

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Adapted from Hurlbut's Notes.

Fourth Quarter.

PAUL IN MELITA AND ROME.

Lesson VI. November 7.—Acts 28, 1-16.
GOLDEN TEXT.

We know that all things work together
for good to them that love God.—Rom.
8, 28.

I. SAVED. VERSES 1-6.

1. WHEN THEY WERE ESCAPED—The original means "escaped in safety." THEY KNEW—The Revised Version has these clauses, "we were rescued," "we knew," making it a personal recollection. THE ISLAND—It is sixty miles south of Sicily, and almost pear-shaped, seventeen miles long and nine miles at its greatest width. WAS CALLED MELITA—It was originally peopled by the Phœnicians, and its people in Paul's day retained their ancient language. It is now possessed by Great Britain and is an important stronghold.

2. THE BARBAROUS PEOPLE—The term "barbarians" anciently did not mean savage or uncivilized, but was used of all peoples who were neither Greek nor Roman. This island had manufactures and some fine buildings. SHOWED US NO LITTLE KINDNESS—All the more grateful to the storm-tossed voyagers because doubtless unexpected, for it was common for those who had been shipwrecked at sea to be plundered and perhaps murdered on the shore. KINDLED A FIRE—This must have been kindled in some covered place or in a house. Received us all—The word implies that both shelter and hospitable care were given. THE COLD—This shows that the storm was in the winter, and was not the sirocco, a hot hurricane.

3. PAUL HAD GATHERED—We notice the ready and helpful spirit of the apostle, as active in the small details of life as in its greatest affairs: preaching the gospel and helping to build a fire in the same willing spirit. A VIPER—No poisonous serpents are now found in the island, for it is the most thickly settled section in Europe, and reptiles always disappear before an increasing population. OUT OF THE HEAT—It had been in a torpid state among the sticks, and was warmed into activity. FASTENED ON HIS HAND—The account would seem to indicate that the viper bit the apostle, and that the islanders knew that the bite was deadly.

4. WHEN THE BARBARIANS SAW—They learned that the passengers in the ship were mostly criminals under guard, and watched them with an ignorant curiosity. HANG ON HIS HAND—Perhaps hanging by its teeth where it had bitten. THEY SAID—Just as people are prone to argue a special divine interference in the affairs of life, forgetting that all life is under a divine order. A MURDERER—How unjust are the opinions of those who judge by appearances only! VENGEANCE—Rather, as in Revised Version, "justice," whom the ancients personified as the daughter of Jove. Even the most ignorant minds perceive that sin demands punishment.

5. SHOOK OFF THE BEAST—Calm in the consciousness of God's care and in the assurance of God's promise that he should yet reach Rome and stand before Caesar. FELT NO HARM—Thus was fulfilled the promise of Christ, "They shall take up serpents," Mark 16, 18.

6. WHEN HE SHOULD HAVE SWOLLEN—The viper's bite, according to the ancients, caused a violent inflammation, swelling of the part bitten, and speedy death. LOOKED A GREAT WHILE—Watched his acts, and perhaps noticed his calm bearing. SAID THAT HE WAS A GOD—The world is often mistaken in its estimate of God's people both when it praises and when it condemns.

II. HONORED. VERSES 7-10.

7. IN THE SAME QUARTERS—In that part of the island. THE CHIEF MAN—In Greek, protos, "the first." This title is not named elsewhere in ancient history, but is confirmed by ancient inscriptions recently dug up on the island of Malta, thus verifying Luke's characteristic accuracy in official titles. WHOSE NAME WAS PUBLIUS—According to ancient tradition Publius became a Christian, was the first bishop of Malta, and afterward died a martyr. RECEIVED US—Paul, Luke and Aristarchus are here referred to; not the entire two hundred and seventy-six people who had been shipwrecked. THREE DAYS—Until more permanent quarters could be secured.

8. SICK OF A FEVER—The original, which is in Luke's precise style, as a physician would describe the disease, indicates an intermittent fever and dysentery, a malady not infrequent in this island.

PAUL ENTERED IN AND PRAYED—The miracles of Christ were wrought by a word of power, but those of the apostles were generally accompanied with prayer. HEALING HIM—The act was Paul's, but the healing power was of God.

9. OTHERS ALSO—Revised Version, "the rest," implying that there was a general interest in the apostle and an extensive work of miracles; so that all the sick in the island (which may have been thinly populated) may have been healed.

III. WELCOMED. VERSES 11-16.

11. AFTER THREE MONTHS—They had left Crete early in October, were shipwrecked in the same month, and embarked from the island of Malta in February. A SHIP OF ALEXANDRIA—Alexandria was situated at the western mouth of the Nile, and was the second city in the Roman empire and the commercial metropolis of the Mediterranean. WINTERED IN THE ISLE—Having taken refuge from the storm in which Paul had been shipwrecked. WHOSE SIGN—The sign was an image sculptured on the prow, which gave its name to the vessel. CASTOR AND POLLUX—Or, as in Revised Version, "The Twin-Brothers."

12. LANDING AT SYRACUSE—This was a large city on the western coast of Sicily, eighty miles north of Malta. WE TRAVELED THERE THREE DAYS—Probably waiting for a favorable wind to carry them northward through the Strait of Messina.

13. FETCHED A COMPASS—Rather, as in Revised Version, "made a circuit," or sailed along the Sicilian shore, beating and tacking in the face of unfavorable winds. CAME TO RHEGIUM—A place directly on the top of the Italian boot, where the strait is but three miles wide between the mainland and Sicily. AFTER ONE DAY—Waiting for a wind to carry them through the strait. THE SOUTH WIND BLEW—And as a consequence they sped rapidly northward. PUTOLI—Here their voyage ended, for at last they were on the soil of Italy. Putoli was one of the principal ports of Rome, situated on the famed Bay of Naples. It is now called Pozzuoli.

14. WE FOUND BRETHREN—It was now the second generation after Christ's ascension, and the gospel had spread into all parts of the Roman empire. WERE DESIRED TO TARRY—And were permitted to do so by the kindness of the centurion of Julius. SO WE WENT TOWARD ROME—Over the famous Appian Way, called "the queen of roads," which followed the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

15. FROM THENCE—From Rome itself, where already a church was in existence, to which Paul had written the Epistle to the Romans four years before. THE BRETHREN—Some of whom may be named among the greetings in Rom. 16. HEARD OF US—The week's delay at Putoli gave opportunity for sending word of the apostle's coming. APPII FORUM—"The market of Appius," or, as we would now name it, Appianstown, a small village and stopping place for travelers, forty-three miles from Rome. THE THREE TAVERNS—A group of shops, ten miles nearer Rome than Appii Forum. Thus two separate parties came to meet Paul. TOOK COURAGE—Showing that he had been depressed, perhaps from not knowing how the church at Rome might receive him, since it was more or less made up of Jewish Christians, who as a class were not friendly to the apostle. How much of comfort comes with kind greetings!

Two children lost their lives in a burning house at Preston, seven miles from Halifax, Wednesday at midnight. The house, occupied by Peter Downey, a colored man, took fire while the family were asleep. Mrs. Downey was ill, and it was with difficulty she and her children were removed. There were two others in the house at the time, nephews of Downey—Arthur and Harry Willis, eight and ten years of age. They were removed last of all, but when taken out were found suffocated by smoke, and nothing could be done to restore them.

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