

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Lesson II. July 9. Acts 16: 19-34.

PAUL AT PHILIPPI.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."—Acts 16: 31.

EXPLANATORY.

For some time the missionaries, making their home at Lydia's house, preached the gospel in Philippi. "The almost total absence of Jews meant an almost total absence of persecution." Peacefully and happily the work progressed, and a church was founded. But frequently they met in the streets a poor slave girl owned by a company of speculators, who made no little money out of her as a fortune-teller. She was supposed to be possessed with "the spirit of Python," the imagined serpent that guarded the oracles of Apollo at Delphi, and inspired the women, who, in some wild, raving manner, uttered the oracles at that famous shrine.

19. Her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone. The first heathen persecution, like that subsequently inflicted on the Christians, was set on foot by covetousness. Like the Gergesenes, they cared nothing that a soul had been saved in comparison with the loss of their gains. Note that the worldly opposition to the gospel still grows chiefly from the same cause. The modern examples of opposition, the lottery dealers, the political corruptionists, the takers of bribes, the speculators, the senders of run to Africa, the oppressors of India, and all other seekers for wicked gains. They caught Paul and Silas. The idea of violence is conveyed in the original. *Drew them into the marketplace.* The marketplace, or *agora*, was in all Greek cities the centre of social life. In Philippi as a colony, reproducing the arrangements of Rome, it would answer to the Forum, where the magistrates habitually sat. *Unto the rulers.* The city judges or magistrates.

20. And brought them to the magistrates. Greek, strategoi, praetors. The chief magistrates in a Roman colony were called the *duumviri* (the two men) or *quatuorviri* (the four men), as the number was not always the same. *Saying, These men, being Jews, this was one of those most common artifices of bad men, when the real reason is hidden under some alleged reason that arouses popular prejudice.* No people were regarded by the Romans with such contempt and hatred as the Jews. *Do exceedingly trouble our city.* The gospel does produce a revolution in an ungodly world; it does arouse a commotion. But this is not the fault of the gospel, rather of the sin that is ruining men.

21. And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive. The complaints against Paul and Silas were founded on the Roman law against introducing foreign religions into territory which the Romans had conquered. They forbade the introduction of innovations in religion, especially into Roman cities like that of Philippi, as calculated to unsettle the minds of the people and create political disturbance.

The multitude rose up together. The accusations consisted in three things. The masters were aroused enough not to make apparent their real motives. The real and the apparent reasons for opposing Christianity are seldom the same. They would have us to say that they opposed the gospel because it opposed their taste and sine and unjust gains. *Rent off their clothes.* The clothes of Paul and Silas. The sentence was, according to custom, "Go, lions, tear off their garments, scourge them, and then let them to beat them." The word means "beat with rods." The custom was with the Romans to inflict blows with rods upon the naked body. Why did they not escape by their Roman citizenship? Sensible, as they did the next morning? The clamor of the mob gave them no opportunity to be heard. Professor Riddle thinks it was to shield the infant church against whom the rage of the mob would have been turned.

23. Many stripes. The Roman punishment was not limited to "forty stripes save one," like that of the Jews. 24. Thrust them (sore and bleeding) into the inner prison. The dungeon, a deep, damp, chilly cellar underground opening only at the top, without fresh air or light, stifling and pestilential. Made their feet fast in the stocks. "The word." A heavy piece of wood with holes into which the feet were put, so far apart as to distend the limbs in a most painful manner.

25. Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises. Their wounds were undressed, and their hands were bound to the stocks. They were in the inner prison. Sleep was out of the question. But they passed the night in devotions. The imperfect tense of the verbs in this verse imply that the prayers and singing were continued. It is very probable that they used the Psalms, some of which would be especially appropriate. And the prisoners heard them. The inner prison appears to have held more than Paul and Silas, or it may be that bars in the inner walls allowed the sound to pass into other cells.

26. And suddenly there was a great earthquake. This was the Lord's answer to prayer. Observe that this answer involves a Divine visitation with nature, though not a violation of natural law. We must know a great deal more about earthquakes and their causes than we do now, to assert that it is irrational to believe that such an earthquake should be sent in answer to prayer. All the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Either by the action of the earthquake, or by the same supernatural power which produced the earthquake.

27. The keeper... *awaking out of his sleep.* He did not hear the songs, but he was awakened by the earthquake. "He probably slept in such a place that on rousing he could observe at a glance whether the prison doors were secure. St. Paul, out of the dark, could observe him before the jailer could see farther than the open doors." *Drew out his sword.*... would have killed himself. The Roman law transferred to the jailer the punishment due an escaped prisoner.

