The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubets' Notes.

Second Quarter, 1903.

APRIL TO JUNE.

Lesson VI. May 10. The Plot Against Paul.—Acts 23: 12-22

GOLDEN TEXT.

The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer.—Acts 23: 11.

EXPLANATORY.

I. PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.—Vs. 1-10. The Trial of Paul. The next morning Paul was brought before the Sanhedrim for trial, so that the chief captain might learn the cause of the complaint against him. He began his plea with a statement that he had lived in all good conscience before God; a general denial of all charges of crime.

The high priest was angry at Paul's claiming a life so much purer and better than his own was publicly known to be. Josephus "gives us a terrible picture of his violent and unscrupulous conduct." "We are told that he reduced the inferior priests almost to starvation by defrauding them of their tithes, and sent his creatures to the threshing-floors with bludgeons to seize the tithes by force." In accordance with this spirit he ordered the attendants to smite Paul on the mouth.

Paul's Indignation. Paul, indignant at the insult and injustice in a court of justice, retorted. (v. 3) GOD SHALL SMITE THEE, THOU WHITED WALL, a vivid picture of a hypocrite, used with a slight variation, by the Lord of the Pharisees and scribes (Matt. 23: 27; Luke 11: 44).

Paul's Apology. When some one, shocked at what Paul said to the highest and most powerful official in the Jewish commonwealth, asked him: (v. 4) REVILEST THOU GOD'S HIGH PRIEST? Paul apologized not to the high priest but to the court, saying that he was not aware that it was the high priest who had spoken. He knew the high priest, but did not recognize him as the source of the order. The reply was not ironical, but the fact itself was a satire on the high priest; for how could any one conceive of a high priest giving such an order. It is no liceable that he did not retract the saying, or deny that what he said was true, but he was sorry that under the circumstances he spoke the true word (see Rom. 11: 7; I Pet. 2: 13-17; Jude 8-10). For in doing so he had inadvertently broken another law (Ex. 22: 28), which says (v. 5) THOU SHALT NOT SPEAK EVIL OF THE RULER OF THY PEOPLE.

The result was that the council came to no decision as to the charge against Paul, but continued to quarrel so fiercely among themselves that the soldiers were compelled to rescue Paul again and bring him into Castle Antonia.

II. THE VISION OF ENCOURAGEMENT.—V. 11. During THE NIGHT FOLLOWING THE LORD, the glorified Jesus stood by Paul as he had at Corinth (Acts 18: 9-10), and as he did again two years later in the storm at sea (Acts 27: 23-24), showing that he was his ever present helper, as the electric flash reveals the continual presence of the unseen electric power.

There were many reasons why Paul was in need of comfort and cheer at this time. (1) The reaction after two days of such exhausting excitement and exertion. (2) He had just escaped death, and was in the power of heathen who hated the gospel, and were likely to be influenced by the cunning and powerful Jewish hierarchy to put him to death. (3) The result of his work in Jerusalem seemed likely to be a failure. His very efforts to bring harmony and peace, and to bring the Jews into the kingdom, had apparently made matters worse. (4) His prayers and long cherished hope that he might preach the gospel in Rome seemed likely to be frustrated.

AND SAID, BE OF GOOD CHEER, be of good courage, of good cheer. FOR AS THOU HAST TESTIFIED. The compound word implies the thoroughness of the apostle's testimony. His work was so approved of God that he promised him a larger and more difficult field. SO MUST THOU BEAR WITNESS ALSO AT ROME. His wish (Acts 19: 21; Rom. 1: 10-11) was to be gratified in a way in which he had no thought.

III. THE NEW CONSPIRACY AGAINST PAUL.—Vs. 12-15. 12. AND WHEN IT WAS DAY, the day after the trident Paul's vision. CERTAIN OF THE JEWS. It is probable that among the conspirators were members of the fanatic association, called Sicarii, referred to in our last lesson and who played a permanent part in the last turbulent years of Jerusalem. BOUND THEMSELVES UNDER A CURSE, literally, anathemized or cursed themselves, bound themselves under an anathema or curse, which they invoked upon themselves if they should fail to do as agreed.

13. MORE THAN FORTY. Showing the intensity of the desire to make certain the death of Paul; and at the same time rendering it more difficult to keep the secret from Paul's friends. CONSPIRACY, swearing together, an agreement together under oath.

THEY CAME TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS, many of whom probably, and Ananias the high priest certainly, belonged to the Sadducean party, and were anxious to have Paul destroyed.

15. NOW THEREFORE . . . SIGNIFY, cause to appear, declare, make known. "A legal term; give official notice: a formal request for a regular investigation, to which Lysias, it might be assumed, would be disposed to accede, after the abrupt interruption of the previous day." WE, OR EVER HE COME NEAR (to the council hall), ARE READY TO KILL HIM. Their plan was to assassinate him on his way down from the barracks to the council hall, to reach which he must pass either through the great court of the temple or through the city. The plot was skillfully laid, and success seemed assured.

IV. HOW THE PLOT FAILED.—Vs. 16-22. 16. WHEN PAUL'S SISTER'S SON. "This is the only direct reference in Scripture to Paul's family. It is uncertain whether Paul's sister resided in Jerusalem, or whether the young man may have come up to Jerusalem with Paul, or had been sent thither for his education, as his uncle was before him." Paul had kinsmen in Rome (Rom. 16: 7, 11). HEARD OF THEIR LYING IN WAIT. The conspirators were numerous, and it would be very difficult for so many to keep their secret. They probably discussed their plans more or less in the fraternity or Guild of the Pharisees, and Paul's sister and her son would doubtless belong to it. ENTERED INTO THE CASTLE. Showing that his friends had free access to him, as afterwards at Cesarea (Acts 24: 23).

