

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, October 14th, 1877.—Paul at Jerusalem.—Acts xxi. 27-39.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 30-36.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."—John xv. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xxi. 17-40. Tuesday, Vs. 19; Romans xv. 14-21. Wednesday, Vs. 23, 24; Numbers vi. 1-21. Thursday, Vs. 28; Acts vi. 8-15. Friday, Vs. 36; Luke xxiii. 13-25. Saturday, Vs. 39; Romans xi. Sunday, Psalm xli.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul seized by a mob. Vs. 27-30. II. His violence interrupted. Vss. 31, 32. III. Paul brought to the castle. Vss. 33-36. IV. Colloquy at the entrance. 37-39.

QUESTIONS.—On teaching Jerusalem, how was Paul received? Vs. 17. Whom did he at once visit? What did he at once announce? What was a Nazarite? What else did Paul do?

Vs. 27. What week is referred to by these "seven days"? Who were these Jews of Asia? Why were they in Jerusalem?

Vs. 28. What did they cry out? Had he spoken against the law? vii. 48, 49. Who are meant by Greeks? Did the Gentiles have the freedom of the whole Temple? How much did they have?

Vs. 29. What reason is given for supposing that Paul had polluted the Temple?

Vs. 30. What is now done with Paul? Why were the doors shut?

Vs. 31. By what was mob-violence interrupted?

Vs. 32. To what does Paul now owe his life?

Vs. 33. Why is Paul bound? How?

Vs. 34. What is done with Paul?

Vs. 35. How is he pursued by the crowd? Who protected him?

Vs. 37. Whose mistake is here corrected? What request is granted now to Paul? Vss. 37, 40. What Scripture is illustrated in this lesson? Psalm lxxvi. 10.

PAUL PUTS HIMSELF UNDER A NAZARITE VOW.—Paul has come to Jerusalem, the fifth visit to this city since his conversion. Chap. ix. 26; xi. 30; xv. 2; xviii. 21, 22; xxi. 15, 17. He is welcomed by the assembled elders of the church (17-19); and their advice aims to conciliate the Jewish Christians in Judea by joining some Nazarites in their devotions, 20-26. He does this expressly to prove himself a faithful Jew—a purpose on Paul's part that emerges at every point of his history. He had kept the Gentile believers free from the yoke of the law, for this was in accordance with the decision of the Jewish council; but it was very generally reported of him that "he taught all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." Having now a practical opportunity of refuting this charge, he takes a Nazarite vow, with four others, who had already done so, and pays the expenses of all himself, the value of eight lambs, four rams, oil, flour, etc. The regulations for this vow are given in Numbers xi. 1-21. The Nazarite was forbidden to drink wine, to cut his hair, or to approach any dead body. If he were not a Nazarite for life, like Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, but for a term of years or days, when the period was fulfilled, due notice was to be given thereof, and at the expiration of the full time he was to present himself at the Temple with offerings prescribed by law, and to have the hair of his separation (or time of consecration) shaved. There was an apartment in the Temple set apart for these purposes. To be a Nazarite was regarded by the Jewish nation as most honorable. There being, therefore, four Jewish Christians already Nazarites, it was thought that Paul would ingratiate himself into public favor by joining himself to their number; and as these four were poor, that it would be an act of generosity on Paul's part to assume the charges of the offerings they were to present when their time was fulfilled. Paul did as advised. He acted in good conscience to prevent rupture (xxiv. 16), but with what result our lesson will show.

EXPOSITION.—We have in these verses an account of a murderous assault upon Paul by Jewish fanaticism; the opportune rescue of Paul by Roman authority; and Paul's request of a favor.

I. The Assault. Verses 27-31.—The time of it is said to have been near the end of "the seven days." Intervening between Paul's purification of himself with the four Nazarites (vs. 26), and the time when the offering was to be brought and release from the vow given (vs. 24). Compare also xxiv. 1, 11.

The instigators of the assault were Jews from the province of Asia. The larger part, probably from Ephesus, well acquainted with Paul, and the ringleaders in the attempt to silence him there. xix. 9; xx. 19. They would know Trophimus the Ephesian (vs. 29).

The method was to stir up fanatical hate in the multitude by an outcry, and so with mob violence seize and kill him (vss. 30, 31).

