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FROM

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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October 1 to December 25, 1892.

LESSON I.—October 1, 1892.

SAUL OF TARSUS CONVERTED.—ACTS 9:1-20.

(MEMORY VERSES, 15-18.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3.

1. Who is mentioned as a leader in the martyrdom of Stephen? Acts 7:58; 8:1.
2. What did he from that time do to the church? Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:13.
3. What was his feeling, and how did he manifest it? Acts 26:11.
4. What motive prompted him to such a course? Acts 26:9.
5. How prominent was he in the Jewish nation? Gal. 1:14.
6. What support did he have in his work of persecution in distant cities? Acts 9:1, 2.
7. What took place as he came near Damascus? Verse 3.

8. What time of-day was it? Acts 26:13.

9. What followed the appearance of the bright light? Acts 9:4; 26:14.

NOTE.—“It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” These words of Jesus throw light on Saul’s career, if they do not reveal the secret of his zealous persecution. They show that he was fighting against conviction. He was conscientious. Acts 24:16. He was zealous for God, although not according to knowledge. He regarded the new sect as dangerous to the cause of God; and, not knowing the liberty of the gospel, he supposed that force might be used in the matters of religion. But he had heard Stephen’s discourse, and a conviction that these persecuted ones might be right would persistently thrust itself upon him. This conviction he regarded as a sinful thought, and, shocked that he could for a moment harbor such a thought, he would redouble his efforts against the church. So at last Christ himself appeared to him,* and Saul at once yielded. This should be a lesson to us to be careful how we accuse those who oppose the truth, of being dishonest. They may, like Paul, be kicking against the pricks. If we say that these have heard the truth, we must remember that Saul had also, and that it had been preached with a power more than human. It would be difficult for any man to be more bitter against the truth than Saul was; yet he was sincere, and afterwards preached the faith which he once destroyed. This record is given to emphasize the lesson that the Saviour has given us, that we should in every case withhold judgment.

10. What was the reply to Saul’s question as to who was speaking to him? Acts 9:5.

*To show him that this conviction was not from Satan but from him.

11. For what purpose did the Lord say he had appeared to him? Acts 26:16-18.

12. Where was he sent to find out what he should do? Acts 9:6; 22:10.

13. How intelligible was the conversation to Saul's associates? Acts 9:7; 22:9.

14. How had the light affected Saul? Acts 9:8; 22:11.

15. How did he spend the three days following his entrance into Damascus? Acts 9:9.

16. Whom did the Lord send to him? Verses 10-12.

17. What did the Lord say to Ananias, to remove his doubts? Verses 13-16.

NOTE.—“I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.” Saul was called to suffering; so are all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 3:12; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3. The secret of Paul's steadfastness was that he recognized this calling from the first. He never encountered anything unexpected. The men who apostatize when persecution arises are the ones who have calculated on having an easy time. They are the men for whom the way has been cleared, so that they could embrace the truth without any difficulty. They are like the soldiers who enlist thinking that army life is all dress parade, and who very naturally run when they see fighting. But the true soldier enlists with the understanding that he may receive wounds. So the men who enter the cause of God expecting tribulation, will not be moved by it. But while God calls men to suffering, he at the same time makes known to them his own joy, so that they can say that this “light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 Cor. 4:17. See also Rom. 8:18.

18. What did Ananias say to Saul? Verse 17; chap. 22:12-16.

19. What did Saul immediately do? Acts 9:18-20.

20. How successful was his preaching? Verses 21, 22.

LESSON II.—October 8, 1892.

DORCAS RAISED TO LIFE.—ACTS 9:32-43.

(MEMORY VERSES, 33, 34.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” Acts 9:36.

1. Where was Peter when we last heard of him? Acts 8:14, 25.

2. To what place did he finally come? Acts 9:32.

3. What afflicted person did he find there? Verse 33.

4. What did Peter say to him? and what was the result? Verse 34.

5. What was the effect of this miracle? Verse 35.

6. What pious woman lived at Joppa? Verse 36.

7. Upon her death, what did the disciples do? Verses 37, 38.

8. What did Peter find on his arrival at Joppa? Verse 39.

9. What did he do? Verse 40, first part.

10. What was the result? Verses 40, 41.

11. How were many affected toward the word? Verse 42.

12. To what miracle of Jesus' was this one similar? Luke 8:49-56.

13. What signs did Jesus say should go with believers? Mark 16:17, 18.

14. How great works did he say should be done by those who believe on him? John 14:12-14.

15. Is this promise limited to believers in any particular age?

NOTE.—Jesus said, "These signs shall follow them that believe," naming several. And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." What greater works can be done it is impossible to say; but we have the word of Christ that they shall be done. Those who ask, "Why don't we see some miracles, if they are to be in the church till the end of time?" do not realize that in every age the gifts of the Spirit have been manifested in the church, although often to a limited extent. But if it is asked why miracles are not so common now as in the first century, we can only reply by pointing to the conditions. When the same devotion, unselfishness, faith, and zeal are seen among believers, then the same power may be expected to be seen in the church.

