

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, Aug. 19th, 1877.—Thessalonians and Bereans.—Acts xvii. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 10-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”—Acts xvii. 11.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xvii. 1-14. Tuesday, 1 Thess. i. Wednesday, 1 Thess. ii. Thursday, 1 Thess. iii. Friday, vs. 7; John xix. 12-22. Saturday, vs. 11; John v. 33-47. Sunday, vs. 13, 14; Matthew x. 16-42.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul and Silas at Thessalonica. Vss. 1-4. II. Their persecution and departure. Vss. 5-9. III. Arrival at Berea. Vss. 10-12. IV. Persecution. Vs. 13. V. Sent away by the brethren. Vss. 14.

QUESTIONS.—In what direction, and how far is Amphipolis from Philippi? What is the city he next reaches? How far, and in what direction is Thessalonica from Apollonia?

Vs. 1. Is this the first or second synagogue we have reached in Macedonia?

Vs. 2. What plan of work is referred to by the phrase “as his manner was”?

Vs. 3. What truth, the greatest of all truths, did Paul preach about in Thessalonica? What is meant by “opening” in this verse? Luke xxiv. 32. What by “alleging”? See Gal. iii. 1. In what sense was there a necessity, “a need-be,” about our Saviour’s sufferings?

Vs. 4. Among what class did Paul have many converts? What was the character of Paul’s preaching? 1 Thess. ii. 2. How did he place his distinctness above suspicion? 1 Thess. ii. 9.

Vs. 5. What course do the unbelieving Jews take to get rid of the apostles?

Vs. 6. Not finding them, whom do they bring to the rulers? What is their charge? To what is it a noble testimony?

Vs. 7. Was this pretended loyalty of the Jews to Caesar sincere? Who before them had made a similar pretence to loyalty? John xix. 12.

Vs. 9. For what reason was this security taken from Jason and the others?

Vs. 10. To what city do Paul and Silas now go? In what direction and how far?

Vs. 11. Here, too, Paul seeks out a synagogue; how does he find the Jews of Berea compare with the Jews of Thessalonica? For what will the Berean Christians ever be remembered? What has Christ taught us on this point? John v. 39.

Vs. 13. What effect had Paul’s success in Berea upon the Jews in Thessalonica? Do you suppose they had forgotten that Paul was once a persecutor himself?

Vs. 14. To what place does Paul now go? From what town did he probably embark for Athens?

Paul’s second missionary journey has thus far included Antioch in Syria, Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas, Samothracia, Neapolis, and Philippi. He now extends it to Amphipolis about thirty-three miles south-west of Philippi, a large commercial city on the river Strymon, and the capital of the first division of Macedonia; thence to Apollonia, about thirty miles south-west of Amphipolis; thence to Thessalonica, a great maritime city, and well fitted to be the centre of great gospel light. It was the capital of the second division of Macedonia, and the seat of a Roman governor. It shared the commerce of the Aegean Sea with Corinth and Ephesus. It was a place of great luxury and wealth, retained its importance all through the Middle Ages, and is now the second city in European Turkey (Saloniki). There were many Jews in Thessalonica when visited by Paul. In their synagogue he was at first well received. But the great success of apostolic preaching, especially among Gentile proselytes, aroused Jewish envy, compelling the missionaries to leave the city.

EXPOSITION.—In this lesson also we meet with only Paul and Silas. Luke, and probably Timothy, were left behind at Philippi for the sake of the Philippian Christians, though Timothy rejoined Paul at Berea (vs. 14), while Luke was not again with Paul till his third missionary tour. xx. 5, 6. Our lesson presents to us Paul and Silas at Thessalonica (vss. 1-10), and at Berea (vss. 10-14).

I. At Thessalonica. Verses 1-10.—1. Their arrival. Scripture is silent as to scenery, art, etc.

2. Their labors.—These letters show that Paul at least worked “night and day” at his trade, in order “to pay their way.” 1 Thess. ii. 9. This, however, was only that he might more successfully preach. The place of preaching was at first, as usual, “the synagogue,” the hearers, therefore, Jews and proselytes; the length of time allowed him as his opportunity in the synagogue, three consecutive Sabbaths; his method, that of friendly discussion in the exposition of Old Testament prophecy concerning the coming Messiah and King of Israel (vs. 7); the “opening” being the explanation of passages and the “alleging” being the setting forth and application of the deduced meaning; the substance of his doctrine, the necessity according to Jewish Scripture of the death and the resurrection of the predicted Messiah, especially the identity of that predicted one with the Christ Jesus whom they announced.