28. Cried with a loud voice. Released

his voice so as to secure attention at once. *Do thyself no harm, or "wrong."* His purpose of suicide was harmful for his body, and sinful for his soul. *For we are all here.* This assurance, which Paul gives as a reason why the jailer should not kill him, shows the special quickness of apprehension and presence of mind. It was, moreover, a new thing in the world for a prisoner to be solicited about the bodily and spiritual welfare of his jailer.

29. Called for a light, or more correctly "lights," as in the Rev. Ver. Lights which could be carried in the hand. *Came trembling, for fear.* He connected all that had occurred with the two prisoners Paul and Silas. *Fell down.* Recognizing they were under no mortal protection.

30. And brought them out. From the inner prison where they were confined, probably into the court of the prison. *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* Saved from what? "He is aware that these men claim to be the servants of God, that they profess to teach the way of salvation. It would be nothing strange if he had heard the gospel from their own lips. (The slave girl had declared publicly that these men show unto us the way of salvation.) And now suddenly an event had taken place which convinces him in a moment that the things which he has heard are realities: it was the last argument, perhaps, which he needed to give certainty to a mind already inquiring, 'What must I do to be saved?'"

31. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek presents a contrast which is lost in the English. He had called them by the usual title of respect, "Kyril" (= Sirs, or Lords); they answer that there is one Kyrios, the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can save. *And thy house.* Not that his faith would save his household as well as himself, but that the way of salvation was open both to him and to his household.

32. And they spoke unto him the Word of the Lord. They then proceeded, more at leisure, to pour into his attentive and delighted ears the history of Jesus Christ, to declare His doctrine and to explain what it was to believe in Him. All his household shared in these glad tidings.

33. The same hour of the night. It was midnight (see ver. 25). But a new day, birthday, had already begun for him. *Washed their stripes.* From the blood that had coagulated after their scourging. He washed and was washed; from stripes, himself from sins. We have here a remarkable instance of the effect of religion in producing humanity and tenderness. *Was baptized, he and all his household.* As soon as they were sure they believed, they confessed Christ in baptism. There was little danger of hypocrisy or self-deception in those who confessed Christ under such circumstances, and in whom such a change had taken place.

A Christian's Right Place.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

A place for every man, and every man in his place. That is as much a motto for the church of Christ as it is for any army: the wrong place may be well nigh as fatal as no place at all. What our churches need most—next to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—is the development of all their members in some line of Christian activity. Too much is thrown upon the pastor. The church becomes Dr. A.—a or Mr. B.—a or Pastor C.—a church, instead of its being the people's church, with those men as the spiritual shepherds.

The pastor is expected to prepare two expositions of Bible truth every week, to conduct the public devotions of his flock, to visit every family, to conduct funeral and marriage services, and to perform various miscellaneous duties on committees, etc. No industrious minister complains of this; what disturbs him is that too many of his people shirk their duties or expect him to perform them. A church-member has no more right to roll his work over to the minister than he has to ask that minister to do his marketing or to come and conduct his family worship. My friend, you need to do your own spiritual work as much as you need to eat your breakfast. You need to bear also your full share of responsibility for the spiritual life and progress of the church in which you are a partner. You are made on entering it are every whit as solemn and as binding as the vows and promises made by your pastor at the time of his installation.

A Christian who is keen to work will soon find his right place. If he is "apt to teach," if he has the knack of breaking Bible truth into nice morsels for children's mouths, then he will soon scent his way into the Sabbath-school. Another person has some leisure and a sincere love for souls; to such an one personal visitation among the poor and among the unevangelized is a welcome work. It only requires health enough to walk and loving courtesy enough to talk to those who are visitors. If a Bible and a tract go with the visit as well as a loaf for the hungry or a toy for the children, then all the better. The outlying masses never will be evangelized until there is more personal contact and personal effort.

Here is another whose gift is a melodious voice, and whoever can sing before a Christian's great choir. It is a threefold pun that those who can sing and won't sing ought to be sent to "sing Sing"; but the duty of using a voice in the praise of God is as clear as the duty of using a purse to supply God's treasury. There are diversities of gifts. I can recall now a venerable man in my church to which I ministered. He had no knack at teaching, no skill in music, and but little money to contribute. But he did possess a most marvellous gift for prayer. Like Dr. Brown's "leaves the door-keeper," he could "pray" and come into "close groups" with his pleading importunity. That old man's prayers reminded me of Eli's plea with God for heavenly showings. Happy is the church that has men and women who are mighty to "prevail with God!"

