YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

BLESSINGS OF PEACE.

M., May 15. Peace with God. Rom. 5:1-10.
T., May 16. Peace of God. Phil. 4:6, 7.
W., May 17. Peace with men. Heb. 12:14.
T., May 18. Peace and prosperity. Isa. 11:1-10.
F., May 19. War and waste. Joel 2:1-14.
S., May 20. Unselfishness the way. Matt. 20: 25-28.
S., May 21. Topic—The Blessings of Peace, and How to Get Them. John 14:27.

What are the blessings of peace?
How may we advance international peace?
What hinders peace on earth?

Among the great nations of Europe the cry that goes up from more hearts than anything else is that for peace. It is hard for us in this country to realize what war means to-day. It has been bad enough in this land in the days gone by, but never was this country so crushed by the iron heel of war, as are those lands that are suffering and enduring as no lands ever suffered before. When we think of the fearful carnage of the blood-stained battlefields, we are appalled. And yet is it not probably true that the greatest suffering is not on the battlefield, as terrible as that is when shot and shell have done their murderous work?

Go back to the homes from which these brave men have come and see how poverty-stricken many of them are. See the anguish in the face of the wife whose husband has answered the call of duty. See the pathos in the tear-stained eyes of the mother, as she thinks of her son and knows not where he is. Look at the maiden whose life had been so happy in love of him who is now so far away and in such great peril. The children have had all the brightness taken out of their young lives as they long for the return of a loving father, and are subdued by the gloom all around them, which they cannot quite understand. In all the family there is a nerve-racking anxiety, as they long and listen for some news from the battle front, and which they dread to hear. In thousands and even millions of homes such experiences are being endured. After every battle the light of life seems to have gone out of many homes, as the sad news comes that the loved one will never come back.

It is the desire of the world that the nations may cease their bloody warfare. But when this much-to-be-desired day comes, and the cannon stops its booming and the shells cease from their death dealing errands, will there really be peace in those lands? There will still remain the maimed heroes of the battlefield, who must carry the marks of the fighting through all their suffering lives. There will be many crushed and sorrowing hearts of women and children, whose loved and loving support has been ruthlessly taken away. A generation and more will pass before the desolate homes and ruined cities will have the scars of shell and fire wiped away.

Can there be anything worse than such a war? Is there anything from which we may more devoutly wish to escape? Yes, there is one thing that is worse than all the horrors of the most fearful and bloody war that can be imagined. Do you ask what that is?

It is the enmity and the consequent warfare that exists between the unregenerate soul and God. "To be carnally minded is death . . . because the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:6, 7). Notice that the enmity is on man's side, and it is man that suffers death, the death of the soul. All the horrors of war are but temporary in their character, and often bring great blessings to the country. But there can be no end to the death of the soul.

Can the soul have peace with God and escape the threatened death with all of its fearful consequences? Yes, for God is very merciful. He is constantly flying the white flag of truce.

He has offered peace to all who will receive it. The sinner has violated God's law and thus made warfare upon Him. But God is willing to forgive, to justify him, to treat him as though he had never sinned, when by faith he accepts Jesus as his Saviour and his substitute in paying the penalty of the broken law (Rom. 5:1-10).

When this peace comes there shall be no after consequences of the conflict. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). Can you imagine anything disturbing the peace of God? We cannot think of Him as living otherwise than in abiding and perpetual peace. Jesus said to his disciples (John 14:27), "My peace I give unto you."

When this peace comes into the heart it will be freed from the guilt of sin, from its power and dominion, from its evil consequences, and in God's own time, even from the presence of sin, when the soul shall be taken to heaven.

When enjoying the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," shall it be marred by enmity against our fellowmen? "As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men." If we are not at peace with others there is something wrong with us. Others may bear and show enmity to us, but we should ourselves be at peace. The waves lash themselves into fury as they dash against the rock, but it stands unmoved.

As long as sin abides in the world we cannot expect the world to be at peace, but that does not prevent us from being at peace with God and man.

Two artists were each asked to paint a picture representing peace. One painted a calm lake with its smooth waters reflecting the verdure covered mountains that surrounded it like the rim of a great goblet. Along its shores the ferns grew and near its edge the water lilies floated on its surface. A little way out a beautiful maiden idly reclined upon a cushion in a boat, that was motionless upon the waters. Those who saw it said, "This is a wonderful picture of peace."

The other artist painted a picture of a rushing mountain torrent dashing itself over a great ledge of rock, that crossed its pathway, into the surging pool below, only to bound forward and force its way, by leaps and bounds, down the narrow gorge that split the mountain side. Across the face of the mountain a mighty wind is shaking and bending and tearing the trees as though it would pluck them up by their roots. Those who saw this picture felt at first that the artist had forgotten the thought that he was to portray. But a closer study of the picture showed that he had not. Deep down in this gorge, where the winds could not reach it, grew a small tree that stretched out a limb across the stream just out of reach of the plunging waterfall. On this swaying limb a little bird had built her nest, and in the midst of all the tumult of nature she sat quietly caring for her little helpless brood. Those who saw it caught the thought of the artist and said: "There is peace amidst all the surrounding turmoil and uproar."