LESSON III.—October 15, 1892.

PETER'S VISION.—ACTS 10:1-29.

(MEMORY VERSES, 1-4.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Acts 10:34.

1. Describe the character of Cornelius the centurion. Acts 10:1, 2.

NOTE.—In the case of Cornelius we have a striking illustration of Christ's words, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17. God wants to save men. He is on the lookout for men to save. So anxious is he to save them that he rejects no candidate, but wherever he sees one feeling after him, he at once takes his hand and leads him out into the clear light. Of his servant, in whose hands is the difficult task of making holy people out of the most unpromising material, he says: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." Isa. 42:3, 4.

2. What appeared to him one day as he was praying? Verse 3.

3. What message did the angel bring him? Verses 4-6.

4. What did he do in response to the words of the angel? Verses 7, 8.

5. As the men drew near to Joppa the next day, what was Peter doing? Verses 9, 10.

6. Relate Peter's vision in detail. Verses 11-16.

NOTE.—There are probably few nowadays who take so superficial a view of this portion of Scripture as to suppose that it is meant to teach that all animals are equally clean, and may be eaten. The distinction between clean and unclean beasts was not an arbitrary one, but was inherent in the nature of the beasts. That nature remains the same to-day that it always was. Moreover, Peter plainly tells the object of the vision. It was intended as an impressive lesson to teach him that he was not to sit in judgment on men, calling one clean and another unclean. He is not to judge that one man is beyond the possibility of salva-

tion, but is to sow beside all waters, not knowing "whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Eccl. 11:6.

7. What followed as soon as the vision passed? Verses 17, 18.

8. How was Peter prepared to receive the message which the men brought? Verses 19, 20.

9. In what words did they reply to Peter's question as to their business with him? Verses 21, 22.

10. When did they return to Cæsarea? Verse 23.

11. What precaution was taken to have witnesses of what took place? Verse 23, last part.

12. What preparation had Cornelius made for Peter's arrival? Verse 24.

13. What took place when he met Peter? Verses 25, 26.

14. What did Peter say when he went in and found the company assembled? Verses 27-29.

15. What law forbade a Jew to keep company with one of another nation?

NOTE.—The student will search in vain throughout the Old Testament to find any law whereby God forbade the Jews to associate with the Gentiles. It is true that he forbade them to intermarry with the heathen, and so he still forbids his people to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Likewise he calls his people to come out from the world, and be separate. As in the old time, so now, he wants his people to be a peculiar people; but nowhere do we find in ancient times he wanted his people to be any more distinct and separate from the world than he does now. The *law* to which Peter referred was

simply one of the traditions of the Jews by which they made void the law of God. See Matt. 15: 1-9; Mark 7: 1-13. God was emancipating Peter from the shackles of Jewish tradition. If he had not been so firmly bound, he would have learned the same lesson from the life of Christ, who never paid any attention to the traditions which Jewish bigotry had invented.

16. What did Peter say that God had showed him? Verse 28, last part.

17. What are God's people not to do? Matt. 7: 1; Rom. 14:4; James 4: 11, 12.

18. When only is judgment to be rendered? 1 Cor. 4:5.

19. When will the saints be allowed to judge men? Dan. 7:22.

20. Until that time what is the church's only office? Matt. 5: 14-16; Phil. 2: 14-16.

21. State some of the evidences that before the first advent of Christ, as well as after, God wanted his people to be missionaries.

NOTE.—That God's design for the Jews was that they should be a missionary people, is plainly shown in the Scriptures. To Abraham God said, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Gen. 12:3. He had also said to him, "Thou shalt be a blessing." Therefore all who are children of Abraham must likewise be a blessing. Long before the first advent of Christ, God had spoken of himself through Isaiah as "a light to the Gentiles," as well as the Restorer of Israel. Isa. 49:6. Moses had said to Israel: "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and

your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." Deut. 4:5, 6. This shows that they were to let the nations know of God's truth. The case of Naaman the Syrian, of the queen of Sheba, of Jeremiah, sent to the nations round about Israel (Jer. 27:1-4, etc.), and of Jonah, sent to the Ninevites, shows that God desired the salvation of other nations no less than of Israel, and that he wished to use the Israelites as the agents in their salvation.