Reader, have you found your place? Then stick to it. Labor on there, even though it be in the humblest corner of the Master's vast acreage of vine and olive. An idle Christian is a monster. Every cup of water given in the Master's name hath its reward. Wherefore neglect not the gift that is in thee, however small it be; and whatever thou doest for the Lord, do it heartily.—Evangelist.

Professor Huxley on Evolution and Ethics.

The Romanes lecture which Professor Huxley delivered at Oxford on "Evolution and Ethics" deals with a subject on which we are glad to hear what the Professor has to say. His lucid and orderly speech, his great power of exposition, and the directness and simplicity of his mind are always attractive and stimulating. We have not, however, read any essay or lecture of his for a long time with the interest with which we have read his, which is now published. It makes one rub one's eyes and ready to ask if it really is Mr. Huxley who is speaking. Much of what he says in the latter part of his lecture has often been said before, but it has been said by those who do not accept as complete the evolutionist's account of man's moral experience. The wonder is that Mr. Huxley should say it. And yet perhaps there is no greater wonder in it after all, for he does know something of philosophy, as some of his essays and his little book on Hume in the "Men of Letters" show; and a man who knows far less of philosophy than he knows cannot but see that there are some awkward questions on the subject with which he deals to which the evolutionist, as yet, has given no satisfactory answer. The chapter in Darwin's "Descent of Man" on the "Moral Sense" is one of the most interesting chapters in the book, but it hardly touches the edge of the questions at issue between the evolutionist and the moralist. Mr. Huxley sees these questions and feels the difficulty of them, but he gives no help towards answering them from the evolutionist standpoint. We do not see our way, he says, beyond generalities. He says the gap in the evolutionary account of the evolutionist's account of the moral nature and the moral experience of man, but he makes no attempt to supplement this account. Not only so; some of the admissions which he makes cannot be reconciled with the theory of the evolutionist's theory of morals, nor with Mr. Huxley's own account of man's obligations as he states it in this lecture.

The evolutionist explains the growth of man's moral nature in the same way as he explains the growth of man's physical nature—both are purely natural phenomena, both due to purely natural causes. Justice, truthfulness, honesty are as much natural products as bile is, or, as we think Mr. Taine once said, as vitriol or sugar. At a certain stage, for example, in his history, man found it expedient not to snatch like a dog his fellow-creature's dinner out of his hand, or walk off with his hunting weapon, and this has ripened, by repetition and experience through ages, into the virtue we call honesty. Mr. Huxley accepts this explanation as substantially correct. "They—the propounders of this explanation—adduce a number of more or less interesting facts and more or less sound arguments in favor of the origin of the moral sentiments in the same way as other phenomena, by a process of evolution. I have little doubt, for my own part, that they are on the right track. But as the immoral sentiments have no less been evolved, as Mr. Huxley says, as the other, the thief and the murderer follow nature just as much as the philanthropist. Comic evolution may teach us how the good and the evil tendencies of nature are brought into play, but it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than we had before." What is said in the latter part of this quotation has been said over and over again by those who believe in the spiritual nature of man and a spiritual basis of duty, but we do not remember to have heard it from an evolutionist of Mr. Huxley's type before. The evolutionist who says this should be able to say something more; he leaves place for, and in fact, demands some "sanction" for the moral sentiments which he cannot find in nature. He knows the bottom out of any doctrine of "natural ethics." There are no natural ethics, if we put any real moral sense in the word ethics. The evolutionist who shuts out God and denies the spiritual nature of man, who holds that nature is non-moral but has no more warrant for using the words right and wrong than he has for using the word ought. He may speak of what is pleasant and painful, of what is useful or injurious to the individual or to society, but of good and evil in the moral sense he cannot speak. There is no good or evil if this is the whole account of man's moral nature. Cruelty, selfishness, sensuality are as much in the line of nature as kindness, honesty, faithfulness, and purity. The immoral sentiments have just as good an account to give of themselves as the moral sentiments, and no vital distinction can be made between them on natural grounds. Is it because Mr. Huxley feels the force of this that he speaks so guardedly of "what we call good and evil," and, again, of "what we call goodness or virtue"? It would almost seem as if he were doubtful whether or no these words stand for realities. We wish he had been a little more explicit here. If there is as much natural sanction for the immoral sentiments, does he feel them also binding on him? and if he does not, as, of course, he does not, why does he not? Where does he get his warrant for making a distinction? We feel truth and honesty and purity binding on us, and we feel that the evolutionist is wrong in saying that there is the same natural sanction for the one as the other. Then there must be some sanction not natural which belongs to the former which does not belong to the latter, some extra-natural or super-natural sanction. Mr. Huxley is obliged to make in practice a distinction between the moral and the immoral sentiments for which he admits he cannot find the least warrant in the evolutionist's account of man's moral nature. His philosophy suggests one conclusion to him, his experience and the exigencies of practical life compel him to another.