The charge was two-fold. First, that Paul's doctrine was anti-Judaic; and second, that he had profaned the Temple by taking an uncircumcised Gentile into the part of the Temple forbidden to all except Jews. The first part was artfully put to rouse passion to the utmost. The power of the second part was in naming a specific act, just committed, against the very letter of the law, which even Roman law allowed them to punish with death, and on a public solemn day, as in extreme defiance of God, and God's people.

The ground of the charge, as to its first part, was Paul's refusal to admit Jewish usages as a part of the gospel, and necessary to salvation; as to its second, nothing whatever. A mere suspicion, at the very best, was at its bottom. Vs. 29. Not an iota of evidence for it.

The assault itself was without form of law.

II. The Rescue. Verses 31-36.—Knowledge of the affair came to the officer by means of sentinels. During the feast days a suitable force of soldiers were in a fortress called "the tower of Antonia," which stood at the south-west corner of the Temple area, "high enough to overlook its courts." Hence the quick report, and the readiness to respond. The Turkish garrison is now on nearly the same site, and overlooks the mosque of Omar, which is on the Temple site.

The response was instant and rapid. Vs. 32. Promptness at such times was necessary, and in this case saved Paul's life. This tribune's name is given in xxiii. 26.

The arrest of Paul followed at once. Lysias seems to have come in person to Paul, and to have taken him by his own hand, because in verse 33 the taking is said to have been by him and the binding by his command. Paul was here bound according to Roman custom, each arm to the arm of a soldier, so as to walk between the two without power of escape. Compare xii. 6.

The inquiry into the cause of the outbreak followed. Two points (1.) Who is the criminal? (2.) What is his crime? "What is it he has done?" (Vs. 33.) It followed the arrest.

The removal was necessary, and at once ordered. The spirit and purpose of the Jews came out in the old cry (vs. 36) with which they chased Jesus out of their city and out of the world nearly thirty years before. John xix. 15.

IV. The Request. Verse 37-39.—Was made courteously to the officer in command. Paul was mistaken for the head of a band of assassins which had shortly before this been broken up. Josephus gives the history. Lysias knows of him that he did not speak Greek. Then all calmly (vs. 39) Paul tells who he is, and asks to speak.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, Oct. 21th, 1877.—Paul and the bigoted Jews.—Acts xvii. 17-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men."—Matt. xxiii. 13.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

There were a great many Jews from foreign parts in Jerusalem at this time, who had seen Paul at Ephesus and hated him there. One day some Jews from Asia saw Paul in the Temple, and sprang on him, shouting as they held him fast, "Men of Israel, help." When the crowd rushed to the spot, they cried out, "This is the man who teaches all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place; and further, he has brought Greeks into the Temple." This made all the Jews wild with anger.

They dragged Paul out of the Temple, down the steps, into the Court of the Gentiles—for, angry as they were, they dare not shed blood in the holy place—and the priests quickly shut the gates. While they were beating Paul the chief captain came, with a large guard of soldiers; and, taking him from the Jews, ordered him to be chained by each arm to a soldier, to keep him safe, then asked who he was and what he had done. Some cried one thing, and some another; and as the officer could not find out, he commanded him to be taken into the tower. But the people crowded so that the soldiers carried him in their arms up the stairs, the mad crowd shouting, "Away with him!" When they were at the top of the stairs, and were about to take him into the castle, Paul said to the captain, "May I speak to thee?"

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.
DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XLII.—BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

"Do you think Mr. Hartlebury will ever come, sir?" said Hugh rather dejectedly one morning, about a fortnight after Mr. Barnett's visit; "because if he doesn't, I must be looking out for something to do."

"Don't be over-anxious, my boy," said Matthew, affectionately. He had felt more than ever drawn to him since the day on which he said, "much as I love Mr. Pedder," and he sympathized greatly with him through this season of hope deferred. "You needn't be too anxious just yet, ye know," he went on. "There's many a thousand of folks what have got to live from hand to mouth, and we haven't come to that yet. I've got twenty pounds left yet."

"Only twenty!" exclaimed Hugh, with a little gasp. "Oh, I can't tell you how sorry I am you have had to use your savings, Mr. Pedder! But you shall have it all put back again, if I live,—yes, every penny of it. So don't you be anxious, will you? Because, see, I can turn out any minute and earn what will keep you and me, even if it isn't the way I'd like best. I'm strong and well, and I'll pretty soon get something to do, if Mr. Hartlebury doesn't turn up."

