

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, November 4th, 1877.—Paul before Felix.—Acts xxiv. 10-25.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 22-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”—Acts xxiv. 25.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xxiii. 12-35. Tuesday, Acts xxiv. 1-27. Wednesday, Psalm i. Thursday, Romans xii. Friday, vs 17; 2 Cor. viii. 1-24. Saturday, 1 Peter iv. 12-19. Sunday, vss. 24, 25; Matthew xiv. 1-12.

ANALYSIS.—I. After Tertullus, Paul speaks. Vss. 10-21. II. Decision of Felix delayed. Vss. 22, 23. III. Paul before Felix and Drusilla. Vss. 24, 25.

QUESTIONS.—What was the Jews design? How was the plot detected? What word did Lysias send to Felix concerning Paul? How long did Paul wait for his Jewish accusers to come down? Who came as their advocate? How did Tertullus' speech compare with Paul's? Of what did he accuse Paul?

Vs. 10. What did Tacitus say of Felix's character?

Vs. 11. How had these twelve days been passed? See xxi. 15, 18, 21, 26, 27; xxii. 29, 30; xxiii. 10. For what had Paul gone up to Jerusalem? How can this be reconciled with vs. 17? Comp. xx. 17.

Vs. 12. What does Paul in this verse deny?

Vs. 13. What does he say his enemies could not prove?

Vs. 14. What, however, does Paul frankly confess? What is meant here by heresy? Why does he call the God of Christianity the God of his fathers? Comp. 2 Tim. i. 3.

Vs. 15. Of what had Paul hope? What did the Jews allow? Why does Paul introduce this? Chap. xxiii. 6, 7.

Vs. 16. How may an unoffending conscience be secured?

Vs. 17. What is alms-giving?

Vs. 18. Who found Paul in the temple? In what state did they find him? What does Paul mean by this? Chap. xxi. 23-26.

Vs. 20. What does Paul now demand? When was Paul before the council? Chap. xxiii. 1-10.

Vs. 22. What does Felix now decide? Why wait for Lysias? What did he expect? Vs. 26.

Vs. 25. Who was Drusilla? What does Paul now preach?

The day after Lysias had taken Paul into the castle certain of the Jews banded together to assassinate Paul; but the conspiracy was detected, and he was sent to Cæsarea. Henceforth Paul is in Roman custody to the end of the period embraced in the Acts. It proved to be a protection to him against the animosity of the Jews. Five days after Paul's arrival at Cæsarea, and just twelve since he had reached Jerusalem, Ananias and the elders came down to Cæsarea with a certain Latin orator named Tertullus, between whose fulsome harangue before Felix as an hired advocate and the manly simplicity of Paul's defence there is scarcely a more striking contrast to be found in oratory.—xxiii. 12-35; xxiv. 1-9.

EXPOSITION.—This lesson consists of Paul's formal plea in defence of himself when on trial, and a description of the custody and of a sermon preached by request to the Roman procurator and his Jewish wife.

I. The Plea. Verses 10-21.—It is in answer to that of Tertullus for the prosecution (vss. 3-9), and by permission of Felix. It consists of (1) an introduction conciliating Felix (vss. 10, 11); (2) a denial of the two charges of Tertullus, which, if proved, would have carried Paul's condemnation (vss. 11-13); (3) an admission of the other charges with the evidence that both in theory, and in its influence on his life, it identified him with his nation, and not the reverse (vss. 14-18), and finally (4) a counter-charge against the real authors of the riot at the feast, and a challenge to his accusers present to show that his conduct at Jerusalem, in connection with the disturbance, had in it anything more criminal than his avowal of the chief distinguishing doctrine of the leading and most orthodox sect of the Jews (vss. 18-21).

The conciliation. It was simply an avowal of his pleasure in having a judge with sufficient knowledge of Jewish affairs to understand the case.

The denial. In general the purpose of his visit to Jerusalem was worship, as the time of making it would imply, thus other than sedition, and the very contrary of profanation. No proof is brought of sedition or profanation. “Disputation” in the temple-courts was proper; but even in this they had not seen him engaged. No proof can be brought of any one of the criminal acts charged against him; they being false.

