lingered (as one may see persons wait at the close of the service to speak with the minister), and Paul and Barnabas spoke with them, and persuaded them to persevere in their attachment to this Christian truth, and in a corresponding life. The Jews appear indifferent, but the Gentile-born attendants are interested. It is a good sign again, when the hearers are eager for more instruction and counsel. In meetings where a deeply religious spirit is present, it is sometimes difficult to close the services. Nor is it strange, when eternal things have first become real to men, that they should earnestly seek them.

(c) The next Sabbath almost the entire community attended to hear the word of God. The apostle avoids exaggeration. Miracles do not yet appear to have been wrought. No doubt the intercourse of the week with Paul and Barnabas deepened the impression. So far all was encouraging. But there are difficulties that come out of success itself. And now we have to look at the dark side of the picture. The Jews, though often despised as a whole in the Gentile cities, yet secured a certain respect from a part of the community as having the admitted knowledge of some great truths. On this—such is human nature—they prided themselves, as one may sometimes see sects and churches do. A minority, kept on its good behaviour, is often puffed up and self-complacent. They value truth, not as truth, but as their doctrine. This new gospel interfered with their boasted standing, and upset their views. It was popular with all classes. They took alarm, grew jealous ("envy"), opposed ("spoke against"), Paul and Barnabas, denying their statements, and abusing them, and probably also the Messiah, whom they preached.

We have the effect of this on Paul and Barnabas (verse 46). They "waxed bold," i.e., instead of losing time in the vain hope of conciliating these opposers, they broke with them, and said plainly, "It was necessary" by the Master's command (Acts i. 8; iii. 20), which guided them, and on which they proceeded (Rom. i. 16), first to offer the forgiveness to them, to whom Christ had come; and since they rejected it, as their fathers did Moses (Acts vii. 39), and by their conduct condemned themselves as unworthy of so great blessing, then behold! we waste no strength on your cavils and abuse, but "turn to the Gentiles," who will hear. Nor in doing this, startling as the step is, do the preachers violate the Scripture rule. They rather fulfill the prediction of Isa. xlii. 6, (applied by Simeon, Luke ii. 31, 32, to Jesus), which by application teaches that the gospel is to be sent to the Gentiles. They had indeed preached to the Gentiles elsewhere and before, and they did not mean to abandon the Jews henceforth, but here in Antioch they would sow on the soil that was prepared.

This announcement (verse 48) gladdened the Gentiles, and raised in their esteem the word of the Lord or the gospel, which did not shut them out from blessing, but gave them also a ministry. So God's children, as many as were ordained to eternal life (a favorite phrase of Luke's in the gospel, Luke x. 25; xviii. 18-30), believed. It was concluded that they were so ordained from their believing. They did not believe because they were made aware that they were ordained in God's merciful but secret plan, for they had no such knowledge, but they believed on the evidence given, and their faith is regarded by the apostles as the proof of their being ordained. What over varying theories and modes of expression men have, and however plainly they are told to "save themselves" (as in Acts ii. 40), when saved they say "grace taught my soul to pray." So the "whole region" (verse 41) was prevailed by the tidings of this gospel.

Further active opposition continued from the Jews, who moved the Gentile women of

good position, who had adhered to them—"devout" means worshipping with them (of whom we know from Josephus there were many)—to influence husbands, brothers, magistrates, etc., against these new teachers, and drive them from the city. Social forces, of which women has much control, are powerful for or against truth. They were thus, by threats, or legal process, or actual violence, compelled to leave. But they did it with solemn protests according to the customs of the East, and our Lord's command (Mark vi. 11; Luke ix. 6). By this act they said practically, "We do not leave; you send us off; the fault of your not hearing is not ours, but yours; we do not own your right to do this, and if punishment comes on you, we are free of your blood."

So they came to Iconium in Lycaonia, at the foot of Mount Taurus. Its name is now *Konyak*, and it has a population of over 20,000. There they preached as before.

Now the prediction of Jesus was made good to the new disciples, who were thus and otherwise made to suffer (Luke xxi. 12, 18; and still more exactly in Matt. v. 10-13). A compensating joy and the power of the Holy Ghost, making all spiritual things real to them, attended their suffering. (See Rom. xiv. 17; xv. 13; and 1 Thess. i. 6.)

Learn from this:

(1) The diverse effects of the same gospel. Some believe it and live; some reject it and perish. (See 2 Cor. ii. 16). The likely often reject it, the unlikely often receive it. But God does not cast off men till they cast Him off (verse 46-51).