"I should think he'd soon be makin' his appearance, if he haven't clean forgot ye, Hugh," said Matthew. "He's a preacher, you say, and of the same ilk as pa'sons, I s'pose. I don't know much about pa'sons, but I like to believe as they're critters as wouldn't tell a lie nor break a promise. So we'll have faith in Mr. Josiah a little bit longer."

And as if some subtle, magnetic influence apprised him of their expectancy, Mr. Hartlebury remembered his promise to Matthew and Hugh, and felt constrained to go to the house of business which he had in his mind, and speak for Hugh. Then on the day on which he engaged to give an address at the Mission Hall, with which Lisa's night-school was connected, he decided to go early in the afternoon to Matthew Pedder's, and direct Hugh how to act in this transaction.

Hugh's spirit rose at a bound when he entered the shop, and the shadow which had rested so long upon his face, vanished like mist in the sun. "Well, haven't I tried your patience sorely?" was Mr. Hartlebury's greeting.

"A little sir; but we've been expecting you all along, and we were expecting you still," answered Hugh. And Matthew added, "We were saying, not long ago, that we should keep faith in ye a bit longer."

"That's right; but I scarcely deserve it for keepin' ye waitin' so long. Well, Hugh Haldane, I've been to this great place that I was telling you of, and I've seen the gentleman that inspects, and has to choose designs, and you're to go and see him, any day between two and four. Now, thinks I to myself, what should hinder your going this afternoon? You've got your drawings, I suppose; well then, you'd better start off at once, and I'll stay here, and have a chat with Mr. Pedder till you come back; then I shall hear what success you have, met with. There's nothing like doing at once whatever you've got to do,—though you'll be saying, I preach better than I practise on that point, seeing how I've put off all these months going to speak for ye."

Hugh eagerly got his portfolio, and looked through his precious designs again for the fiftieth time. Then Matthew bade him go and put on his best clothes, saying, "It'll put a bit o' sperrit in ye for the job ye has to do. If you ain't nobby you won't have half the courage to speak up for yerself."

So Hugh went upstairs and made himself as 'nobby' as he could; and when he came down, Matthew looked at his handsome boy with great pride and affection. His eyes were bright and his face glowing now, with happy expectancy, and tucking his portfolio up under his arm he started off, having first received from Mr. Hartlebury minute instructions as to the way he should go, and what he should say to the gentleman whom he was going to see.

There were very few callers during his absence to interrupt the conversation which Matthew and his friend engaged in. Being at all times anxious to say words in season to his fellow creatures, and to do them good according to his light, Mr. Josiah soon led Matthew imperceptibly on to talk of religious things. And so winning was his manner, and so thoroughly worthy did he seem to be of confidence that Matthew presently found himself telling freely of his inner experiences of the past and present,—actually telling all without shamefacedness or reserve! It was nothing new to Josiah Hartlebury to receive these confidences; persons voluntarily came to him with their confessions and troubles, in numbers as numerous as many a Catholic priest receives under pressure. But although it was something utterly new to Matthew to be telling his soul-troubles, and getting sympathy and counsel from a fellow-man, it did not seem to him strange and difficult, as he would have supposed it would be, had anyone told him beforehand that that ordeal was before him.

In drawing the conversation to a close, Mr. Hartlebury said, "It seems to me Mr. Pedder, that you've come to Jesus by night, like Nicodemus, for fear of the Jews,"

"Ah, no!" interrupted Matthew, earnestly. "Don't think I'm feared o' the Jews about these parts. Certainly, they're as thick as swallows in the summer, but I ain't a morsel afeared o' 'em. I've never yet cared what they think o' me, and I'm sure I don't now."

His friend smiled as he replied, "Nicodemus was afraid of the Jews, because it was them in particular it would give such offence for him to go to Jesus. In our day it's mostly them that call themselves Christians that take offence, when we really and truly go to Jesus. What I mean to say is, you must be His faithful, brave soldier, and servant, and confess Him openly before men. Never be ashamed of Him who isn't ashamed to call the meanest of us His brethren, though he's the Lord of glory. If we hide our light under a bushel the poor world'll be all the darker and wretcheder for it."

Matthew did not respond, and Josiah went on, "I know you'll find it a trial to do this, because you say that for the best part of your lifetime you've shut yourself up like away from your kind, and been hard and distant with 'em. But now that must not be so. Disciples of the Lord Jesus must follow in His steps as far as they can, though at the best it's but in a very lame and stumbling fashion, 'cause ye see there's all sorts o' stumbling-blocks in their way, such as pride, and self-love, and oldheartedness, which weren't in His way, so that He went along the highway of Right, calmly and royally. But for all that, He sympathises with us in our imperfect following of Him; for 'He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.'"