We cannot expect peace in all the world, but there may be and ought to be peace in our hearts, the peace that our Saviour gives us.

Let us try to spread this peace, till the Prince of Peace shall reign in every heart.

It is blessed to know that death is not a state, but an act; not a condition, but a transition.—Exchange.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

THE CRIPPLE OF LYSTRA.

May 21, 1916. Acts 14.

Golden Text.—"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

Paul and Barnabas had been preaching in Antioch in Pisidia. The Jews stirred up persecution against them, as they did in almost every city where they preached, and drove them "out of their coasts." Following the instruction of Christ, "they shook off the dust of their feet against them."

They went on to Iconium. Though the Christians were deprived of their leaders, they did not give up nor become despondent. "They were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Their joy was due to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost and through his testimony the knowledge that they possessed salvation.

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue. One might imagine that they would keep away from the Jews, who had persecuted them so often, and go to the Gentiles with the offer of salvation. The Gentiles rarely, if ever, persecuted them, until stirred up by the Jews. But everywhere Paul carried the gospel first to the Jews. If they rejected it, he turned to the Gentiles.

Again the "unbelieving Jews" stirred up the Gentiles, and together they opposed the missionaries, but it seems that the opposition was not very violent for some time. For a long time they continued preaching the gospel, and God gave them power to work many miracles. This caused many to believe, but the more followers they secured the more violent grew the opposition. Wherever the powers of righteousness increase, there the power of evil will be sure to manifest itself with increasing violence.

As the number of believers increased, the Jews became more jealous, and endeavored to destroy their influence.

The result was that the whole city became interested in the controversy, and the people were divided in their opinion. Some agreed with Paul and Barnabas and others opposed them.

The opposition became so violent that Paul and Barnabas found they would likely be stoned to death. So again following the Saviour's instructions, they fled to other cities. This time it was to Lystra and Derbe. Their enemies might persecute them, but they could not stop them from preaching the gospel.

At Lystra Paul found a cripple, who had never walked in his life. No doubt, like the man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, he was a beggar.

He heard Paul preach the gospel and evidently in his heart believed. Whether he asked Paul to heal him or not we do not know. His pitiful condition would be appeal enough to such a heart as Paul's.

Paul saw from his manner or expression that this man believed the gospel that he was preaching, and, therefore, felt that he would show faith in him, as the messenger of the Saviour, to trust him that he could bring to him the blessing of healing.

They must have been in the midst of a crowd, for Paul cried "with a loud voice," so that all who were near him could hear what he said. Like Peter with the other lame man, he told him to do the impossible. But that did not trouble the lame man. He believed that in some way he would be able to do what he was told to do. If, as it is probable, he received the healing of his soul, he would realize that the power that could give him that great blessing would do for him all that was needed.

He did not hesitate, nor offer excuses. He made the effort to do the impossible, and it became the possible. He was told to stand up. As he did this he found he could do more. He leaped and walked.

As we make the attempt to obey God's commands, He not only gives us power to do just that, but even more power if we will use it.

So wonderfully were the people impressed that they were certain that these were not mere men, but were two of their gods come to earth in bodily form.

Barnabas they called Jupiter and Paul they called Mercury.

Paul at this time had become the leader. But their idea of leadership was different from ours. Jupiter was the chief of their gods, but according to their idea he did not often speak to men. Mercury was his messenger and spokesman to men. As Paul did most of the speaking they concluded that he was Mercury.

Though the people understood Greek, the language which Paul used, they used their own tongue, which Paul did not understand. Only when he found out that the priest of Jupiter was about to offer sacrifice to him and Barnabas did he realize what they had been saying and thinking.

A lesser man than Paul might have said that this was a fine opportunity to gain an unlimited influence over the people. If they believed him and Barnabas to be gods, they would be willing to hear and accept anything they might say. Paul would not do evil, that good might come.

The mob that does not stop to reason in its applause, is not likely to do so in its disapproval. When Paul had spoken to them, he at last convinced them that he and Barnabas were only men.

The fame of their success and popularity reached the ears of their enemies, the Jews at Antioch and Iconium, and they came to Lystra to stir up opposition to them, though they had to travel one hundred and seventy-five miles from Antioch and a hundred from Iconium. Men will oftentime go farther to do evil than they will to do good.

So successful were these Jews in their efforts that they turned the admiration of the people for Paul and Barnabas into hatred. No doubt the populace felt some resentment against them, because they had been deceived into thinking that they were gods, when they were only men.

This time Paul did not succeed in escaping. Led by these agitators the people stoned him, and, when they thought he was dead, dragged him, like some dead animal, out of the city. His friends did not desert him, but gathered about what they supposed to be his lifeless body. Suddenly he arose, as though it had been from the dead, showing that God had restored him.

The next day he continued his missionary journey, going from city to city, preaching the gospel everywhere he went. He ordained elders in every church. This shows that even at that early day the Church had the Presbyterian form of government, being governed by a body of elders in each church.

Finally, Paul and Barnabas completed their first tour of these cities and they returned to Antioch in Syria, from which place the church had sent them out as missionaries to the Gentiles. They reported to the church their experiences and what God had done through them in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles. And there in Antioch they abode with the disciples a long time.