

The Sunday-School.

SECOND QUARTER,
LESSON XII.—June 21.

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY.

2 Tim. 3:14 to 4:8.

Read the Epistle.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*—2 Tim. 4:8.

Learn by heart 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:7, 8; Rom. 15:4; Ps. 119:97, 105.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.*—Written just before Paul's martyrdom, probably in A. D. 66 or 67.*Place.*—Written from Paul's prison in Rome to Timothy at Ephesus. Luke may have been the amanuensis (2 Tim. 4:11).*Place in the History.*—The Acts close abruptly with Paul's first imprisonment, probably A. D. 61-63. Released, it is thought that the apostle visited Timothy at Ephesus and Titus in Crete, and then went to Spain; that on a second journey in Greece and Asia he wrote First Timothy and Titus, and was again arrested and taken to Rome, writing Second Timothy from the second imprisonment.*The Circumstances.*—In A. D. 64, a few months after Paul's release, there burst forth at Rome that frightful conflagration which raged for six days, and laid a vast region of the city in ashes. The Emperor Nero enjoyed the dreadful sight. It was rumored that he had caused the fire, and to avert this suspicion Nero laid the charge on the Christians. Multitudes were arrested. They were slain with the sword; they were covered with the skins of wild beasts to be torn to pieces by dogs; they were wrapped in sheets of pitch, tied to stakes, and set on fire. Nero drove about in his chariot by the flare of these hideous human torches.

Paul was probably arrested on some charge connected with this persecution. He was thrown into the lower dungeon of the Mamertine prison. Under these sad circumstances Paul wrote to Timothy this Epistle. Its purpose was to instruct him in his work, and to urge Timothy and Mark to come to Rome. But before they could reach him the great apostle was beheaded.

Timothy and Paul.—Timothy, born probably in Lystra, Asia Minor, was converted by Paul. He went with Paul to Europe on his second missionary journey, and was the apostle's comrade and helper for the rest of his life, becoming like a son to him. After Paul's release Timothy was placed in charge of the church at Ephesus, and worked there till his own martyrdom. It is said he was killed with sticks and stones by the enraged Ephesians because, at one of the licentious festivals of their idolatry, he protested against some particularly abominable performances.

The pastoral epistles of Paul, the two to Timothy and one to Titus, are so called because they are addressed to young pastors, in charge respectively of the churches at Ephesus and Crete. These epistles are of the highest value to Christian workers, because they discuss the best methods of Christian work. Our lesson is a comprehensive view of Christian work, its foundation, purpose, hindrances and rewards. It may be summarized under four rules.

FIRST RULE: ABIDE IN THE BIBLE.—

Vs. 14-17. Scripture knowledge is the foundation of Christian work. Paul congratulates Timothy on his home training in the Bible. *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.* Bible truths, including the gospel Paul had taught him. *And hast been assured of.* Timothy had been assured of these truths by the witness of the Spirit in his heart, the experience of his life. *Knowing of whom thou hast learned them,* namely, his good mother and grandmother and Paul himself. *And that from a child.* The Rabbis mention five as the age at which Jewish children are to begin to read the law. Youth is the time to learn. A twig is easily bent. *Thou hast known the holy scriptures.* The Old Testament, instilled in his youth, and the New Testament, as the writings appeared. *Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.* The Old Testament, through its many prophecies of the Saviour; the New Testament, through its witness to the Saviour's life and death. *Through faith which is in Christ Jesus,* faith reposed in Christ.*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,* literally, "God-breathed,"—truth breathed into men by God; or as is said in 2 Pet. 1:21, "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."*Proofs of the inspiration of the Bible.*

(1) The fact that Christ taught the doctrine. (2) The belief in their own inspiration held by the Bible writers. (3) The spiritual power of the Bible. (4) The fact that the Bible is essentially different from all other books in its character and effects. (5) The wonderful accuracy of the Bible, though fully tested by modern science. (6) The impossibility that the Bible could have been written by the men who wrote it unless they were inspired. (7) The fact of miracles. (8) The long course of fulfilled prophecy. (9) The unity of the Bible, though written in three languages, by at least thirty-six different persons, during 1500 years. (10) The fact that the Bible exactly meets the needs of all nations and races and all conditions and ranks of men. (11) The mighty effects of the Bible in the history of the world and the progress of civilization. (12) The experience of every Christian, who proves its supernatural power in his life.

And is profitable. Paul names four ways in which the Bible is of service: (1) *For doctrine.* For instruction. (2) *For reproof.* For conviction of wrong ways of living and thinking. (3) *For instruction in righteousness.* The training and discipline that belongs to and produces a righteous life.*That the man of God.* The Christian pastor. Every faithful Christian may win this title. *May be perfect* (R. V.), ("complete"), in all the qualities and powers needed for his work. *Thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* The test of the divine inspiration of Scripture is here placed in its practical usefulness.SECOND RULE: TELL OTHERS ABOUT CHRIST.—Vs. 1-4. Paul goes on to define that work, prefacing his definition with a charge that shows its importance. *I charge thee, therefore.* In view of all the opportunities Timothy had enjoyed. Paul's adjuration includes four motives to fidelity, applicable to us as well as to Timothy: (1) *Before* (R. V., "in the sight of") *God.* God's all-seeing eyewas upon Timothy. (2) *And the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick* (the living—those that are alive at his coming) *and the dead.* The second motive is the certainty and solemnity of judgment. (3) *At his appearing.* Christ's glorious second coming, possibly at any time. (4) *And his kingdom.* Timothy should do his work well because it would help to establish Christ's rule on earth.Now follows Paul's famous definition of a Christian preacher, which is applicable to all Christian workers. There are seven particulars, but the last six are forms of the first. *Preach,* proclaim like a herald, *the word,* the gospel. It must be done: (1) *Faithfully.* *Be instant.* Be ready for any opportunity. *In season, out of season.* Take opportunity or make it. For the truth, the occasion is always seasonable. (2) *Searchingly.* *Reprove.* Convict them of their errors. (3) *Powerfully.* *Rebuke.* In the original the verb has a thought of threatened penalty. (4) *Encouragingly.* *Exhort* (5) *Patiently.* *With all longsuffering.* Timothy's hearers would be stupid, obstinate, perverse, abusive; he would need patience. (6) *Wisely.* *And doctrine.* Timothy must teach and not scold. It is useless to cut down weeds unless good seed is sown in their place. *For.* The reason why Timothy should be urgent in delivering his message: the opportunity is brief; *for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.* (R. V., "but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts"). Having itching ears, applies not to the teachers but to the listeners. They hear for empty gratification.*Henceforth.* Paul's life-struggles were over; there remained only to receive the reward. *There is laid up for me.* Deposited, reserved. *A crown of righteousness.* The leaf garland of the Grecian games, taken by Paul as a symbol of his eternal reward in heaven. *Which the Lord, the Righteous Judge.* Paul was still thinking of the athletic contests, presided over by an umpire, or judge. *Shall give (award) me at that day.* The day of Christ's second appearing. *And not to me only.* Paul would not seem for an instant to exalt himself above his brethren. *But unto all them also who love his appearing.* That look longingly forward, with love of Christ, to his second coming; that pray sincerely, "thy kingdom come." These are Paul's last words to the churches, for the remainder of the epistle is occupied with personal greetings. And though he died a prisoner, he passed away as all Christians may pass away, with a song in his heart, words of cheer upon his lips, and shining in his eyes the reflected light of heaven.

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