"Well," said Matthew, after a thoughtful silence, which his friend did not attempt to disturb, "it seems to me as it won't be so hard for me to be a bit kind and neighbourly to the folks about, as it would ha' bin afore I had my little chap. He've done me a power o' good: I can see that, when I looks back to what I was afore he came. Why, the Matthew Pedder afore ye at this present, sir, is as different from the Matthew Pedder of seven or eight years ago, as a lark's different to a raven, though I says it myself. And I'll tell ye what's the reason, sir: it ain't that my little chap has changed my natur' any, nor my defiant, hard old heart; but it's jest that he've led me to look at the Lord with the same eyes as he looks at Him. And di-

rectly I got a glimmer of Him as the Lord of love and pity and merciful kindness, it seemed to break down me at once, so that I began to ask what I ought to be, and what He'd like me to do. And I've bin grad'ly learnin', that, with more help from my lad than from anybody else; for if there's a critter in this world as tries to please the Lord and delights to do it, it's my boy, sir, though he's of an age when most young chaps are bent only on foolery and followin' the ways of their bad hearts at any cost." "Ah, it's cheering to see the young give their hearts to the Lord, as did Timothy!" exclaimed Josiah, fervently. "And it does me good to meet with those who, instead of for ever crying 'Lord, Lord!' without doing His will, are striving with heart and soul, in obscurity, to know His will and do it. But you must come out into the light, Matthew Pedder, for his honour and glory. The world, the poor world lying in sorrow and despair because they know not the Father, needs you. 'My servants shall serve me, saith the Lord;' and you must serve Him in the way He has taught ye to do,—going about doing good. Perhaps you're saying you can't go about doing good? Well, you haven't got to run all over the country, nor even to the other side of London, no, not even to the end o' this street. There's a neighbour on each side of ye, there's somebody just across the road; and, nearer still, there's folks that come into your shop. Well, you needn't be saying to 'em, 'My friend, are ye saved?' or, 'D'you believe in the Lord Jesus?' or anything o' that sort. But just set and speak to 'em in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, so that they may take knowledge of ye that you've been with Him. A kind, chery word to your neighbours; the gift of a little singing-bird out of your shop to any poor creature shut up in affliction from taking their walks abroad; kind advice to some o' those miserable loafers as haunt your shop now and then, all this is reasonable service to your Lord and Master; and if it's done to please Him, you'll have an inward satisfaction that will be a great reward for you."

"Yes," answered Matthew, in a slow and thoughtful manner, "I can do that for the Lord, and I can see, too, that it's a duty. We oughtn't to live for ourselves, but for others."

"And by-and-by you'll get to do more than that, and be eager to do it," responded Josiah. "You'll see I shall be looking ye up some day, when I'm in want of a hand for my mission work."

"No, no," said Matthew, shaking his head and smiling. "I ain't one to come to the forefront. What bit o' work I does for the Lord must be in the shade, not cos I'm ashamed, but cos the front is for cleverer and more 'perienced workers than me."

(To be continued.)

A Silent Concert.

This impressive scene of a religious service is described by Dr. Gallaudet in his article in the *Sunday-School Times* on "The Ephphatha Sunday-school."—"In a pleasant suburb of the city of Washington, on the second Sabbath afternoon of each month, a Sunday-school concert is held, of a character altogether unique. No signal bell is struck at the opening, for there is never a hum of busy tongues to be hushed. No voice is raised in prayer. No organ-note calls to the joyous praise of God in singing, for those who have 'come before His presence with thanksgiving' have no power to show themselves 'glad in Him with psalms.' Silence reigns throughout all the exercises, not from choice, but from necessity, for the scholars in this school dwell at all times in stillness scarcely less profound than that of death itself." At the last February concert, comprising the usual repeating of texts and short addresses by the pupils, in the silent finger speech, the exercises began with the recitation of the following verses in the language of signs, by one of the younger pupils:—

Dear Saviour, ever at my side,
How loving Thou must be,
To leave Thy home in heaven to guide
A little child like me.
Thy beautiful and shining face
I see not, though so near;
The sweetness of Thy soft, low voice
I am too deaf to hear.
In the rendering of this hymn the absence of music was at least partially compensated by the poetry of motion, which is often an element of great beauty in sign recitations.