(2) The blinding effect of *secularism*.—If our main aim is our own nation, we shall be envious and jealous of any who seem to prosper more, shall be led to detraction, evil speaking, and opposition—the only forms of opposition our free institutions admit of.

(3) The grace young believers require—that of continuance. They do not learn or do all things at once. But they are to hold on, and as they advance they get more light.

(4) How candlesticks are removed.—Men reject the truth, and it is taken from them. See the Epistles to the Seven Churches, and the history of the middle ages.

(5) How God makes up in things spiritual for losses endured for Him. The teachers are driven away, but the power of the Holy Ghost comes. They suffer outward distress, but they have full inward joy. The magistrates and the women in good society frown on them, but the Lord "lifts up upon them the light of His countenance."

(6) In all ages women have great influence for good or evil. It becomes them to consider how they use it. Their words, preferences, example, help or hinder God's cause.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The effects of the preaching at Antioch—the Gentiles' wish—the effect on the city—the apostolic advice to young Christians—the ill-feeling of the Jews—the reason of it—how it appeared—the course of Paul—the authority of it—the joy of the Gentiles—why—the active opposition of the Jews—their instruments—the result and the lessons to us.

LESSON XXIX.

PAUL AT LYSTRA. [Acts xv. 2-20.]

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 13-17. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Acts iii. 2-8

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With vs. 8, 9, read Matt. ix. 28, 29; with v. 10, read Acts ix. 84; with vs. 11, 12, read Rom. i. 21-23; with v. 13, read Dan. ii. 46; with v. 14, read Rev. xix. 10; with v. 15, read Ps. cxlii. 5, 6; with v. 16, read 1 Peter iv. 8; with v. 17, read Rom. i. 19; with v. 18, read Acts x. 36; with v. 19, compare 2 Tim. iii. 11; and with v. 20, read 2 Cor. iv. 10.

THE FOLLOWING PERSONS ARE TO BE IDENTIFIED: Paul, Barnabas.

ALSO THE FOLLOWING PLACES: Lystra, Lycaonia, Antioch, Iconium, Derbe.

Examine Jupiter, Mercurius.

GOLDEN TEXT.—But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God; and an everlasting king.—Jer. x. 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Lord alone is exalted by the apostles.

We are still in Paul's first missionary journey. It will be well to trace on the *Biblical Atlas* the journeyings of Paul to Iconium (Acts 18, 61); thence to Lystra and Derbe (verse 6), cities of Lycaonia, so called (as appears from *Smith's Bible Dictionary*) rather from race and speech than political division, but in which the people were familiar with the Greek religion in which Jupiter and Mercurius—the Latin form of *Mercury*—figured. The people were rude, simple, devoted to sheep farming on a bleak plain; but a good Roman road traversed this region of Asia Minor.

We now study a remarkable miracle at Lystra (verse 8). The place was not very rich. We read of no synagogue. The Jews who made trouble came from Antioch and Iconium (verse 19). The missionaries to the East often speak in the squares and market places. There also the beggars show their wants and ask help. Paul was probably confronted by this poor well-known cripple, who had never walked, and so was a good subject for evident divine power. How many are thankful that they can walk?

This poor sufferer "heard Paul" (verse 9). He may have heard rumors of these men and their miracles. He seemed interested and was expectant, as if it would not surprise him to be healed. God who was disposing the man to expect, disposed Paul, who studied his face, to give the blessing of power to walk. How many go to hear men preach, and yet look so stolid, unconcerned, that one cannot but see that they expect nothing, and have no earnestness or faith!

The word "faith" in this verse suggests to us that God's power is in the case, so it is not formally named in verse 10.

Paul said "with a loud voice" (verse 10), not only to arrest the man's attention, but to show bystanders the single agency by which the work was done. To "stand upright," was a thing impossible to him

before; but now with the new powers given to him, he "leaped and walked." The cure was not gradual, but instantaneous. He might be pardoned for being demonstrative—like young Christians with their new found hopes and strength.

"The people" saw and connected the work with Paul. They recognized the supernatural. They know of the gods of whom Jupiter was often called "the father," and Mercury the messenger. Their speech was probably corrupt in some degree; hence the specification "of Lycaonia," and their ideas were confused. But the idea of God in man's nature is widely diffused. They took Barnabas for Jupiter. Probably he was the more impressive in appearance of the two, while Paul, who spoke, was taken for Mercury, a second-rate god. Paul's own account of himself—"preference weak" (2 Cor. x. 1)—corresponds with this. Jupiter occurred to them naturally, for he was the local god (verse 13). They had a temple, and probably a statue of him somewhere near, perhaps at the city gate. So "patron saints" are honored in many lands under Christian names.