Then, again, Mr. Huxley feels himself in a difficult position between the natural man and the ethical man, the "fit" man and the good man. Evidently he has as little liking for nature's "fittest" man, the natural man, as the rest of us. The natural man, to put it plainly, and yet hardly more plainly than he puts it

himself, is something of a brute; he does not care much whom he treads down or who lacks so long as he is full. The lecturer prefers the ethical man, the man who practices "what we call goodness or virtue." But he can neither justify his preference for the good man, nor, so it seems to us, can he account for it. "The practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which is at first opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of treading down all competitors it requires that the individual shall not merely respect but shall help his fellows. . . . It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence. The 'fittest' man, that is, in nature's eye, the man who succeeds and survives, is the self-assertive man, the man who can tread down his competitors, who probably has no theory, but whose practice is more or less of the gladiatorial kind. Nature takes care of the man who is in line with her, and eliminates most closely the cosmic process. While the 'best' man, by virtue of the very qualities which make him best, is less fit. The better the man the less fit in the evolutionist's sense of fitness.

We think Mr. Huxley a little overstates the fact in the extract we have just given. The practice of virtue is not as much opposed to success in the struggle for existence as he says. The practice of virtue runs to prosperity in the main. "Virtue has a tendency to procure superiority and additional power," Bishop Butler says. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* The meekness of Christ is the expression of the same truth. Rule and possession come in the long run to the good; the natural man is not as strong and as secure even in the natural order as the ethical man. But however this may be, Mr. Huxley separates himself from the common good. One catches, indeed, a strain of this kind towards the end of his lecture. And yet, if the evolutionist's account of man's nature is a complete account, we cannot see why he should prefer the ethical man. He is certainly pleasanter to live with, easier to get on with, but this is not all that Mr. Huxley means by his preference. If it were, the tone of indignation and approbation with which he speaks of the men who have no care for the common good would hardly be in place. The evolutionist ought to prefer the fit man, the man whom nature reckons best. But he cannot; he feels himself constrained to prefer a different best from nature's. Nature's best man is not man's best man. There is another point here. If nature has given us all our moral sentiments and our moral ideals, how have we come to have a different standard of fitness or best from nature's? Nature has made our morals, and yet our morals are not in line with nature. The ethical man has reached a line at which he turns round on nature and says that her ways are not good enough for him. The non-moral has produced the moral. Mr. Huxley speaks of the "first principles of ethics," which are "inconsistent with the cosmic process." We wish very much he would tell us where he gets these first principles from. They are "inconsistent with the cosmic process," and yet we are told that the cosmic process has given us all our morals. How has the cosmic process managed to give us principles which are inconsistent with itself?

Towards the end of the lecture Mr. Huxley gives a practical turn to it. He tells us that we must not imitate nature but resist her. "Let us understand once for all that the ethical process of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, but in combating it." To follow nature in the evolutionist's sense of the word nature, excluding the spiritual, is destruction to the nobler life of man. The principles which make for the well-being of man individually and collectively are not given by nature. Natural impulses and appetites, the tiger and the ape in us, must be curbed and disciplined. Man's progress depends on his maintaining a constant fight with that "cosmic nature which is born with us." Mr. Huxley is simply preaching here in the academic idealistic doctrine which is a common-place of Christian teaching. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee." Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. "Put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful desires." "Walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." "To mind the things of the flesh is death; to mind the things of the spirit is life and peace." Mr. Huxley's preaching is sound. But again, what we do not see is how an evolutionist, who does not admit some extra-natural sanction for the moral sentiments, comes to preach in this way. He tells us that man has been made by nature; and yet he has come to a line at which he breaks in part with nature, and his ethical moral progress turns on his resistance to nature. Surely it means this, that man is not wholly nature's child, that there is something in him which nature has never given him. Man is not entirely contained in nature. We accept, in the main, the evolutionist's account of the development of the moral sentiments, but there is an element in them, some sanction with them, for which the evolutionist has no explanation. Man is God's child as well as nature's child, and he is bound to God as well as to nature. And there is a Holy Spirit about him and in him leading him and lifting him out of the flesh into the spirit, and out of the material into the Divine. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.—H. Bonner, in London Freeman.

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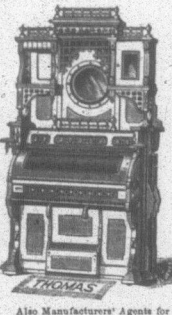
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