17. THIS YOUNG MAN. The narrative gives the impression that he was quite a young man. UNTO THE CHIEF CAPTAIN. Although Paul had an express promise from Christ of security, that he would escape the snares of the Jews, and bear witness for him at Rome, yet he did not neglect any proper means of safety, thus proving how far removed he was from the character of an enthusiast. His prudence also is here observable: he does not tell the centurion, but thinks it safer to inform the tribune himself."

19. THE CHIEF CAPTAIN TOOK HIM BY THE HAND. Seeing, perhaps, that he was nervous and flustered both from the peril to which he was subjecting himself by revealing this secret,—since suspicion would naturally fall on him,—and also by finding in the presence of the most powerful person in Jerusalem the military delegate of the dreaded procurator."

20. AS THOUGH, as if about to, intending to as a pretext.

22. SO THE CHIEF CAPTAIN. "The chiliarch is obviously glad of the intelligence. His sympathies are clearly with St. Paul personally as against the high priest and his followers." SEE THOU TELL NO MAN. (1) To avoid any interference with his plans, or a new conspiracy; (2) to avoid danger to the young man for revealing the secret; (3) to avoid any explanations of his conduct to the Jewish leaders.

V. PAUL TRANSFERRED TO CESAREA.—Vs. 23-35. That same night the chief captain outwitted the conspirators by sending Paul out of the city under a guard of two hundred soldiers, two hundred spearmen, and seventy mounted troopers with whom Paul rode. They left Jerusalem at nine o'clock in the evening, with a letter from Claudius Lysias to Governor Felix, stating the facts, and the reason why Paul was sent to Cesarea. The next day, after a march of forty-two or forty-three miles, they reached Antipatris, a city in the fertile vale of Sharon, eleven miles north of Lydda. It was built by Herod the Great as a fortress and a pleasant place of residence and named after his father.

The cavalry continued to guard Paul the remaining twenty-nine miles to Cesarea, the capital of the province of Judea. Paul was kept in the palace built by Herod the Great. As usual the palace was also a fortress and judgment hall for public business, and beneath it or in some tower were guard rooms and prison cells. Probably Paul was thus not sent to the common prison, but made as comfortable as possible, as the letter of introduction was kindly, and the governor could exercise his choice as to how and where the prisoner should be confined.

THE IDEAL HOME.

BY REV. GEORGE STAIR.

The foundation of modern civilization and the very cement of moral society is the family and the home. In savage life the spirit of individualism predominates; there is no instince of solidarity, but as man becomes civilized he realizes more and more the value of co-operation, and the more truly civilized he becomes the more coherent he comes the family and the home. Sever man or a nation from the idea of singleness of matrimonial alliance, the family and the home, and at once there is debasement in moral life, and woman, as some one has said, "instead of being what God intended her to be, a helpmeet to man," becomes his plaything or his slave.

Home is the place that we love best, because it is the place mother is, and there, because of her loving and fostering care, is the place of greatest earthly security. Man cannot create the home atmopher; he may climb to great heights of fame; he may win great battles; he may triumph over all competitors and thereby amass great riches; he may master the sciences, acquire a facility in innumerable languages, live or dead, but man, with all his power, genius and native ability, cannot make a home. That remains the task of woman, and in this she reigns supreme. Home ought to be a place where we can find the most refreshing rest. Home ought to be a place of genuine warmth; but some homes are as cold as ice, which breathe an atmosphere as cold as a breath from the polar zone. Let our homes be places of joy, love and brightest sunshine. Home ought to be a place of enduring love, the love which outlasts the wedding day and produces a life which is one long unbroken honeymoon. Home is the moulding place of child character. Your child has a right to insist that you live such a life as will exalt the standard of true manhood and true womanhood. Your child has a right to demand that you do nothing to stain by sin the name that you bear, and which you bequeath to him as a life possession. Give your child a sweetly religious atmosphere in which to grow; not one of monotonous 'don't' and "you must not," but one that presents the attractive side of Christianity. Let Christ be the unseen but truly recognized guest in your home, and teach your child the religion of "the Book."—Treasury.

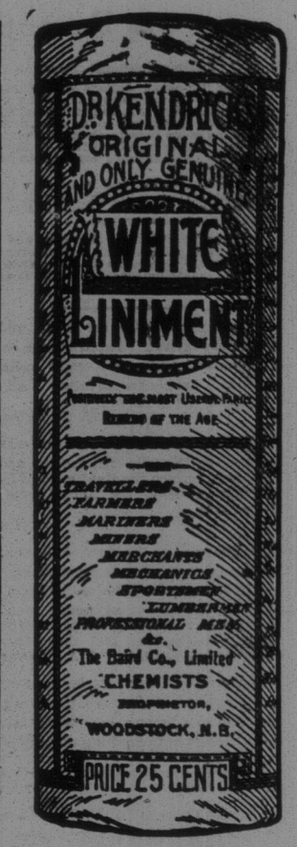
"I think it would be a good plan to send Willie up into the country for a month," said Willie's father; "he's never been on a farm, and it would be a novel experience for him." Willie hesitated and when pressed for a reason said: I don't want to go, I've heard about the country, and I don't want to go where they have thrashing machines. It's bad enough when it' done by hand."

HOW TO GAIN HEALTH

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