

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

PAUL CHAMPIONS FREEDOM AND BROTHERHOOD

International Sunday School Lesson For November 3rd

Golden Text: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—Galatians 5:14.

Lesson Text: Acts 15:23-29; Galatians 5:13-18.

Our recent lessons have centered in the early Christian activity which sprang up in the City of Antioch. Two weeks ago we saw how the first organized missionary party was sent out and the work done in Cyprus and Asia Minor. Shortly after the return of Paul and Barnabas from their tour a question arose to disturb the church at Antioch.

We have seen earlier how the gospel was deliberately carried to the Gentiles in Antioch and then by missionaries to Gentiles in other regions.

When the news of the accession of many Gentiles into the church reached Jerusalem the conservative group there had misgivings. These Jews, who had followed for centuries, could

not bring themselves to accept Gentiles into Christianity, unless they, too, came into the church through the ancient Jewish avenue of circumcision, and other ritualistic requirements.

From Jerusalem then to Antioch went a group of these critical Jews to advise the new Christians that their entrance into the faith had been irregular and their standing was imperfect.

Quite naturally, Paul and Barnabas, exponents of liberality and freedom within the faith, combatted this viewpoint and challenged its wisdom. The discussion was involved and led to confusion and misgivings of many.

Therefore, the church at Antioch decided to send a delegation to Jerusalem, where the recognized leaders of the faith resided, to secure an authoritative utterance on the question.

To Jerusalem Paul, Barnabas, Titus and others proceeded. In his epistle to the Galatians, it is generally accepted now, Paul wrote about this conference.

The three leaders from Antioch held preliminary conferences with Peter, the foremost apostle, and with James, the earthly brother of Jesus, who seems to have been accepted as the head of the Jerusalem church.

So momentous was the question involved that a general meeting of apostles and elders was called.

At this meeting, fortunately, the exponents of the liberal viewpoint

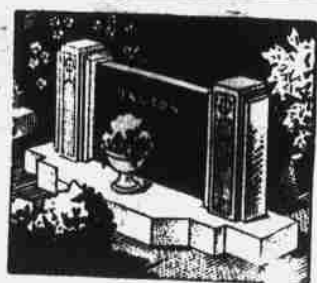
prevailed over the narrow and restricted opinion. Peter recounted his well-known experience with the Gentile Cornelius at Caesarea, and reminded the conference that his action there had been specifically approved subsequently.

Paul, Barnabas and probably others, related the outstanding events of their missionary enterprises, dwelling, particularly upon the fact that, as at Caesarea, the Holy Spirit had confirmed the conversion of Gentiles, inespically to the conclusion that, as had been said before, "to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."

The decision of the conference was adopted upon the recommendation of James, who suggested that only a few necessary observances be requested from the Gentile Christians. These were particularly necessary to make social intercourse with Jewish Christians possible and friendly.

The verdict was forwarded to the church at Antioch in a written communication carried by Judas and Silas. The latter remained in Antioch and subsequently accompanied Paul on his second missionary tour.

The decision of the council made no ritualistic observance necessary for salvation. It was a charter of liberty for the Christian conscience.



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although in subsequent centuries organized Christianity forgot the principles declared.

In subsequent ages, with one predominant church, "the communion of saints was a chain-gang at lock-step with one long whip cracking down in the line to prevent any man's deviating."

At length, under the leadership of outstanding exponents of freedom, such as Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley and others, the principle of freedom in Christianity from super-imposed requirements and dictated thinking was achieved.

Education Credits In Effect For Those Who Enlist In Army

October 5 was the last day volunteers who enlisted in the regular army could assure themselves of a full four-year college education under the GI bill of rights. According

to the army recruiting team in Edenton every Thursday, those entering the military service now will receive education allowance credits only for the time served from the date of entry in service until the official termination of the war.

The remainder of the GI bill is in effect, according to the recruiters, until the end of the war, and all volunteers who enlist now can benefit from this bill which was passed by Congress for the benefit of those men who are in the service of the United States. The recruiters will be glad to furnish any information to those who are interested.

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