LESSON IV.—October 22, 1892.

PETER AT CÆSAREA.—ACTS 10:30-48.

(MEMORY VERSES, 39-43.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43.

1. Tell how God prepared Peter to go to the house of Cornelius.

2. How did Cornelius come to send for Peter?
Acts 10:30-33.

3. In what excellent condition to receive the truth was Cornelius and his friends? Verse 33, last part.

4. With what words did Peter begin his discourse? Verses 34, 35.

5. Was this a truth of recent origin? Gen. 12:3; Jonah 3:10.

6. With what were Cornelius and his friends acquainted? Acts 10:36-38.

7. What did Peter then recount? Verses 39-41.

8. What had Christ's witnesses been commanded to preach? Verse 42.

9. To what had all the prophets also given witness? Verse 43.

10. Then was justification by faith a new thing in the days of Christ and his apostles? Gen. 15:6; Heb. 4:2; Gal. 3:8.

11. What took place while Peter was still speaking? Acts 10:44.

12. What did the Spirit cause them to do? Verse 46.

13. How did this manifestation affect Peter's brethren? Verse 45.

14. What did Peter himself say? Verses 46, 47.

15. What was immediately done?

16. What did the pouring out of the Spirit on the Gentiles prove to the Jews? Acts 11:15-17.

17. What ought they to have known from the Scriptures, without this demonstration? Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8.

NOTE.—If anyone thinks that the Jews would certainly have known it if their Scriptures had taught that the Lord was as anxious for the salvation of other people as he was for the salvation of the Jews, let him remember how impossible it was for the disciples to grasp the idea that Christ was going to die, which was not only contained in the Scriptures, but was plainly and repeatedly declared to them by the Saviour in person. It needed this outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles to convince the disciples that God is no respecter of persons. But God is always the same, therefore he was never any respecter of persons. So it was always true that "in every nation he

that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Péter's tardy recognition of the truth did not make it a new thing with God.

LESSON V.—October 29, 1892.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED AT ANTIOCH.—ACTS

11:19-30.

(MEMORY VERSES, 21-24.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."
Acts 11:21.

1. What took place immediately upon the death of Stephen? Acts 8: 1.
2. To whom did they preach the word? Acts 11:19.
3. What different course did the disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene pursue? Verse 20.
4. What was the result? Verse 21.
5. When the news of this came to the church in Jerusalem, what did they do? Verse 22.
6. What did Barnabas do? Verse 23.
7. What was the result? Verse 24.
8. What is further said of his work and unselfishness? Verses 25, 26.
9. How long did they two continue to preach in Antioch? Verse 26.
10. For what is Antioch noted in the history of the gospel?—*Ib.*, last part.
11. While Saul and Barnabas were there, what was prophetically declared to the church? Verses 27, 28.

12. What did the Christians at Antioch determine to do? Verse 29.

13. How was this resolution carried out? Verse 30.

14. What exhortation should the church always have in mind? Gal. 6: 10.

15. What was the apostle Paul's practice? Gal. 2: 10.

LESSON VI.—November 5, 1892.

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON.—ACTS

12:1-24.

(MEMORY VERSES, 5-8.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” Ps. 34: 7.

1. Recite briefly the events of the last lesson.
2. What took place about that time? Acts 12:1, 2.
3. How did Herod further seek to gain the favor of the Jews? Verse 3.
4. How securely was Peter guarded? Verse 4.
5. What means did the church employ for Peter's release? Verse 5.
6. What was Peter's condition the very night before he was to be killed? Verse 6.
7. What words of the Psalmist could Peter have spoken? Ps. 4:8.
8. While Peter was sleeping, who came upon him? Acts 12: 7.
9. Where had the angel of the Lord been all the time? Ps. 34:7.

10. What did the angel do and say? Acts 12: 7, 8.
11. What did Peter think of all this? Verse 9.
12. How far did the angel lead him? Verse 10.
13. What did Peter then know? Verse 11.
14. What did he do? Verse 12.
15. What took place when Peter knocked at the door where the disciples were praying? Verses 13, 14.
16. How did those assembled receive Rhoda's joyful news? Verses 15, 16.
17. When Peter was admitted, what did he do? Verse 17.
18. What was Herod's end? Verses 20-23.
19. How successful was his attempt to crush out the gospel? Verse 24.