The admission. That he was one of “the Nazarene” schism (Eng. Ver., “heresy”). So far from rejecting the God and the Scriptures of Israel, this “way” required both hearty worship of that God, and full faith in all the Scriptures. Paul adds certain pertinent particulars of his conduct as fruits of his Christian life (vss. 16-18); namely, the collection of funds for the needy of his people (Rom. xv. 25, 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4; 2 Cor. viii. 1-4), and the orderly presentation of the legal offerings in the temple in connection with the assumption and observance of his vow (xxi. 23-25), which was taken purely on Christian principle, and was thus a fruit of that principle.

The counter-charge and challenge. The Bible Union Version correctly translates: “Amidst which they found me purified in the temple, not with a crowd, nor with tumult; but certain Jews from Asia [caused it].” Here the fact of a disturbance is admitted; but, says Paul, not I, as Tertullus charges, but those Jews from Asia caused it. The accused becomes accuser by telling the plain truth. They raised the disturbance, indeed, by shouting out a two-fold charge against Paul (xxi. 28), and hence he adds that to justify themselves for raising the tumult, they ought to be present and substantiate that charge.

II. The Custody. Verses 22, 23.—The Jews insisted upon instant surrender of Paul into their hands, or at least upon instant decision against him by Felix, but he “deferred them”; that is, “put them off,” refusing their demand. The reason is remarkable, and well justifies Paul's introduction. Felix had a “more perfect [literally, more accurate] knowledge of that way;” (that is, of Christianity and Christians, vs. 18), either than Lysias, hence avoiding that honest man's error, or than most officers; that is, very accurate, so that he understood the meaning of all this attempt upon Paul, and acted accordingly.

Custody under Roman law was of three kinds; (1) “confinement in the common jail; (2) free custody, where a magistrate held himself responsible for the person's appearance, much on the principle of our bail; (3) “military custody, according to which the accused was given into the charge of soldiers who were responsible for his safe keeping. He was then often chained to a soldier.” This last was the method of Paul's custody.

III. The Sermon. Verses 24, 25.—On the place, see xxv. 23, doubtless the same room into which Paul was brought by request to explain “that way.”

The hearers were Felix and Drusilla, and probably others, as Paul's guard the procurator's attendants, though of these no mention is made. Of Drusilla, “younger daughter of Agrippa the First (the Herod of xii. 1), and sister of Agrippa the Second, who is mentioned in xxv. 13.” Josephus writes: “Agrippa gave his sister Drusilla in marriage to Azizus, king of the Emesenes.

But when Felix was procurator of Judea he saw her, and being captivated by her beauty, persuaded her to desert her husband, transgress the laws of her country, and marry himself.” We are told she had a son by Felix, and that mother and son perished by the eruption of Vesuvius, A. D. 79.

The sermon clearly presented “the faith in Christ” (vs. 24), or Christian doctrine with special reference to the characters, lives, and needs of his hearers, faithfully, yet certainly with utmost courtesy. Such a course was perilous (Matthew xiv. 1-13); but Paul felt it to be duty. “Temperance,” here, is self-government, the control of appetites and passions, and especially as here applied, chastity. “Righteousness,” refers to duties to others, though it may be here as often used in its general sense.

The effect was a sense of dread [not “trembling.”] Felix felt the power of the words, but did not repent. He put away the preacher and his message for ever.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, November 11th, 1877.—Paul before Agrippa.—Acts xxvi. 6-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”—Acts xxvi. 19.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

The captain, hearing of a wicked plot to kill Paul, sent him by night to Cæsarea, with a letter to Felix, the governor. When the governor had read the letter and heard where Paul was from, he said, “I will hear thee when thine accusers are come.” Five days afterward, Ananias, the high priest who had ordered Paul to be struck in the mouth, some of the elders, and a lawyer, came to Cæsarea. The lawyer, whose name was Tertullus, made a speech, in which he charged Paul with making disturbances among the Jews through all the world; with being leader of those who believed in Jesus of Nazareth; with profaning the Temple. Ananias, and the other Jews, agreed to all this. Paul said that Felix had been governor six or eight years, and in all that time had never known him to disturb the peace. Besides, it had only been twelve days since he came to Jerusalem at all. He asked why they did not come and show when and where he had done such things as they said. Felix said he would wait till Lysias came; and ordered Paul to be kept safely. After a few days he sent for Paul to talk to him and his wife, who was a Jewess. As Paul told him of the right life for the present, and the judgment to come, Felix trembled, but said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.”

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XLIV.—DOROTHY DECLARES HERSELF.

Even while they were speaking on this subject Matthew's heart was heavy with apprehension respecting the course Dorothy would adopt when she came to know of their plans for the future.

