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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON VIII.—Feb. 24.

(For Questions see Star Quarterly and Lesson Papers.)

THESSALONIANS AND BEREANS.

SCRIPTURE LESSON, ACTS 17: 1-14.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Thessalonians and Bereans. Acts 17: 1-14.

T. The Scriptures and Christ. Luke 24: 1-30.

W. Jewish history. Acts 17: 1-14.

S. Saved by brethren. Acts 17: 1-14.

An important text. John 3: 16.

S. Preachers instructed. Matt. 10: 21-28.

S. Divine protection. Isa. 41: 10-20.

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 17: 11.

TOPICS.—The truth preached.

Its reception in one place.

A better class of people.

TIME, A. D. 52.

NOTES AND HINTS.

Connecting Link.—This lesson follows in order

of the preceding, and brings before us an exhibi-

tion of the same spirit which Paul met so often in his

first missionary journey.

The seeds of Christianity were well planted in

Philippi. The unjust persecution of the apostles

were probably of no disadvantage to the progress

of the Gospel. Some of the preachers could now be

spared for work in other places, but with quiet

dignity they chose their own time. After visiting their friends and speaking

words of comfort to the little Christian community, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, leaving Luke,

as seems likely, to care for and continue the work at Philippi, left that city and went down

the coast in a south-westerly direction until they came to Thessalonica, then a large city, and

now containing a population of seventy thousand.

I. The truth preached. In that place they

found a synagogue to which, Paul, as was his custom,

went every Sabbath day and preached unto the people the doctrine of the Messiahship

of Jesus Christ, reasoning with them out of the Scriptures. The Word of God was always the

basis of the apostle's preaching. Upon that foundation, held sacred by the Jews, he could

build an argument which they could not deny or destroy. His first point was that the Christ

was a sufferer, in order to fulfill the predictions of him; second, that he must rise from the

dead, thus vindicating his claim to be a complete divine nature, and his power over death

and the grave; third, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he preached, is that very Christ. We

can imagine something of the manner in which he would present his argument. It is easy to

believe that a profound impression was made, by his learning, eloquence and powerful reason-

ing, on the minds of those who heard him. It sometimes seems strange that any were uncon-

vinced, yet so it was. Even when Paul preached, there were but "some" evidently not many

who believed. Yet "some" of the Jews did believe. The Lord opened their hearts. They

received the truth and it made them wise unto salvation. Of the devout Greeks, whose minds

were less under the power of prejudice, many believed, and the chief women, not a few.

So the seed found soil and began to grow.

II. Its reception in one place. Of this topic

we have already spoken, but something may be

said of its reception in the same place, of how it

was not received there. The Jewish mind was

a bigoted mind, a mind full of strong prejudices,

and unwilling to yield them to any but the most

overpowering influence, and then to such

parted with them reluctantly. In a town like

Thessalonica there was no lack of loafers and

idle fellows who could easily be roused and

converted into a wild mob by any who chose to

apply the match to such combustible material.

Among these, the Jews who in the synagogue,

did not wish to believe, scattered the seeds of

disturbance and soon had a great commotion

going on in the city. They attacked the house

where Paul and Silas were staying, and failing

to find them, seized their host and certain others

belonging to the household, and dragged them to the

market place, where they were bound with

whips. The apostles thought it not wise, or necessary, to

remain. The work had been begun. The leaves

were hidden where it was sure to work; their

presence were endangering the safety of their

friends and they quietly departed.

III. A better class of people. About fifty

miles westward they came to the smaller town

of Berea. There they found, in the synagogue,

an audience of willing listeners, who not only

gave a candid hearing to the word spoken, but

went to searching the Scriptures for themselves,

to see what the apostles said was true. For

entertained whenever we enter the sanctuary.

A few years ago two young friends with myself,

all equally giddy, dropped into the Catholic

church one week-day morning to witness a wed-

ding ceremony. As there were but few present

and the advent of the priest and the wedding

party delayed, I thoughtlessly produced a news-

paper which happened to be in my possession

and we all, as quickly as possible, proceeded to

peruse its contents. As we were sufficiently

spectful to make our comments to each other in

whispers, but very soon from a distant corner

of the church a young woman approached, and

laying her hand on my shoulder, said in a quiet

but firm undertone, "We do not read news-

papers in church. I am very sorry to add that

our little party was thoroughly snubbed, and

enough to leave the church at once. We were

thoughtless, never having been trained to attach

any special sacredness to the church on week-

days, but as I now look at it, the woman was

perfectly right and we were very impolite. The

Catholic teachings in regard to the sanctity of

the House of God are not incompatible with the

spirit of my topic.

