

Sunday School Lesson

(Continued from Page 2)

from us. Judgment on man's conduct will be made by One who knows our weaknesses, namely, by Jesus, whom God raised from the dead.

This last idea was too much for the Athenians. Neither Stoics nor Epicureans expected a life after death, and for a man to be raised from the dead seemed beyond all reason. Most of Paul's hearers ridiculed him.

According to Acts, Paul was not entirely without converts,

however. One man and one woman are mentioned by name, "and others with them." But so far as we know, Paul organized no church in Athens.

Was the sermon on Mars Hill a success or a failure? As far as literary composition is concerned, the sermon is a masterpiece. But only a few persons were convinced. Perhaps the audience was at fault. These Athenians wanted to talk, but they did not want to act. They did not want their lives to be changed.

Apparently, Paul considered the Athenian mission a failure.

Later, he wrote to the Corinthians, "When I came to you brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." In the same letter he commented that the cross is folly to Greeks and that not many wise men are called.

Many persons think these remarks reflect his experience in Athens. He had come to realize that Christian faith is not a philosophy and that a gospel of judgment, repentance, forgiv-

ness, and new life would have little appeal to the rich and powerful of the world.

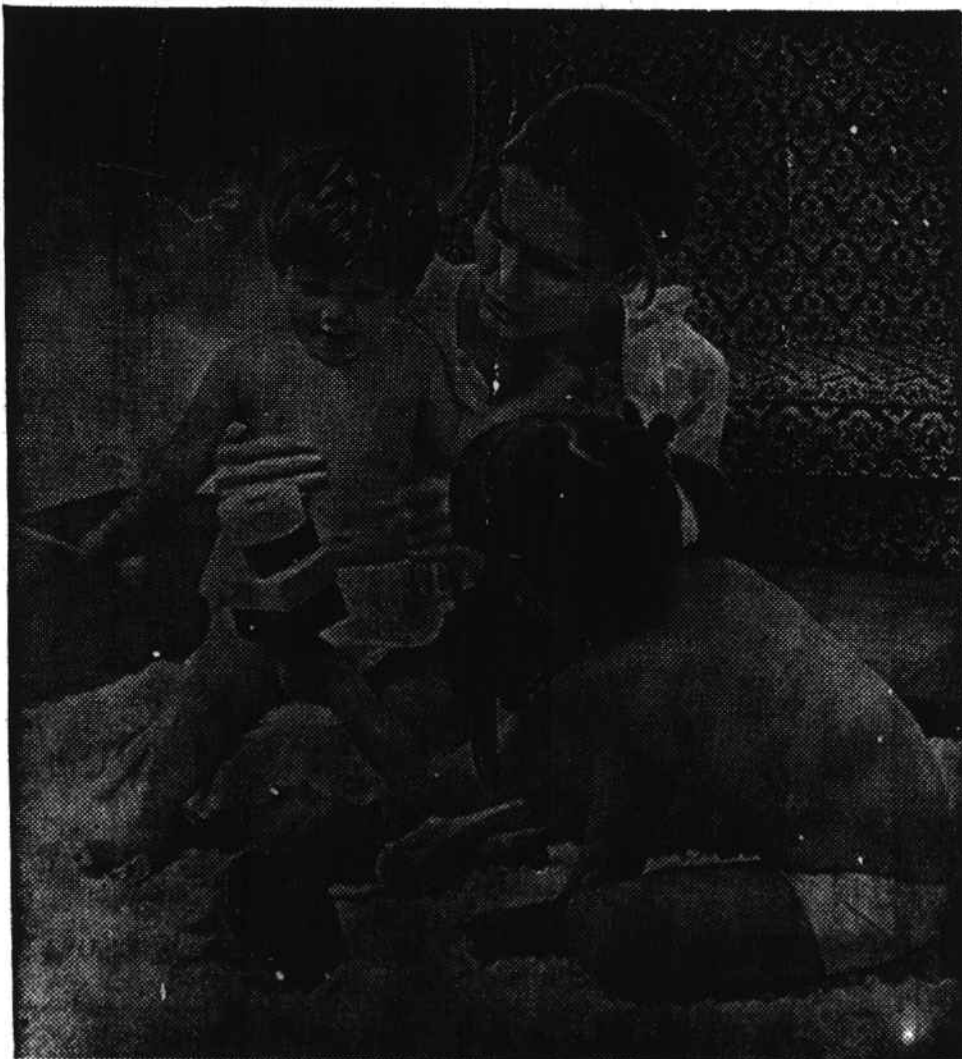
We face a challenge not unlike Paul's in Athens. We too speak to people for whom conventional religious language has no meaning. How do we preach repentance to persons who regard ideas of right and wrong as outmoded Puritanism? The idea of judgment is rejected by those who feel they are not like other men. The Resurrection seems to hold no hope for persons who believe that "when you're dead, you're dead."

If we wish, we can stay in our churches and talk to ourselves. But if we desire to reach a lost generation with God's redemptive love, we must go where people are.

The Gospel and Vested Interests
Acts 19 tells of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, where he founded one of his greatest churches. The whole story is fascinating, but in this lesson we are concerned only with the business community's reaction to the new faith.

The worship of Diana (or Ar-
(Continued on Page 8)

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