NOTE.—The fact that Herod was not able to keep Peter in prison, shows that he did not have it in his power to grant him any favors. He who has no power to punish, has no power to protect. But the power of Herod represents the power of all civil governments. God's people have nothing to receive of them, and should ask them for nothing. Peter could do much more for Herod than Herod could do for Peter. Even while Peter was in prison, Herod might well have sought his protection. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them," and they who have that protection need no other. Indeed, if they seek any other, they thereby tend to deprive themselves of that, for by so doing they show their lack of faith in the Lord's protection. The Lord says, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." Ps. 146: 3. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven, and earth." Verses 5, 6.

But it may be said that God uses civil rulers to accomplish his purposes. That is true, and he alone knows how and when to use them. None of them have any power over his people except as he gives it to them. John 19:11. Therefore, if he allows them to be put to death, as in the case of Stephen and James, they may know that it is his will. "He giveth his beloved sleep." And if the Lord has work still for his servants to do, they may rest confident that there is not power enough in the world to keep them in prison.

LESSON VII.—Nov. 12, 1892.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.—ACTS 13: 1-15.

(MEMORY VERSES, 2-4.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Luke 24:47.

1. What steps did the Christians at Antioch take in view of the dearth that was foretold? Acts 11:28, 29.

2. By whom did they send their gifts? Verse 30.

3. When Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch, whom did they take with them? Acts 12:25.

4. Who were prominent in the church at Antioch? Acts 13:1.

5. What did the Spirit say as they were engaged in the work? Verse 2.

6. How did they obey this command? Verse 3.

7. While thus sent by the church, who was really sending Barnabas and Saul? Verse 4.

8. Where did they first go?—*Ib.*

9. At what town in Cyprus did they first preach?
Verse 5.
10. Who assisted them in their work?—*Ib.*
11. To what place did they next go? Verse 6.
12. Whom did they there find? Verses 6, 7.
13. What opposition was here met? Verse 8.
14. How was Satan's agent rebuked? Verses
9-11.
15. What were the immediate results? Verses
11, 12.
16. Whose work was this sharp rebuke? Verse 9.
17. Where did Paul and his company go from
Paphos? Verse 13, first part.
18. What took place there?—*Ib.*; last part.
19. What was their next point? Verse 14.
20. What invitation did they here receive?
Verse 15.

NOTE.—If this lesson were entitled "Paul's First Missionary Tour," it would more nearly express the fact in the case than it now does. That would not be really correct either, for when Paul went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, preaching the word, he was just as truly on a missionary journey as at this time. Those who, after the death of Stephen, went everywhere preaching the word, were on a missionary journey just as surely as Paul and Barnabas were. Philip was on a missionary journey when he came to Samaria, and it was when he was on a missionary trip that the eunuch was converted. All these men were Christians, and were preaching Christ. And it was before Paul was even converted. So it is evidently a misnomer to entitle this lesson "The First Christian Missionaries."

LESSON VIII.—Nov. 19, 1892.

PAUL'S SERMON AT ANTIOCH.—ACTS 13: 26-43.*(MEMORY VERSE, 38.)***GOLDEN TEXT.**—"To you is the word of this salvation sent." Acts 13: 26.

1. In response to the invitation to speak in the synagogue at Antioch, what familiar history did Paul rehearse? Acts 13: 16-22.

2. What did he connect with the mention of David? Verses 23-25.

3. What encouraging word did he speak to those present? Verse 26.

4. How had the dwellers in Jerusalem condemned themselves? Verse 27.

5. What story did Paul next rehearse? Verses 28-31.

6. What glad tidings did Paul now declare? Verses 32, 33.

7. In what words is the resurrection of Christ spoken of in one place in Isaiah? Verse 34.

8. Where are these words found? Isa. 55: 3.

9. In what other way did Paul show from the Scriptures the resurrection of Christ? Acts 13: 35-37.

10. What glorious gift is assured by the resurrection of Christ? Verses 38, 39.

11. To what does the apostle Peter say that we have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? 1 Peter 1: 3, 4.

12. But in what condition only can we have a hope of that inheritance? Rom. 5 : 1-4.

13. Then what must we know of the resurrection of Christ, in order to have this hope? Phil. 3 : 10; Eph. 1 : 18-20.

14. How can we know the power of his resurrection? Rom. 6 : 3-5; Col. 3 : 1.

15. With what exhortation did Paul close his discourse? Acts 13 : 40, 41.

16. What request followed? Verse 42.

17. What did Paul and Barnabas do after the meeting? Verse 43.

LESSON IX.—NOV. 26, 1892.

THE APOSTLES TURNING TO THE GENTILES.

