

believing those to be the Word of God they wisely looked there for the test of this new preaching, and this they did daily; noble men these, and worthy to have their names embodied in the vocabulary of the Church to all time, as the common name of all Scripture lovers and readers; no wonder that with such a company the converts were numerous, so numerous that when Paul was compelled to leave through the opposition of the Jews from Thessalonica, Silas and Timothy remained for a season to help to gather in the abundant harvest.

Incidental Truths and Teachings.—If God's servants go from opposition to opposition and from suffering to suffering, they also go from victory to victory.

Jesus, His cross and resurrection Paul's great theme.

The children of darkness are afraid of the light.

The sinful peace of the world wants disturbing.

Jesus is a King and makes kings of His people, but spiritual and heavenly.

The Bible and the Bible alone, the religion of thoughtful men.

Main Lessons.—Jesus Christ and Him crucified the great theme of gospel preaching.—Acts 26 : 22-23; 1 Cor. 1 : 23; 2 : 2; 5 : 5; Gal. 3 : 1; 6 : 14.

The Scriptures should be searched by all seekers after truth.—Isa. 8:20; 34:10; John 5:39; 20:31; 1 Cor. 2: 13.

LESSON IX.

March 2, }
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PAUL AT ATHENS.

{ Acts 17 :
22-34. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—"In Him we live, and move, and have our being."—Acts 17 : 28.

TIME.—A. D. 52.

PLACE.—Athens, the capital of Attica, in Greece, at that time the centre of literature, art and civilization. It was named after the goddess Minerva, the Athena of the Greeks. Its population was about 150,000.

Notes and Comments.—**INTRODUCTION.**—Paul had been waiting at Athens for his companions, and in his walks through the city is grieved to see the prevailing idolatry. He goes, as usual with him, into the synagogue of the Jews and discusses the gospel with them, among them were some who were "devout;" but he does not rest there he speaks daily in the market place, the centres of ancient city gatherings; so much impression does he make that the polished philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics would hear more of his message, covering their desire with a contemptuous expression. They would not hear him, however, with the common people, but took him to the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, an eminence to the west of the Acropolis, where the Supreme Court of Judicature was held and where the philosophers and statesmen met for discussion.

Ver. 22. "Paul stood:" the one messenger of Christ in the stronghold of human wisdom. "Mars Hill:" so called from the legend of the trial of Mars for the murder of the son of Neptune. "Ye are too superstitious:" REV. "somewhat superstitious:" neither rendering gives the exact idea, "religious" would be better, if it were not that we attach a special idea to that word; his opening remarks were conciliatory, he wanted to lift them from ignorant to intelligent ideas of worship.

Ver. 23. "As I passed by:" in his solitary walks through the city. Silas and Timothy had not joined him, nor did they until he got to Corinth. Chap. 18 : 1, 5. "Your devotions:" literally, as REV., "objects of worship:" "to the" (REV. "an") "unknown God:" that there were several altars with such an inscription in ancient Athens is abundantly testified by profane writers. Doubtless they had their origin in the ignorant fear of offending some god

of which they knew nothing. Outside the true faith all is fear and uncertainty. "Him:" Paul centralizes their vague thoughts, there is but one true God, and that God "declare I unto you."

Ver. 24. "God:" a personal God, the foundation truth of all religion, opposed alike to the atheism and the polytheism into which his hearers were mainly divided. "Dwelteth not." He is spiritual and filleth all things; doubtless here is a remembrance of Stephen's last address. Chap 7 : 48.

Ver. 25. "Neither is worshipped," REV., "served with men's hands:" service in the sense of giving something needed, as the heathens bringing food and drink to the altars of their gods, supposing that these were consumed by them, reversing the truth that we depend upon God and receive everything from His hands. "Life:" so "in Him we live," ver. 28. "Breath:" by breath we have our life, so "we move," ver. 28. "All things:" so "we have our being," ver. 28.

Ver. 26. "One blood:" the great doctrine of the unity of the race, they—many of them—believed that man had sprung from different sources, and so was under the power of different gods. "Bounds of their habitation:" so, Deut. 32 : 8, God in history, or as REV. "their appointed seasons:" God in nature; seed-time and harvest are from Him.

Ver. 27. This verse strikingly portrays the uncertainty of men seeking God without a revelation. "Feel after:" the touch, the lowest of the senses here applied to the Gentile search, so thick was the darkness around them that they had to grope. Rom. 1 : 21. "Though He be not far:" near to us in His presence and relationship; ignorance supposes Him to be far off. Rom. 10 : 6-8.

Ver. 28.—"Live—move—have our being:" so ver. 25. life refers to our animal life. "Move:" rather, have our emotions, as love, fear, hate, etc., for the original signifies that. "Have our being:" the true, essential being, the intellect and will of man. "Your own poets:" Aratus, a native of Cilicia, some have thought that he was born in Tarsus. "His offspring:" this sentence is the first part of an hexameter verse from one of his poems, so also Cleanthus, a Stoic, in his "Hymn to Jupiter." Note how Paul, in addressing cultivated heathens, appeals to their own writers, but when addressing Jews, to the Scriptures.

Ver. 29. A logical deduction—if we are what we are, surely He from whom we came cannot be "like gold or silver or stone, graven by art." Not only were these statues (by which Paul would be surrounded, and to which he would likely point) not gods, but they were not even the resemblance of God, and could not be.

Ver. 30. "Ignorance:" confessed by them in the inscription. There was a tradition that the Athenians were a colony of Egyptians, and brought with them the inscription from Isis and her robe, which was never removed. Christless times are ignorant times. "Winked at:" overlooked. Chap. 14 : 16. "Now:" this day, this hour, the spell of ignorance is broken, knowledge has come, and with it responsibility. "All men, everywhere:" Christianity claims universal attention. "Now—repent:" the imperative has no future tense, it is now.

Ver. 31. He closes by bringing in the great subject of his preaching, Jesus, although he does not mention the name. The argument which the verse division breaks is that men are to repent, because God will, at a set time, judge the world, that the judgment is to be by one whom He hath chosen and set apart for the work; and that, as an assurance and seal of that intention, He hath raised that man from the dead. Paul has preached repentance, he now preaches faith.

Vers. 32, 33.—Paul's audience was largely composed of philosophers of the Epicurean or Stoic schools. To the for-