

The Sunday-School.

FIRST QUARTER.
LESSON XII.—March 22.

Paul's Message to the Ephesians.

EPHESIANS 2: 1-10.

Study the Whole Chapter.

GOLDEN TEXT.—By grace ye are saved through faith.—Eph. 2: 8.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time.—The Epistle was probably written at some time during the two years of Paul's first captivity at Rome, A. D. 61, 62.

Place.—It was written at Rome, primarily to the Christians of Ephesus, but was probably a circular letter to all the churches of the Lycus valley in the Roman province of Asia on the west coast of the modern Asia Minor. See Lesson X.

Place in the History.—Acts 19: 1-12. Paul visited Ephesus on his second and third missionary journeys. The last time he remained nearly three years, probably A. D. 53-56, his influence reaching out over a wide region.

A WONDERFUL LETTER.—The Epistle to the Ephesians sums up, in a wonderful way, the entire gospel of Christ. It was written in Paul's Roman prison and sent to Asia by Tychicus, together with the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.

The keynote of the Epistle is found in the present lesson, it is the new life in Christ—the church as the body of Christ, and therefore filled with his Spirit.

DEAD IN SINS WITHOUT CHRIST.—Vs. 1-3. Paul shows how God brought the Ephesians into his church. In painting their lost condition without Christ, the apostle paints a picture of all sinners. He uses four dark colors in the picture.

DEATH. And you hath he quickened. Made alive. Who were dead in trespasses (special acts) and sins (all forms of sin—a more general term). Sin is the death of the soul. On the other hand, every contact with Christ, every act of obedience and faith, quickens us, pours new life into our souls.

WORLDLINESS.—Wherein in time past ye walked. The sinful life is spoken of as the road in which the evil walk. According to the course of this world. In accordance with the evil customs and sinful tendencies of mankind.

SATAN. According to the prince of the power of the air. Satan, the personal spirit of evil. Of the air Professor Abbott understands as alluding to the common impression that evil spirits dwell in the air.

Paul's conception of Satan may be studied in the following passages: Acts 13: 10; 26: 18; Rom. 16: 20; I Cor. 5: 5; 7: 5; II Cor. 2: 11; 11: 14; Eph. 4: 27; 6: 11; I Thes. 2: 18 II Thes. 2: 9; I Tim. 1: 20; 3: 6, 7; 5: 15; II Tim. 2: 26; Christ also spoke of him often and plainly: Matt. 4: 10; 12: 26; 25: 41; Mark 8: 33; 4: 15; Luke 10: 18; 22: 31; John 8: 44; 14: 30. Satan exists, and is to be feared; but the humblest Christian may conquer him, in Christ's strength.

The spirit. Satan, or Satan and his followers. That now worketh. The Ephesians have been freed from his baneful dominion, while he is now working among others, namely, in the children of disobedience. This phrase means simply the disobedient. Among whom also we all. All Christians, Jew and Gentile, Paul and the most ignorant disciple, were, before conversion, children of disobedience. Had our conversation. R. V., "lived," the manner of living as well as speaking. In the lusts (i. e., desires) of the flesh; including all sinful desires.

GOD'S ANGER, the darkest color of all. And were by nature the children of wrath. Even as others. "All have sinned," so all should be equally humble.

ALIVE WITH CHRIST.—Vs. 4-7. But God. There is always God, to set off against the dark picture of human sin and woe. Who is rich in mercy. Abounding with an infinite love that covers all our sins. For his great love... God offers us salvation in Christ, not because we deserve it, but because he loves us. Even when we were dead in sins. Such is the real state of an unrepentant sinner; yet God loves him. Hath quickened us. Brought us to life. Together with Christ. Together with Christ the sinner is crucified, nailing his old self to the cross, and rising into newness of life.

(By grace ye are saved). This parenthesis is inserted to render more forcible, by repetition, the thought that since they were dead in sins they were helpless, and their life must have come by grace of Christ.

And hath raised us up together, being partakers through faith in the joy and power of his resurrection. And made us sit together in heavenly places. Heavenly experiences of the new life. In Christ Jesus. Resurrection, enthronement, heaven, all are in Christ.

That in the ages to come. The eternity, to which we are to sit with Christ in heavenly places. He might show the exceeding riches of his grace. See note on rich in mercy, V. 4. Through Christ Jesus. The ground of his kindness towards us is in Christ.

HOW THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION IS BROUGHT ABOUT.—Vs. 8-10. There are three steps in this transformation.

FIRST STEP: The New Life is a Gift. For by grace ye are saved through faith. By undeserved grace, sought and received by our faith, God saves us.

And that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Eternal life must be a gift, it would be impossible for us to earn so vast a reward.

SECOND STEP: Humility. Not of works. Salvation is not to be obtained in the Pharisee's way, by prayers in the market-place, ostentatious gifts and similar parade of good deeds. The good deeds are to be done, but with humility; and our hope of heaven must rest, not on them, but on Christ.

Lest any man should boast. Paul often recurs to this lowly thought. Few things are more offensive than to see a man thinking himself to be something, when he is nothing.

For we are his workmanship. God formed us. Created. Redemption is creation reaffirmed. In Christ Jesus. Christians are said to be created in Christ Jesus because their very existence, spiritually, depends upon their union with him.

THIRD STEP: Fruit-bearing. We are created unto good works. R. V., for "good works." Good works are the

result of our new life, not the means through which it comes. Which God hath before ordained. God prepares our good works (1) by revealing his will in the Bible; (2) by the guidance of his spirit; (3) by giving up strength and determination; (4) by setting before us doors of opportunity. That we should walk in them. Following the path God's providence has marked out for us.

A GOSPEL FOR ALL THE WORLD.—Eph. 2: 11-22. Paul has unfolded the principles of Christ's gospel. He has painted the pictures of sin and death, of salvation and life, and has shown how to transform the one into the other. He closes the glorious chapter by showing the wideness of the gospel invitation.

A MOTHER'S CHARGE.

I. H. Gambell in the Baptist Standard vouches for the following:

In the town of —, Texas, a young man lay dying of wounds received in a saloon row. Neighbors, male and female, crowded the parental home. "The scene," says an eye witness, "was indescribable in its intense agony." On the right of the bed sat the father and on the left sat the mother, each holding a hand of their boy, while the death damp gathered on his handsome brow. Solemn awe was on each face, and death stillness was disturbed only by the heavy breathing of the drink victim.

Quietly the mother arose from her seat and, turning her deathly pale face to the silent watchers, said: "My boy is dying on the altar of society. I charge you women with his blood. From your hands he received the wine glass; with you he drank at the punch bowl over his mother's protest. I charge you men with his blood. You voted to place the gilded saloon before him, and it beguiled him to this awful end. Each of you have known full well that the wine glass punch bowl and the saloon cannot be maintained without victims.

"My husband and my sons, I charge you before God with the blood of your son and brother. You gave the saloon your influence, and votes for business, and now you would give all your business to close the gaping wounds and light again these sightless eyes. Won't you let this victim be enough, and spare the lives of other boys and hearts of other mothers." Then she staggered and fell.

A month later this mother's heart ceased to ache, and her emancipated spirit went up before the Great Judge to testify against the murderers of her boy, male and female. Society women and business men, "Are you ready for the judgment day?" How many victims have you helped to send on before? How many are to come after you, as contributions to your society and business? Are any of these victims your friends, neighbors, brothers, sons?

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"One of my daughters had a terrible case of asthma. We tried almost everything, but without relief. We then tried Ayer's Cherry Pectoral and three and one-half bottles cured her."—Emma Jane Entsminger, Langsville, O.

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