To worship was the next step. The priests of the temple brought oxen, and fillets or garlands of flowers which decorated the heads of the animals. "The gates" may be of the temple, or city, or place of the apostles' sojourn. The people were expected to join in it. How prompt these poor heathen with their adoration! An example to Christians in this regard.

The apostles—for Barnabas is ranked with Paul here, with reference to Acts xiii. 4—are horrified! They are there to persuade the people to turn from dumb idols and give God his due, and lo! they are themselves about to be offered divine honors! (verse 14). The Hebrew way of showing grief and deprecating an evil, was the ceremonial rending of the garments (certainly not tearing them to pieces, but taring a finger length or so on the chest), and running in among the people in a way expressive of horror at the deed (verse 14). Their remonstrance was clear, "Why do ye these things?" There was no need to describe. The reason for the protest is, "We are men of the same feelings and nature" ("passions," literally, capacities for being affected). Nay, more, we are preaching against these very vices, and telling you to turn to the one true and universal Creator. The "vanities" are idols—"nothing" in 1 Cor. vii. 4. If any one inquired "why turn?" The reply is—God in time past gave his religion to the Jews only, and left other nations to their own ways. How far this was punishment, it is no part of Paul's business to explain here. He is dealing with facts, and if God "suffers any nation to walk in its own ways," such will they be (verse 16).

"Yet," he proceeds to argue with a simple people living among the scenes of nature, "He did not withhold witness. He gave rain. He sent harvests. He fed and gladdened us" (verse 17). This is the basis of natural theology. Effects prove a cause. Good effects suggest a good cause, great effects a great cause. Heathen people, if they would, might know this. (Compare Acts xvii. 30). If He gives all, He, and not the creature, is to be worshipped. And all their earnestness was barely enough to stop them (verse 18). We may well believe that after this they had a time of teaching and usefulness, of which the report went abroad, and now

Trouble begins from without, from Jews, as usual with Paul. They came and wrought on the minds of the mob; introduced their way of proceeding, "stoning"—shows they were the leaders. Paul refers to this in 2 Cor. xi. 26. They did not respect the city limits here as they would in Palestine. The severity of this assault is seen in its stunning Paul, so that he appeared dead. Had this been a case of restoration to life, it would no doubt have been explicitly mentioned. Divine aid was given him, strengthening him (verse 20). But it was with suffering. Here Timothy seems to have seen Paul, perhaps made up his mind to follow "Christ. Paul refers to this to Timothy, as one of the scenes he remembered, not mentioning Derbe, where there was no trouble (2 Tim. iii. 10, 11).

Attention may be fixed on the impotent man. We may see a picture of ourselves in him. (1) We cannot by nature walk with God (Heb. xi. 6), in the light (John i. 7). We are impotent from birth (Eph. ii. 1, 2). (2) If we wish to be healed, we shall look for it. (3) Such look will be noticed by God and by good men. He never said, "Seek ye my face in vain." We may learn from the Lycaonians; (1) We err and know not God by nature; are led to worship and serve the creature (Rom. i. 25). (2) We are feeble, like the crowd of Jerusalem—"Hosanna" one day, "crucify Him" another. (3) We have evidences enough (Ps. xix. 1-6; Rom. i. 19, 20). (4) We should have been like the Lycaonians now if God had let us alone. Where Greeks and Romans failed, what hope is there for others?

We may learn from Paul: (1) Any honor to us that detracts from God is abominable. (2) We are to plead with men as they can understand. These hearers had not, like the Jews, the word of God; so He speaks from the book of nature. (3) How poor a thing is human applause! And how faithful is God in time of trouble.

From the whole we may learn that our duty is, wherever we may have opportunity, to set forth the truth and to illustrate it with all the powers at our command, to give God all the glory when we seem to have success, and if we have enemies and opposition, to remember that they can only go a certain length in the attempt to harm us. "Fear not them that kill the body."

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The fellow-laborers—their route—the character of the people—the miracles—on whom—in what manner performed—the effect on the people—their error—their proposal—the protest—the argument of Paul—the new opposers—the change of feeling—Paul's suffering—escape—and the lessons from the impotent man, the people, and the apostle.

Singing in the Sabbath-School.

