

## Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Paul’s First Missionary Journey – 11-17 August 2018

**C**hrist worked mightily through Paul to proclaim repentance and forgiveness. Thus Paul said, “Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).

Sunday: Salamis and Paphos – Paul and Barnabas “sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God” (Acts 13:4-5). Of the missionary work of disciples who went before Paul, we read that, “when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). Thus, the main thing done by Paul and Barnabas, as done by the disciples, was they *preached the Word*, that is, they preached the Lord Jesus. With their hearts full of that Word, it was sure to be only a question of time when their lips would proclaim it to all, without regard to race or nationality. Note that they preached the Word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “All things were made by Him.” “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” They preached the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as is plainly stated in Acts 11:20. They did not merely preach about Christ, but they preached Christ Himself, the Word made flesh, Christ was in their hearts, and came forth in their words, so that all who heard the Word spoken received Christ. It was for the hearers then to decide whether they would keep the Word (Christ) or reject Him.

All Christians are to preach Jesus. The meaning of the Greek word rendered in English as “preaching” (Acts 11:19) is ‘to talk, chatter, babble.’ The noun derived from it means, ‘talking, babbling, gossip.’ It is the regular word used to signify common conversation. Wherever Paul and the disciples went, the burden of their conversation was Jesus. People are usually inclined to talk most of that which they know best, and they knew Jesus better than anything else. As they made the acquaintance of people, and entered into conversation with them, their ‘gossip,’ so to speak, was Jesus. It was not idle, meaningless talk, but easy, natural conversation such as with people who did not know the Lord would be common gossip. This is not so very hard work, is it? It is simply to tell the news, not the ordinary news, the gossip of the newspapers and the street, but the good news of salvation, which is for all people. Tell only what you know, but be sure that what you know is the truth. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16), and that will be your qualification to preach.

Monday: Pisidian Antioch: Part 1 – As Paul and Barnabas continued to preach Jesus in Antioch, multitudes gathered to hear the gospel. “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:45-46). The Jews who opposed the preaching of Jesus judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, by refusing to receive Jesus. Life was indeed given to them, and they put it away from them. Note that it was all in their own hands; they were made judges in the case. And so it is with all men; it is that every man determines his own worthiness or unworthiness. Whoever will receive the eternal life, is counted worthy of it. Each man judges of his own fitness, and he elects himself. Surely God could not possibly deal more fairly with mankind.

Tuesday: Pisidian Antioch: Part 2 – Paul and Barnabas were preaching the doctrines of a sect that was everywhere spoken against. They were doing this, notwithstanding the fact that their preaching had been condemned by the established church, and was utterly out of harmony with the belief of the majority of that church’s members. At Antioch, in Pisidia, they had been so active that “the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region,” much to the disgust of the general public. So the record says: “But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts” (Acts 13:50). If it had not been for the influence of the “devout and honorable women,” Paul and Barnabas might have continued preaching in Antioch. The heathen did not persecute them, but on the contrary rejoiced to

hear the word; it was the good people of the established church, “the chief men of the city,” and the “devout and honorable women,” – the eminently respectable and moral people, – that persecuted Paul and Barnabas, and drove them from the country. And who shall say that a similar thing may not happen again? The established church is to enforce her dogmas by law. When error is upheld by law, then the law-abiding people must prosecute those who stand for truth and against error; and in such a case prosecution becomes persecution.

Wednesday: Iconium – “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren” (Acts 13:1-2). The missionary journey of Paul was occasioned with opposition from the Jews. As persecution continued, the apostle went from city to city preaching Jesus. Paul and Barnabas “fled unto Lystra and Derbe” (verse 6).

Thursday: Lystra and Derbe – At Lystra the Lord wrought a notable miracle through Paul; a man was healed who had been a crippled from his birth. The people, in their astonishment, cried out that they were gods, and the priest of Jupiter, with the people, was about to offer sacrifices to them. But Paul earnestly spoke against their idolatry. Acts 14:18-19, convey a striking lesson: “And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.” The man was healed; the miracle remained among them. Yet the same people who were scarce restrained from offering sacrifices to them as gods, with a little persuasion stoned Paul, and supposing he was dead, drew him out of the city and left him as they would a dead dog. This is a most remarkable illustration of the fickleness of man and of the utter worthlessness of popular applause. A minister of God should never be elated when the multitude praised him. Especially if the hearts of the people are not stirred by the truth and the Spirit of God, and if the current of popular favour is setting in his direction for the time he should look with great distrust upon words spoken in his praise. Satan would not at all object to having the priests of Jupiter do homage to the servants of God, if he could persuade those servants to accept the worship; for he well knows if they do accept it he has destroyed their influence for good. Christian workers have no worse enemies than flatterers.

The minister should not be discouraged if the people turn against him. It is no evidence that God is not with him. The people of Lystra had not as good reason to stone Paul as they had to do him reverence; but while he could dissuade them from worshiping him, he could not prevent their stoning him. So it always was, and so it is. A little playing upon the evil passions of men will quickly cause them to forget the best deeds and the greatest benefits.

We have no doubt that if Paul had permitted them to worship him, they would not have been so easily persuaded to stone him; for *man does not so readily turn against his own idols*. Forgetting this, many of a minister has gone to destruction because he measured his success in his work by the applause he received. It was not without an evident reason that the Saviour said: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). “Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16). Of course “all nations” does not here include the Jews, since God had given them His law so that they might not walk in their own ways. The reason why the other nations were allowed to do so is stated by Paul in the first chapter of Romans: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” God does not force Himself upon any. If they do not wish to acknowledge Him, He withdraws from them, and lets them have their own way. The depraved condition of the Lystrans, and heathen of other nations, shows the level to which men soon sink when they cast off from God. It may be said that infidels and atheists are often men of good morals; but because they have the good fortune to live in a land where the public opinion is to a certain extent against immorality. Whatever of good there may be in an atheist is due solely to his surroundings or to the force of early instructions, for there can be no principle to hold him. Let those that fear God be removed from a country, leaving only atheists to have it, having no communication with any who fear God, and the country would soon be worse than the vilest heathen country on earth.