4. Their success.—Scanty among the Jews proper, but great among the proselytes, both men and women. In vs. 4, “some” is contrasted with “great multitude,” and “not a few.” “The chief” or prominent women, are specially mentioned, partly to show the greater success of the gospel with those not Jews, and partly because of their greater influence in the cause.

4. Their opposition.—Not as at Philippi, from heathen men and worldly interest, but from Jews, and religious zeal, such as once moved this very Paul to persecute. They “took” into their counsel and employ “certain wicked men, leaders of the rabble,” for such seems to be the force of the phrase translated “lewd fellows of the baser sort.” The purpose was not to kill Paul and Silas, but to arrest them, and secure their condemnation from the city authorities, as at Philippi. Their concealment was their safety, for they would not have been let off as easily as was Jason, who was clearly a well-known and honored citizen of large means. “The people,” in vs. 5, are not the mob, but rather the legal assembly of the citizens. Thessalonica was “a free city” where the privilege of Roman citizenship had been granted. “The rulers” tried the case in the Forum, and could pronounce the final sentence, even of death. The Jews had just been expelled from Rome by Claudius for some disturbance; the tumult at Philippi was known; there may have been seditions elsewhere; and now the Jews would fix the blame of all upon the Christians in general, and upon Paul and Silas in particular, as the Christian leaders. The “security” was doubtless money bail, and implies the wealth of Jason and other converts; and it was “to keep the peace,” which could only be by sending away Paul and Silas. These left, not from fear for themselves, but for the peace and prosperity of the church.

II. At Berea. Verses 10-14.—The greater nobility of the Berean Jews consisted in a more “honest and good heart,” or disposition, perhaps in part because in this inland town they were less corrupted by their business and its connection, but chiefly because God “opened their hearts” to receive the word with readiness. The Scriptures searched were the Old Testament. The search was in the line of apostolic teaching. It was “daily,” because of the depth of interest. When God wakes men to a sense of their need and of the greatness of his grace, religion becomes the first and chief concern. Christianity asks no man to go blindly at another’s will, but each to search and prove for himself what is God’s will and truth. Paul left, while his companions remained. It is not certain whether Paul really went to the sea, and so took ship to Athens, or made a feint of going that way to mislead his persecutors, but instead, went by land.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, Aug. 26th, 1877.—Paul at Athens.—Acts xvii. 22-34.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Tim. ii. 5.

THE STORY OF THE LESSON.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Luke and Timothy stayed behind at Philippi, but Paul and Silas left the city for Thessalonica. They stayed there three or four weeks, and, as Paul’s habit was, went into the Jewish synagogue every Sabbath and argued with them out of their own Scriptures. Some of the Jews believed, but the greater number were Gentiles, of whom many were the chief women. The other Jews who did not believe got a crowd of idle, worthless fellows together and rushed to the house of Jason, where the apostles were living. They could not find Paul and Silas; so they dragged Jason, the owner of the house, and some other Christians, before the rulers, and charged them with having turned the world upside down, and with saying there was another king besides Caesar, one King Jesus. The rulers were troubled: for they were afraid of Caesar, and made Jason and the rest give a pledge that the apostles should leave the city. So Paul and Silas went away by night to Berea, fifty miles or more away, where they went at once to the synagogue, to preach Christ. They found the Bereans more noble than those in Thessalonica; for they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether Paul’s words were true. Many believed; but when the Jews of Thessalonica heard it, they came to Berea and stirred up a mob there also.

SELECT SERIAL.

From The Day of Rest.

DORA’S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XXXII.—AN ERRAND TO THE WEST-END.

“Look here, Lisa,” exclaimed Hugh, when at length she made her appearance again at Matthew Pedder’s window, “will you have this? I’ve been keeping it for you nearly a fortnight.”

Lisa looked at the half-crown which he held out to her, and her face flushed, but she did not offer to take it. “Where did you get it?” she asked.

“A kind gentleman that came into the shop gave it to me, and I want you to have it. It will help to pay your rent, Lisa.”