More than any place else, there ought in the Sabbath-school to be good, earnest singing. The teachers need it, the scholars need it, and the cause itself needs it. In an assembly composed of a hundred children, more or less, there is nothing so *mal apropos* as dull, spiritless praise. A child's soul is put to torture by that which is dreary and without feeling.

In order to secure good singing there ought to be a good supply of books. They ought to be in every seat, to be taken up by the pupil when he enters; or, what is better, perhaps, they ought to be distributed through the school before the exercises begin, each scholar receiving one for his exclusive use. No matter it be to young to read, let him have a book, which he shall hold open at the place, and thus he made to feel that this is a part of the service in which he is to have his share. This is a boy in that way and he will not sit with his book after he gets old enough to read and sing.

Another source of help is in the teachers. By example and exhortation they can show the pupils the beauty and duty of praising God in reverent singing of Psalms. They can also help the children to books, take an interest in their effort at finding the place, and otherwise give them encouragement. Children will not be precisely what their teachers make them in such cases; but their habits of worship will be largely formed from the influence thus brought to bear upon them.

A third help will be found in those who lead the singing. They can either lead it so as to make it attractive and easy, or repulsive and impossible. There are easy, simple tunes, which lack neither dignity nor pathos, and which are particularly adapted to the voices and susceptibilities of children. These should always be chosen in preference to those that are harder and heavier. The gay spirit of childhood does not flourish upon mere dulness and gravity. It must have elasticity, vigor, and the power of energy and activity. It may be set down as a rule that where there is such a selection of tunes as will propitiate the accents of children, they will learn to sing, to enjoy the singing, and to profit by it as a part of the worship of God.

One thing ought particularly to be mentioned. Tunes should not be in too great variety. Sometimes audacious preceptors think they must have a long list from which to choose, and if they sing the same air on successive Sabbaths, they are displaying a culpable ignorance of art, and are running the services into a reproachful monotony. There can be no greater mistake. A little change may be necessary, and a new tune may be introduced now and then, but the proper method of securing general interest and music, is by singing over and over again tunes with which, by repeated use, the scholars have become familiar. Mr. Sankey has been singing the same hymns to the same tunes for several years, and the whole country has learned not only to like the hymns, but the hymns as they belong to certain copyrighted airs. And we will do much towards promoting improved music in all our Sabbath-schools, when we have appropriate tunes set to certain Psalms, and when we sing these Psalms and tunes over and over again, with as much familiarity and earnestness as are shown by Mr. Sankey and his disciples when they for the thousandth time enter into the spirit of "The Ninety and Nine," and "Jesus of Nazareth Passeth by."

DR. JOHN HALL, at the meeting of the International Lesson Committee, at Indianapolis, made a speech, in which, after glancing at the past, he looked out into the future with special reference to the responsibility resting upon parents and Sunday-school teachers. If these rightly perform their duties toward the children the future is assured. Let the generation growing up be intelligently acquainted with the holy oracles, and we cut the ground from beneath all the "isms" that will ever take shape. Let them know the Bible, and it will not be difficult to inculcate the exhortation, "Children, obey your parents." All the social and family relations of life will be made pleasant and agreeable and a blessing to mankind. Let them be saturated with the Bible, and they will keep the Sabbath in the proper place. There will be no trouble in getting the right kind of temperance legislation. Then the adjustment of these questions will be easy, and we shall have a nation growing up under the influence of that teaching which, vivified in the soul, is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of the life which is to come. To Sunday-school teachers I would say: Go forward in your work; and, if the spirit flags and faints, contemplate the magnitude of the work you are allowed to put your hand to. In conclusion, he advised parents not to neglect the teaching of their children and trust entirely to the Sunday-school teacher.

"Fireside" Temperance.

It seems in keeping with the character of our department that we should recognize the importance of the great work of temperance which is being done in our land.

No subject affects more vitally the happiness and prosperity of our families or the purity of our firesides. Most of the vice and crime committed can be traced directly back to the use of spirituous liquors. It would be very gratifying to us, were we able to interest our young readers in the cause of temperance.

If all the girls and boys who are now living in the world should refuse ever to touch intoxicating drinks, drunkennes would in a few years die out, for there would be no one to reinforce the lessening ranks. Can we not have a temperance society of our own, to be called the "Fireside Temperance Band?" We should be delighted to have a long list of names as members of it. We should like to bear the opinion of the children and young people with regard to this suggestion.

It has been calculated that for every pound sterling England expends in missions she receives ten in trade; and the same ratio will hold in the United States.

We wish some competent contributor would write us a good essay on the persons of speeches.