ACTS 13 : 44 to 14 : 1-7.

(MEMORY VERSES, 46-48.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles.” Acts 13 : 47.

1. Relate the circumstances of Paul's preaching in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia.

2. What request was made at the close of the sermon?

3. Who came the next Sabbath? Acts 13 : 44.

4. How did this interest affect the Jews? Verse 45.

5. What did Paul and Barnabas say to them? Verse 46.

6. What command had they to preach to the Gentiles? Verse 47.

7. Where is this scripture found? Isa. 49 : 6.
8. How did this saying affect the Gentiles? Verse 48.
9. How extensively was the word preached in that region? Verse 49.
10. What brought the work of Paul and Barnabas to a close? Verse 50.
11. To what place did they then go? Verse 51.
12. In what condition did they leave the converts? Verse 52.
13. What was the result of the speaking in Iconium? Acts 14 : 1.
14. What opposition did they encounter here? Verse 2.
15. How did the Lord witness to their preaching? Verse 3.
16. What exhortation is given to us in view of preaching thus witnessed? Heb. 2 : 1-4.
17. What was the result of the work in Iconium? Acts 14 : 4, 5.
18. Were did the apostles then go? Verses 6, 7.

NOTE.—It is worthy of notice that the Sabbath is mentioned four times in this chapter. In verse 27 it is referred to as the time when the prophets are read in the synagogues. It is said that this is done every Sabbath day. This excludes any day from being called the Sabbath except those days on which the Jews assembled for worship. But the most important point to notice is the fact that the day on which the Jews worshiped is called the Sabbath. The only reason for this is that that is its name. The fourth commandment says that the seventh day is the Sabbath. Ex. 20 : 10. The seventh day of the week

is the only day that the Lord named. All the other days are designated simply by numbers; the seventh has a name—the Sabbath. That should be sufficient to settle the matter, but there is an opinion among some that after Christ came things were entirely changed,—that he came to make a revolution, to overthrow the Father's work and substitute his own. On this see John 4 : 34; 5 : 19, 20, etc. But this chapter and other passages show that in the New Testament things have the same names that they do in the Old Testament. The only place where we can learn of Christianity and Christian institutions is in the Bible; therefore, since the Bible calls the seventh day the Sabbath, all Christians are bound to call it the same. Without any controversy over the Old Testament, all Christians must agree that the New Testament was written far into what is commonly known as the Christian era, by Christian men, for the guidance of Christians, and that it was inspired by the Holy Ghost. Therefore the writers of the New Testament did not refer to the seventh day as the Sabbath because they had in their early life been accustomed to so call it, but because that is the name the Holy Spirit gave it in the beginning, and in all time since. No other day than the seventh can be called the Sabbath as long as the Bible is taken as the only standard of Christian faith and practice.

LESSON X.—December 3, 1892.

WORK AMONG THE GENTILES.—ACTS 14 : 8–22.

(*MEMORY VERSES, 8–10.*)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"In His name shall the Gentiles trust." Matt. 12 : 21.

I. Trace the route of the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch in Syria to Antioch in Pisidia.

2. What did they do in Antioch?
3. Where did they go next?
4. When driven from there, where did they go?
5. What afflicted man was in the congregation at Lystra? Acts 14:8.
6. What did Paul perceive in this man? Verse 9.
7. What followed? Verse 10.
8. What did this cause the people to think? Verses 11, 12.
9. What did they proceed to do? Verse 13.
10. When the apostles learned what the people were about to do, what did they do and say? Verses 14, 15.
11. What evidence of himself has God always given to man, as a witness against their idolatry? Verses 16, 17.
12. What may be learned of God from his works? Rom. 1:19, 20.
13. Where is the foolishness of worshiping idols most strikingly illustrated? Isa. 44:9-20.
14. As we meditate upon God's wonderful works, of what else are we reminded? Ps. 111:3, 4.
15. What effect did the apostles' words have on the excited crowd at Lystra? Acts 14:18.
16. What was more effective in causing a revulsion of feeling, and what was the result? Verse 19.
17. What wonderful miracle followed? Verse 20.
18. When the apostles returned to these cities where they had been persecuted, what did they do? Verses 21, 22.
19. What are the only references that Paul ever made to this fierce persecution? 2 Cor. 11:25; 2 Tim. 3:10-12.