For a long time past Matthew had been exercised in his mind as to whether he ought to disclose to Hugh his relationship to “Mrs. Sarah;” but had not yet been able to make up his mind what he should do. But now it seemed that circumstances would save him any further trouble on this point: for he felt sure that now Hugh was in a fair way of earning regular money, she would never suffer him to slip away to the country, free from all responsibility of his grandmother.

And so it proved. Only two days after the receipt of that welcome letter, Dorothy came as usual to do her Saturday cleaning, and Matthew, feeling that it would be better to come to an understanding with her, before they took any steps to carry out their new plans, said, in Hugh's presence, “Well, Mrs. Sarah, it seems likely as we shan't be needin' yer valuable services here much longer: my little chap is wantin' me and him to emigrate, you must know.”

Dorothy paused in her sweeping, and leaned heavily on her broom-handle, while her face flushed with surprise. “Emigrate, eh?” she exclaimed. “Where are you off to, then?”

“Oh, only out into the country to learn how to breath fresh air;” answered Matthew, carelessly, but with great secretness.

“Oh,” said Dorothy, without moving her position, but looking down to consider what course to pursue.

“It has just struck me, Mr. Pedder,” exclaimed Hugh, delightedly, “that it would be splendid if we could get grandmother's old cottage, the place where my dear mother was born. It isn't far from London, you know, and oh, in such a lovely village,—the last country place poor mother went to before she came here to die.”

“What makes ye want to go to the country?” asked Dorothy coldly. “Are ye going to take your bird-business there, Matthew Pedder?”

“Oh, no,” chimed in Hugh, eagerly. “Mr. Pedder's going to retire, don't you know? And I'm going to carry on business on my own account, and he is going to be gentleman-adviser, and banker, and all that sort of thing.”

Matthew laughed out, though his heart was heavy.

“What business are you going to be, then?” demanded Dorothy.

“I've got a splendid business already,” replied Hugh. “May I tell her, Mr. Pedder?”

“Of course you may tell me,” snapped Dorothy, angrily. “Pr'aps I've a better right to know than Matthew Pedder.”

Hugh looked astonished, and Matthew felt that the hour was come. He nodded assent to Hugh, and waited passively for the dénouement.

“Well, then,” said Hugh, looking into Dorothy's downcast face, “I've earned some pounds already by my designs, and now I'm going to earn regular money, so that I feel I'm quite set up, and I want Mr. Pedder to give up business now, and let me work for him instead of him working for me any longer.”

“You've earned pounds, have ye, and now you're earning regular money?” answered Dorothy. “Well, then, it's about time that you should be told as you've got a grandmother to work for too.”

Hugh's face flushed, and he exclaimed eagerly, “Do you know my grandmother, then?”

“She's standing before you this minute, trying to earn a honest living, although nearly past work,” answered Dorothy, rather severely.

Hugh had always imagined that when he should find his grandmother he would want to throw himself into her arms, and that with smiles and tears they would at once begin to talk of his beloved mother and her past sorrows. But now he felt no inclination to embrace this woman, nor even to clasp her hand.

“My grandmother!” he exclaimed quietly, gazing into her face with a reproachful expression which irritated her. “How long have you known that I was your grandson?”

“Oh, a good bit now,” she replied. “But what was the use of telling ye, when Matthew Pedder was doing better by ye than I could afford to do, and when you hadn't a penny to call your own? Of course I thought that if you was a proper sort of a boy, it 'ud only worry ye to see your poor grandmother working for her daily bread, and you with no power or means to help her. So for your sake I kept the secret in, and let Matthew Pedder do what good he could for ye; but now you can have the privilege of knowing your grandmother, and of doing for her the rest of your life, which ought to be a pleasure to you as well as a duty.”

“Yes, my lad I've knowed it a good while, though pr'aps Mrs. Dorothy Sharpe didn't think I did. But you must forgive me, my lad, if I've done ye any wrong by hiding it from ye; but it seemed to me that yer granny didn't want ye; and though you may think me soft for confessin' it, yet I'll out with it, and say, that I did want ye; ay, and it 'ud ha' bin like losin' my eyes if you'd bin took from me, and so it would now for the matter of that. Only I hope the Lord'll help me to be resigned to whatever's afore me.”