“Oh, it’s too much to take: you keep it for yourself,” said Lisa.

“No, you must take it, please, Lisa,” urged Hugh. “You once gave me a halfpenny, that was all you had, and now I want to give you this that’s all I’ve got. Do take it.”

“Does Matthew know?” asked Lisa, shyly.

“Yes, he knows all about it, and he’s pleased for me to give it to you.”

Lisa looked astonished, and after a pause she said, “Well, I’ll take it, Hughie, if you’re sure you can spare it. And thank you very much.”

She hurried away then, feeling that she could not talk comfortably with him after accepting his gift; and although she deeply felt his kindness, she resolved not to go near him again for a long time. Hugh wondered when week after week passed by and she did not come; and he said to himself, “Well, if she isn’t kept at home by illness, isn’t she a little bit ungrateful?”

The boy had quick intuitions, but he could not easily read Lisa.

Matthew and he had been busy for some time executing Mr. Barnett’s orders; and when they were completed, Matthew had to go himself to arrange the new specimens in a cabinet at the gentleman’s town residence, instead of making up one of his “artistic” cases at home.

With supreme indifference to the wants of the public, so far as his stock was concerned, Matthew locked up his shop one morning, and with his completed order carefully packed, he started off with Hugh for the West-end.

The railway facilities were not as great then as they are now, and the greater part of the way to Grosvenor Square they travelled by omnibuses. It was a lovely April morning, and Matthew would have the boy outside the busses, that he might point out to him places of interest on the way.

On that sorrowful night when he came to London with his mother he was too weary to notice anything. He was conscious of passing through miles of lighted streets that all seemed alike to him; but he had not been interested by anything in particular.

Now, on this bright spring morning as he drove along with Matthew, creeping at a snail’s pace through the thronged City streets, and all along Holborn and Oxford Street, away towards their destination, everything was new to him and delightfully full of interest. It was indeed great London with its teeming life, its earnest stir, its superabounding energy, its unceasing murmur of doing and daring. All this might have been considered distasteful to a boy of his retiring, dreamy, poetic temperament; yet he liked it, and felt gratified to find himself a part of it. The poet may revel with keen delight and interest in the beauties of woodland and mountain, of sky and sea, and the thousand charms of nature; but if he be a true poet the world of human nature will also be full of charm and interest to him; and nowhere can that be studied to such advantage as in our great centres of population, comprising highest civilization and lowest heathendom, with all the grades of life between.

Matthew and Hugh were set down at Duke Street, and a short walk brought them to Mr. Barnett’s house. They found him at home, and in his genial, unaffected manner he gave Matthew a kind greeting, and expressed himself glad to receive those new specimens at last. He was interested and amused with Matthew’s quaint words and ways, and being an enthusiastic collector of all sorts of curiosities, and something of a student of ornithology, he and Matthew soon fell to talking like old cronies over those birds.

He took Matthew into a room containing large cabinets stocked with a miscellaneous collection of things which he had foraged together without any arrangement or classification. Matthew shook his head when he saw where his precious birds had to be located, amongst evil-looking reptiles, and pieces of stone, which in his opinion, should have been thrown out into the road.

“You’d better ha’ let me put ‘em up nobby, sir, in one o’ my artistic cases,” he said ruefully. “Their beauty ‘ll be clean lost ‘mongst all this rubbish, if you’ll excuse me making that observation, sir; but if these things is of vally, I han’t got the eye to see it, sir.”

Mr. Barnett laughed. “Yes, they’re valuable,” he said; “but they all want classifying. I am going to transport them bodily down to my country-house, and get them arranged with my larger stock of treasures there; and then I will see that your beautiful birds shall have a worthy place; but at present they must be content here, so will you put them up amongst the rubbish as artistically as you can?”

While Matthew was engaged in doing this in rather spiritless fashion, the lady whom Hugh had seen with Mr. Barnett in the Kentish lanes in the autumn, entered the room. She was dressed in a morning costume of pale blue trimmed with white lace, but her charming attire did not cause her to look charming in Hugh’s eyes: there was the ungracious expression in her face which he had noticed before, and which prevented his admiring her in the smallest degree.