NOTE.—It was not because of fear that the apostles fled from one city to another when they were persecuted, as is shown by the fact that they returned over the same road. After Paul was stoned, he went back into the city, and when they had finished their missionary tour, they went back over every city that they had visited. They fled because they were driven away, and could not at that time do anything more in those places. The slight reference, also, that is made to the stoning of Paul, contains a wonderful lesson, more expressive than anything else could be. What a rebuke for those of us who are inclined to make a great ado over even a little slight or reproach that comes to us in the line of our work. It can be explained only by remembering that Paul had in him the mind of Christ (see Phil. 2:5-7; John 4:34; 2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 12:1, 2), and esteemed all these things as light afflictions (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

LESSON XI.—December 10, 1892.

THE APOSTOLIC COUNCIL.—ACTS 15:1-11.

(MEMORY VERSES, 8-11.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Acts 15:11.

1. To what place did Paul and Barnabas return to labor after their missionary trip? Acts 14:25-28.

2. While they were there, what was taught the disciples by men who came from Judea? Acts 15:1.

NOTE.—It is quite necessary to note the character of the men who made the trouble at Antioch and elsewhere. The

apostles and elders at Jerusalem said of them that "certain which went out from us have troubled you with words; subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment." Verse 24, Revised Version. It will be noticed that in the Old Version "such" is a supplied word. Thus these men were irresponsible persons who did not represent the church. The apostles were not in sympathy with them. Their work was to subvert souls. This they did by preaching a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:7), for they were doing the same work that was afterwards done by the men who tried to overthrow Paul's work in Galatia. They professed to represent the church of Christ, but only that they might the more readily gain access to the disciples, to subvert them. They were "false brethren," from whose malice Paul was often in peril. See 2 Cor. 11:26.

3. What standing had these men in the church?
Verse 24.

4. How did the apostle Paul characterize them?
Gal. 2:4.

5. How was their work received by Paul and Barnabas?
Acts 15:2, first part.

6. Why did Paul and Barnabas thus oppose them?
Gal. 2:5.

7. Then of what must the teaching of these men have been subversive?
Gal. 1:7; Acts 15:24.

NOTE.—It should also be specially borne in mind that the subject of the controversy was the gospel. That was what made the question a vital one. It was concerning how men must be saved. Paul and Barnabas preached salvation by faith; these men taught salvation by man's work. If men must be circumcised in order to be saved, then faith in Christ would be proved to be insufficient.

As Paul afterwards wrote, "If righteousness came by the law, then is Christ dead in vain." Gal. 2:21. Moreover, the fact that the gospel was the subject of dispute is shown by Paul's statement that he resisted those men in order that the truth of the gospel might remain with his converts. Gal. 2:5. These false brethren professed to have the gospel, because they set forth what they claimed was the way of salvation; but there was no truth in their gospel. The truth of the gospel is that "through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved," and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." See also Rom. 10:6-10; Titus 3:3-6.

8. What would their teaching do for the disciples? Acts 15:10, 24.

9. What was finally determined to be done in the matter? Acts 15:2.

10. Was it the decision of the church alone that caused Paul to go up? Gal. 2:1, 2.

11. What is said of their journey to Jerusalem? Acts 15:3.

12. What did they do when they got to Jerusalem? Verse 4; Gal. 2:2.

13. Did Paul have to learn anything of the apostles and elders assembled at Jerusalem? Gal. 2:6; 1:11, 12.

14. When there had been much disputing in the council, to what did Peter call their attention? Acts 15:6, 7.

15. What had God done for the Gentiles when the gospel was first preached to them by Peter? Verse 8; Acts 10:44.

16. What was it concerning which God made no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles? Acts 15:9; Rom. 3:22.

17. Why does God make no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles in the matter of purifying the heart? Acts 15:8, first part; Rom. 3:22, 23.

NOTE.—Peter declared that in the matter of the purification of the heart God made no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. This is proof of the statement that the subject under discussion was the vital one of salvation. The fact that God “put no difference between us and them” was shown in his giving to uncircumcised Gentiles the gift of the Holy Ghost, even as he did to the apostles and brethren on Pentecost. And the reason why God thus put no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, in the matter of justification, was that “he knoweth the hearts.” There is no difference between the heart of the Jew and the heart of the Gentile, because all alike have sinned. Rom. 3:9, 22, 23. Men, judging by the outward appearances, often make a difference between men, but God, who looks upon the heart, knows that all are alike; therefore he puts no difference between men in the matter of cleansing the heart.

18. What did Peter say would be put upon the disciples if the teaching of the false brethren was adopted? Acts 15:10.

19. How only are all men to be saved? Verse 11; Rom. 3:22-24.

LESSON XII.—December 17, 1892.

BONDAGE AND FREEDOM.

(MEMORY VERSE, GAL. 5:11.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:36.

