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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson V.—Second Quarter, For May 2, 1909.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Acts xiii, 1-12.
Memory Verses 2, 3—Golden Text, Mark xvi, 15—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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There would be a warm welcome for Barnabas and Saul for the Christians at Antioch on their return from Jerusalem, and John Mark, Barnabas' sister's son, whom they had brought with them (xii, 25), would probably find himself in a different atmosphere from that at Jerusalem and must have been much helped by the companionship of his uncle, Barnabas, and by fellowship with such teachers as those here mentioned and by the zeal of these warm hearted believers. They ministered to the Lord and fasted. The things of this world were nothing in comparison with the things of the kingdom, and food for the body was wholly secondary when the pure bread and water of life was to be had. Some who read can understand. Although it means much to minister to the Lord, even a child can do it (I Sam. iii, 1). I have often been impressed with this in considering the matter of ministering to the Lord—that the eight words "that they may minister in the priest's office" (Ex. xxviii, 2, 3, 4, 41, and many other places) are a translation of a little Hebrew word of three letters, and I have asked myself, Does it take as much of earth's language to open to us the little words of heaven? For we have no record of any language but Hebrew having been spoken by the Lord from heaven.

Well, I am sure that it means more than any of us know to "minister to the Lord." In the great book of worship, Leviticus, it is well to mark the phrases "unto the Lord" and "before the Lord," and when they become daily mottoes with us we shall know more of true ministry. While they were ministering the Holy Ghost said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (verse 2). Here we have the whole of these chapters in one sentence and the whole of every true Christian life set apart for the Lord, separated from the world and self and sin, to do the will of God, to work the works which are beforehand prepared for us (Eph. ii, 10; Phil. ii, 13; Heb. xiii, 21). So they, sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed. When we are sent of God we always have His assurance, "Certainly I will be with thee" (Ex. iii, 12; Judg. vi, 16), and it is only by His assurance that we will be separated from all things and people not of Him (Ex. xxxiii, 16; I Kings viii, 53). If we would know God as our Father and as the Lord Almighty, the mighty God who is all sufficient for us, and have others see that we are His sons and daughters to His glory, He dwelling in us and walking in us, we must be willing to be separated from all things unto Himself (I Cor. vi, 16-18). The Holy Ghost having set them apart, the believers by fasting and prayer united with Him in this consecration of their beloved teachers to a foreign mission. They might have said: We cannot spare them. We need them so much here. What shall we do without them? But they agreed with God and let them go and must have been specially blessed in giving to God the best they had. How honored these two men were in being named by God for this ministry! Even the longest journeys are made very little of in Scripture, for what is a journey round the world even when compared with coming from heaven to earth, which angels accomplish as swiftly as the lightning? They leave Antioch and are next at Salamis, in Cyprus, without any details as to the journey. The word is preached in the synagogues at Salamis, but no statement as to results. Whether we see results or not, we can always rest on Isa. lv, 11; Jer. i, 12, R. V. They passed through the island to Paphos and found the deputy of the country eager to hear the word of God, but hindered by a Jew, a false prophet and a sorcerer, who sought to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Saul, who is now for the first time called Paul, being filled with the Spirit, spoke as plainly to him as did our Lord to the Pharisees in John viii, 44, and in the name of the Lord caused him to be blind for a season. The power of God thus manifest and the true doctrine taught by Paul so wrought upon the deputy that he became a believer.

God is the God of truth. Jesus Christ is the truth. The Spirit is the spirit of truth. There is no righteousness that can abide in the presence of God but that which God has provided. All that is not of God is of the devil. Consider, then, in the light of these facts, how the way of the Lord and the word of the Lord and the gospel of God concerning His Son are perverted by an ever increasing number of those who are called ministers of the gospel and are paid for preaching the gospel and teaching the truth (Jer. xxiii, 36; Gal. i, 7). Though there may be no Spirit filled Paul to speak plainly to them, God Himself will deal with them in His time. The expression "the hand of the Lord" recalls Ex. viii, 22, "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him, but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him." From even this much of the story of this journey we may learn that Spirit filled messengers of God must expect the opposition of the devil.



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