“But I never shall be taken from you, sir,” answered Hugh earnestly; and he went and stood beside Matthew, placing his head affectionately on his shoulder. “You remember what you said to me at my mother's grave, when I was a little boy without a friend in the world,—you said that nothing but death should part us, and nothing else shall. You've been my best friend, and now I mean to be your best friend, if I can. But our wants are small, sir, and if I keep my health, I shall have plenty coming for grandmother and all, so you must try to make an arrangement for things to go smoothly for us, sir.”

“Arrangement!” exclaimed Dorothy. “What arrangement's needed, I want to know? If you are decided to go back to my cottage I'd better go and keep house for ye, and let Matthew Pedder bide in his old place, and you allow him a little a week, what you can afford. That 'ud be the best way.”

Hugh's face flushed with pain on Matthew's account. “I shall have nothing to do with taking the cottage, grandmother,” he said, quietly. “Of course Mr. Pedder will take it, if he likes the idea of it, and I should go and live with him, as I do here. But if he decides to stay here, I shall too, of course. All that I can earn I owe to Mr. Pedder. You have seen, grandmother, what he

has been doing for me for years; but I am sure he is kind enough to let some of my earnings benefit you as well as ourselves. We shall talk it over by-and-by.”

“Oh, I don't want to be beholden to Matthew Pedder,” said Dorothy, after a pause. “If you don't care for your own flesh and blood, Hugh Haldane, why you needn't, that's all: I hope I can go on a bit longer as I have done, a honest and industrious woman, and then I can go and lay me down in a workhouse, if you won't be ashamed to have a pauper for grandmother.”

Dorothy ended her speech in a shrill, tremulous voice, and putting her apron to her eyes began to cry. Matthew and Hugh were greatly disconcerted by this exhibition, and Hugh said distressfully, “Oh, grandmother! don't go on like that when I've only just found you. Of course you'll not have to go to the workhouse. Mother told me many a time to be sure to be good to you when I found you, and I shall be, too. Only I know you would't like me to turn my back on Mr. Pedder, who has been like a father to me, and I had no claim on him.”

“Well, he liked to do it, and he could well afford it,” said Dorothy sullenly, as she took her apron from her face for a moment.

“He liked to do it because he's so good and kind-hearted,” answered Hugh, gently. “But I don't see how he could afford to draw all his savings from the bank, bit by bit, to feed and clothe me, and send me to school? and that's what he has done, grandmother, so you may think what a debt I owe him.”

“Hush, hush!” said Matthew quickly. “Don't say ne'er a word about owin' me debts. And s'pose we give up this subject now, for fear we may say somethin' we should be sorry for after. Let us all think it over durin' the day, and by tea-time we shall be able to talk more calmer about it, I desay.”

Dorothy put down her apron with a jerk, and sulkily be-took herself and her broom out into the back kitchen. Matthew heaved a sigh, and felt that troubles were thickening for him, and he turned sadly into his desolate-looking shop. As for Hugh, all the joy and brightness which that business engagement had put into his life faded suddenly away; and he seemed to realize, as so youthful a soul seldom does, that earthly joy could never be unalloyed.

He felt deeply disappointed about his grandmother, and having seen much of her disposition and temper during the past eight years, he felt dismayed at the thought of having to live with her. The words of a hymn which he had been learning came into his mind—

“There is a crook in every lot,  
And an earnest need for prayer.”

“Poor Mr. Pedder has his crook,” said Hugh to himself, thinking of Matthew's lost arm, “and now I suppose this is to be mine.”

He went into the shop to Matthew, and found him looking dejectedly through the window.

“Well, my lad,” he said, trying to be cheery, “we were sayin' that the desire come is like a tree of life: but it's got thorns in it, ha'n't it now?”

(To be continued.)

SACRAMENTAL WINE.—How to make and keep it:—“Take a sufficient quantity of ripe grapes, press out the clear juice, boil and heat it as in the case of canned fruit, then can the juice and make it air tight, and it will not ferment. When occasion demands, open the can and take out what is required for sacramental occasions, and dilute it with water; heat what is left as at first and close the can again, and so on until it is exhausted. A few cans thus put up will last for years.”

An Irish clergyman once broke off the thread of his discourse, and thus addressed the congregation: “My dear brethren, let me tell you that I am just half through my sermon; but as I perceive your impatience, I will say that the remaining half is not more than a quarter as long as that you have heard.”

The foundation of domestic happiness is faith in the virtue of woman.

Ralph Wells says: “God weighs our work not for success but for fidelity.”

A man's action is only a picture-book of his creed. He does after all what he believes.