1. What was the cause of the trouble that arose while Paul was preaching in Antioch?
2. Tell what steps were taken to settle the dispute.
3. What was the standing of the men who made the trouble?
4. What effect was their teaching having?
5. Did Paul regard circumcision as a sin? Acts 16:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:6; 6:15.
6. Then why did he so strenuously oppose the teaching of those men? Acts 15:2, 5; Gal. 2:5.

NOTE.—It was circumcision as a condition of salvation that Paul objected to. For the simple act itself he cared nothing one way or the other. Circumcision was a sign of righteousness. Rom. 4:11. But there can be no real righteousness except that which comes by faith. See Rom. 9:30-32; 10:1-4, 10; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23; John 6:29. Therefore the man who had no faith had no righteousness, and consequently his circumcision was a sham. The sign of circumcision was given to Abraham, not to make him righteous,—not as a condition

of salvation,—but as a sign of the righteousness which he already had by faith, as a token of the saved condition in which he already was. The Jews who broke the law were uncircumcised, while the Galatians who, through faith, kept the law, were circumcised. See Rom. 2:25-29; Phil. 3:2, 3; Acts 7:51-53. To say to the disciples, “You must be circumcised—or you cannot be saved,” was to teach them that they must trust in the law for righteousness, and that was to say that Christ had died in vain.

7. What was that really saying of the sacrifice of Christ? Gal. 2:21.

NOTE.—When the false brethren said to the disciples, “Except ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved,” they were teaching them that their faith in Christ was not sufficient for salvation. That same teaching is common even to this day. Many who profess faith in Christ still say, “It is all right to believe in Christ, but that alone will not save you; you must keep the commandments, too.” Let us see what this really means. It is a fact that faith in Christ brings him into the heart and life. Eph. 3:17; Gal. 2:20. Therefore when one says that in addition to believing on Christ we must keep the commandments, he virtually says that Christ’s life is not in harmony with God’s law. He really, although unconsciously, accuses Christ of sin. It is a dangerous position for one to take to presume to add to God’s word, which says that men are saved by faith, and that Christians are wholly the workmanship of God. Eph. 2:8-10. Faith works by love, and love is the fulfilling of the law; therefore he who has faith in Christ keeps the law of God; he walks even as Christ walked, for it is by Christ’s obedience that he is made righteous. Rom. 5:19. “Whatso-

ever is not of faith is sin." But he who thinks that he must keep the law *in addition* to faith in Christ, thereby shows that he does not have faith in Christ's righteousness. The obedience which he proposes to *add to his faith* is the obedience that comes from self-righteousness, or sin. But sin is bondage. Rom. 7:14. Therefore the teaching of false brethren was leading souls into bondage—putting a grievous yoke upon them.

8. When only is circumcision profitable? Rom. 2:25.

9. What is real circumcision? Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3.

10. Of what was circumcision a sign? Rom. 2:25-27; 4:11.

11. Where must righteousness be to be of any value? Deut. 6:4-6; Ps. 51:6.

12. Who only can put righteousness in the heart? Jer. 31:33.

13. Then from whom alone must true circumcision come? Deut. 30:6; Col. 2:11.

14. Of what could circumcision in the flesh only, performed by man, be the sign?—Of the righteousness of the flesh.

15. What is the righteousness of the flesh? Rom. 8:5-8; Gal. 5:19-21.

16. Therefore what is done for men when they are led to trust in circumcision, or works of obedience, for salvation? Acts 15:10. It is to lead them to rest securely in sin. See Rev. 3:17.

17. Was the service which God required of his people grievous or burdensome? 1 John 5:3; 1 Kings 8:62-66; Ps. 116:16, 17.

18. Who only are in bondage? John 8:34; Rom. 7:14.

19. As the Jews had perverted the religion of the Lord, what did their zeal for the law result in? Matt. 15:3, 8, 9; Rom. 2:23, 24; Luke 11:46.

NOTE.—It should not be forgotten that “the Jews’ religion” (Gal. 1:13, 14) was vastly different from the religion of God, as given through Moses. It consisted of *traditions*. Those traditions were the invention of the “fathers” (not Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) to insure that the law should not be broken. Trusting for salvation only in the law, and knowing that the law required perfect obedience in every detail, they naturally set themselves to find out the utmost details of the law. So they kept adding burdensome ceremony to burdensome ceremony until it took a lifetime even to know what the traditions were. But all this was to no purpose, for their fine-spun traditions concerning the law were only the product of their own sinful minds; their most scrupulous service was only the service of the flesh, without the Spirit of God, and hence was sin. Thus they made void the law of God by their traditions. While trusting in the law, they broke the law. From all such slavish services Christ delivers us. See Rom. 7:6. He gives rest to the heavy laden, and makes the soul free indeed.