She raised her eyebrows in astonishment when she saw plebeian Matthew engaged with her husband, laughing and chatting as familiarly with him as a bosom friend. Matthew had no hat to doff, so he put his finger to his forehead, and made a stiff bow, of which the lady did not deign to take any notice.

“What are you doing, Harry?” she asked in a quick, sharp manner.

“Importing foreign birds, my dear, very rare ones. Come and see,” he replied in a careless, good-tempered way.

“Oh dear! how much more rubbish are you going to import into those ridiculous cabinets?” she said, impatiently.

“Not many tons, my dear,” said her husband in a way that made Hugh laugh lightly.

She looked rebukingly at the child, and then remarked, “I think I have seen this handsome boy before, have I not, Harry?”

“Once before, I think, Josephine. We met him with his mother one evening last autumn, when we were going down home.”

“Ah, yes;—a poor beggar-woman, who was making her way to town, and you helped her. So the boy has got something to do, I suppose? He is not

ragged as he was; but what he has gained in tidiness he has lost in picturesque-ness,” she said, looking with anything but admiration at his thick boots and corduroy suit, which Matthew had bought him for week-days.

Hugh’s face flushed when she called his mother a beggar-woman, and Matthew looked as if he could slay her. He was greatly pleased when the boy said in a firm, quiet tone, “Please, ma’am, my mother was not a beggar-woman.” And his soft eyes flashed as he spoke.

“No, no; she was no beggar, my dear; you make a mistake,” said her husband, pleasantly. “She was a most decent woman, but in reduced circumstances, you know; and overcome by misfortunes.”

“Oh, I made a mistake, did I?” she said, with a disagreeable smile, touching Hugh’s crimson cheek with one finger. “You are rather more quick than occasion warrants, little boy; but it has a pretty effect. See what fire I have brought to his eyes and cheeks, Harry!”

“Yes, he’s a bonnie lad, and I mean to keep an eye on him,” said Mr. Barnett, smiling kindly at him. “But now come, Joey, and give me your opinion of my beautiful birds.”

And seeing that both Matthew and Hugh were somewhat incensed, he dexterously managed to keep his wife from saying anything more to them while she remained in the room.

(To be Continued.)

Half of the Widow’s Mite.

A gentleman called on a rich friend for some charity.

“Yes, I must give you my mite,” said the rich man.

“Do you mean the widow’s mite?” asked the solicitor.

“Certainly,” was the answer.

“I shall be satisfied with half as much as she gave,” said his friend. “How much are you worth?”

“Twenty thousand pounds.”

“Give me then your cheque for say ten thousand; that will be half as much as the widow gave, for she, you know, gave her all.”

The rich man was baffled. Covetous people often try to shelter themselves behind the widow’s mite, and under the cover of her contributions give meanly to the Redeemer’s cause. Her example, indeed, rightly interpreted, would pluck selfishness out of the soul, and fill to overflowing the channels of true benevolence.

Swearing.

A little boot-black was standing very patiently at the entrance of a city hotel, waiting for a “job,” when two young men, dressed in the extreme of the fashion and puffing away at their Spanish cigars, stopped before him.

“Here, boots,” said one of them, in a tone of lofty superiority, “let me see if you are master of your trade!” placing his foot on the boy’s knee as he spoke.

The boot-black plied his brush with skill, and the boot soon brightened under his ready touch; the young bloods amusing themselves, meanwhile, by trying to frighten the boy to make more haste, by swearing at him.

The little fellow stood it as long as he could, when, having finished one boot, he suddenly dropped the foot, and returned his brushes to the box in which he carried them.

“What now?” asked the young dandy.

“I would rather not finish that boot, sir,” answered the boy.

“Not finish them!” exclaimed the swell-head, with an oath; “then you don’t see the color of my money.”

“I don’t want your money,” said the boy, “and I will not stay here and listen to your swearing.”

“Let the boy alone,” interrupted the other young man, “and let him finish his job.”

“Well and good,” said the first speaker, “but it is really a rare joke that a boot-black should be afraid of swearing.”

“I can’t afford to swear,” answered the boot-black, with a significant glance upward.

“Do you mean that it costs anything to swear?” asked the young man in astonishment.

“Yes,” replied the boot-black, with solemn earnestness, “it will cost me my soul.”

Let all those who read these lines remember this.—Churchman.