Church-goers should train themselves, or at

least force themselves, to remember that they go

to church for the sole purpose of worshipping

God. Trite and useless as the remark might

seem to be, it is not possible to forget this, and

to enter the sanctuary with the mind either in

a state of complete inattention or wholly engrossed

with other thoughts not appropriate to the hour

and place. The worshipper, it seems to me, upon

entering the church, should take his seat at once

with an air of becoming reverence, and not allow

the state of mind into which he has come by

preparations to be disturbed by any outside

disturbance. Many of the ceremonial forms of

Episcopal worship are extremely irksome to

me, but I must confess that in a moment of

bowing the head in a moment of silence

prayer as soon as the worshipper takes his seat.

It is an outward confession of the motives of

the congregation in thus assembling together, and

can be very appropriately performed, at

least in spirit, by all congregations.

If the House of God is a sacred place, then

all the exercises connected with the services of

worship are sacred. From the first note of the

organ to the closing Amen of the benediction,

the service becomes worship to God. Loud

talk, jesting, or any other irreverent conduct

is not admissible in any polite assembly, but

the organ of many voices in a religious

gathering is especially annoying in a religious

and sensitive taste. The organ prelude is de-

signed as I understand it, (if I am not too theo-

retical in the matter) to draw the rustic, and the

offices too pronounced advent, of the incoming

congregation, by the choir, to prepare them for

the service. The organ prelude is a religious

mark that the unscheduled conversation of

even three or four members of a congregation

totally defeats both these gracious results for the

worshiper. I am, moreover, if the pious believer

has been given to music, it is necessary to

choir, and all its sweet harmonies destroyed by

several voices which rise at times above the song,

and all the way along chime in a discordant

undertone, becomes at length almost unendur-

able. It seems that both these questions are

not asked in vain, for in connection with the

organ, I read the other evening this little

item in our city Journal. At one of our

churches last Sunday, when the organ made

one of those full stops by suddenly pushing in the

"stop" and the use of other devices known to

the performer, a shrill voice, which had been

drowned before was distinctly heard by the

congregation, "I don't care, I don't want a piano!"

Imagine the shame and confusion of the girl!

For of course it was a girl; the whole form and

have been in a meeting where there was

prayer before. But they can not stay away

from this.

There will be great emotion in that prayer-

meeting. There will be strong crying and tears.

There will be shrieks and howlings then. There

will be weeping and wailing, such as might

melt the adamant. It will not be dull, and

dreary and formal. There will be feeling, the

deepest feeling. Those who could not bear the

very name of religious excitement once, will

be the most strongly excited of all. Ah, they

must have the most terrible emotions when

they are led to ask the rocks and mountains to

fall on them. How dreadful must be the sight

of him that sitteth on the throne and the Lamb,

when the fear of them inspires such a prayer as

that.

They will all pray. Some prayer-meetings

have but two or three, a few at the most, that

take any part in them. The mass often take

little or no decided interest in the object of the

meeting. Not so of this meeting. The record

shows that not only the great men above-men-

tioned shall pray, but every woman, and every

freeman. And then the nature of the

object before them decides that all will pray.

Viz.—God on his throne of judgment, and the

Lamb in his wrath! The whole assembly, being

inspired with the same terrible emotions of

awe, will be constrained to offer the same

prayer.

And what a prayer! It is not addressed to

God or to the Lamb. They never received any

spiritual homage from the multitude present at

this meeting. They so ill-treated the blessed

God, carried it to such desperate lengths,

that they now have little to offer him, but

mercy. Hence the dreadful prayer before us.

"Hide us from the face of him that sitteth

upon the throne." They beg to be

hidden beneath the mountains, rather than

be before the face of God. They choose the

rocks shall fall on them and give them the

powder, rather than encounter the wrath of the

Lamb. To what desperate misery must men be

driven when they can implore so dreadful a

curse upon themselves!

And what a prayer-meeting are all from

this world. "The kings of the earth, etc."

We have divine assurance that all who persist

in treating Christ unworthily, are on their way

to this meeting. The multitudes who are now

doing this think little of this matter; yet every

man who is in sin is hastening toward it.

Most of them have little to do with prayer-

meetings in this world, and now they find

anything to do with the service of God. They

refrain from prayer now, but they will pray at

this meeting. God's character and claims had

been brought here, but there will be no want of

emotion in view of this.

Reader, are you on your way to this meeting?

You hope not. But it is your manner of life,

and not your hopes that determines this. If you

have little or nothing to do with prayer in this

world, you are now aware of secret sin in your

life. You are now aware of secret sin in your

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