20. What does Christ give? Matt. 11:28; John 8:36; Rom. 8:2.

LESSON XIII.—December 24, 1892.

THE QUESTION SETTLED.—ACTS 15: 12-31.

(MEMORY VERSE, ACTS 5:11.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. 5: 21.

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1. Tell what led to the conference in Jerusalem.
 2. What was the importance of the question?
 3. Give Peter's argument in the case.
 4. When Peter had finished, what did Barnabas and Paul tell? Acts 15:12.
 5. Who spoke next? Verse 13.
 6. To what did he refer? Verse 14.
 7. To whom did he refer as authority for their preaching to the Gentiles? Verse 15.
 8. What prophecy did he specify? Verses 16, 17; Amos 9:11, 12.
 9. How long had God had it upon his mind to save the Gentiles? Acts 15:14.

NOTE.—The facts concerning the Gentiles were arguments that could not be overcome. God had abundantly blessed the labor that had been done among them, as shown by Peter and Paul and Barnabas. This showed that God was not only willing to save the Gentiles, but that he would save them by simple faith. When God poured out his Spirit upon them, so that they spoke with tongues, no one who revered the Lord could say that there was something still lacking that the Gentiles must do before they could be saved. That the salvation of the Gentiles was not a new thing in God's plan is shown by

the promises to Abraham, by the prophecy of Amos, which James quoted, by Joel 2:28, by Isa. 45:22,23; 49:6; 60:1-5, etc.

10. What, therefore, was James' decision in the case? Acts 15:19.

11. What did he suggest that they should write to the Gentile converts? Verse 20.

NOTE.—The four things specified in the letter to the brethren are declared by the Spirit to be "necessary things." They are as necessary now as they were when written, and had been necessary from the beginning. The blood is the life (Gen. 9:4, 5), and therefore the prohibition against it comes under the sixth commandment. The prohibition against things strangled comes in the same list. The relation of the other things to the law of God is obvious. These things, being forbidden by the law of God, are consequently inconsistent with the life of Christ, for his life is the law in its perfection.

12. Why was it not necessary to specify more particularly the things that pertain to the Christian life? Verse 21.

NOTE.—It should be understood that the apostles did not lay these four necessary things upon the disciples in addition to their faith in Christ. These things were specified only because they were things that people from among the heathen would not so readily perceive as necessarily embraced in the Christian life. Fornication was among the heathen a commonplace affair, and even required by their religion. The eating of blood was a common thing. Everything in ordinary life was so im-

mediately connected with idolatry that it was necessary for the converts from among the heathen to be especially on their guard to avoid pollution of idols. These things, in which the Gentile converts might sin without realizing it, so common were they, were especially noted, but it was necessary for the apostles to go further into particulars concerning the Christian life, for the disciples had constant access to the writings of Moses, in which the Christian life is set forth, for he wrote of Christ. John 5:46, 47.

13. Why was it necessary to specify even these?

NOTE.—One point may be referred to as showing that, in setting forth the law, Moses was describing Christ, through whom alone the righteousness of the law is fulfilled. In Deut. 30:11-14 Moses, after having set forth the law, says: "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." But in Rom. 10:5-9 Paul tells us that this refers to Christ. This was not left obscure by Moses, so that the Jews would think that the commandment must be kept by them apart from Christ, for just before the verses quoted Moses tells them that God would circumcise their heart to keep his law (Deut. 30:6, 8), and just afterward he said, "That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days." Deut. 30:20.

14. Were these things of minor importance?

Verses 28, 29.

15. Are these things to be observed in these days as well as then.

16. What steps did the brethren take to relieve the minds of the new converts who had been troubled? Verses 22, 23.

17. What commendation was given to Barnabas and Paul? Verses 25, 26.

18. What did the apostles agree was evidently the work of Barnabas and Paul? Gal. 2:7-9.

19. How was the result of the conference received by the brethren at Antioch? Acts 15:30, 31.

NOTA BENE.—The teacher and scholar will please note that there are *fourteen* Sabbaths in this quarter and but *thirteen* lessons. But as there are but *twelve* Sabbaths next quarter, and *thirteen* lessons will be provided, it has been thought best to have the lesson of December 31 counted as the first lesson of the first quarter of 1893. This will not disarrange our schools or record books, and is the easiest way to dispose of this transient irregularity.—EDITOR B. S. L.

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