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The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter Lesson 7 Feb. 16 1902
THE SECOND PERSECUTION.—Acts 5: 33-42.

Study Verses 25-42. Read Acts 5: 12-42.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*—Matt 5: 10

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Immediately after the last lesson. The exact date unknown, but between A. D. 30 and 33.

Place.—Jerusalem; the preaching was in one of the porticoes of the outer Court of the Temple. The trial was in the hall of the Sanhedrim, in the city adjoining the temple.

THE OCCASION OF THE PERSECUTION.—V. 12-16.—The leaders had their choice of two ways: they could try to do better things than the Christians, or they could try to stop the progress of those who were doing these things. They chose the latter way.

THE PERSECUTORS.—V. 17. These were the same we met in Lesson V.—the high priest, the Sadducees, the priests and rulers, the members of the Sanhedrim.

THE FORM THE PERSECUTION TOOK.—V. 18. The apostles were so popular with the people that the rulers did not dare to kill them; but they arrested them, and put them in prison, thus putting, at least, a stop to their teaching and their work.

THE DELIVERANCE FROM PERSECUTION.—Vs. 19, 20. God confounded all the persecutors' plans by sending his angel to liberate the apostles, thus showing that the leaders were fighting against God (v. 39), and were defeated. With the deliverance was the command to go right on preaching the gospel in the most public place.

THE APOSTLES' ACTION IN PERSECUTION.—Vs. 21-32.—They went on fearlessly preaching the gospel. They did not hide their "light under a bushel," but placed it on a candlestick. The temple where they preached was the most public place possible. Here they went early in the morning, about daybreak. Worship is often performed in the synagogue at Jerusalem before the sun appears above Olivet. They were again arrested. *Captain of the temple.* See on Lesson V. The report of the officers was astounding and perplexing. The officers were afraid of mob violence.

Popular Favor is (1) a great power. (2) It is well to make use of this favor for the advancement of the gospel. But (3) it is not wise to trust to it, for it is proverbially fickle. It should never be sought as an end. It is worthless except as the result of faithfulness in doing good. *Did not we straitly. Strictly. Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.* Testimony to the success of their preaching. *The man's blood.* If Jesus was the Messiah, the rulers had been traitors to their nation. It was this charge that stirred them so deeply.

God gave the apostles in this way another opportunity to preach the gospel to the rulers, who could not have been reached in any other way. Peter was spokesman. His address was clear, true and personal.

1. He reiterates the principle on which they all stand. *We ought to obey God rather than man.* The consciences of the Sanhedrim approved of the principle, however they differed from the application.

2. He charges the rulers with fighting against God.

3. The rulers had done the same before, but had failed. God had given life to him whom they killed.

4. But there was still room for hope and for salvation. They and their nation could be saved.

THE PERSECUTORS' FIGHTING AGAINST GOD.—Vs. 33-42. *They were cut to the heart.* They were in a rage, because their plans were being thwarted. Their consciences were touched, and yet they were not willing to obey. *And took counsel.* Not how they might learn the truth, not how they might be saved from sin, but to slay them. As if breaking the alarm bell would put out the fire, or destroying the accuser would bring innocence to the accused. *Then stood up one in the council a Pharisee, hence of a party opposed to the Sadducees who had been leaders of this persecution.* But both parties joined in it. Gamaliel, best known to Christians as the teacher of Saul, Gamaliel... (was) had in reputation among all the people. It was the tradition of the ancient Greek church that he was converted to Christianity, and baptized. *Put the apostles forth a little space.* That the discussion might be the more unrestrained. *And said... Take heed to yourselves.* Be very careful what you do. Look at the matter from every point of view. Gamaliel proceeded

to take example from the recent history of the Jews, from which to learn how to proceed in the present case. *For before these days rose up Theudas.* A Theudas is mentioned by Josephus who revolted against the Romans; but he placed him in A. D. 44 or 45, ten or twelve years after this speech was made. Either Josephus was mistaken as to the date, as Rendall and others think, or the Theudas Gamaliel mentions is a different one from the Theudas of Josephus. There were many such uprisings and false Messiahs about this time. *Who was slain.* In both the examples furnished by Gamaliel, the ringleader was slain, — a fact which serves Gamaliel's purpose, for it reminded the council that the apostles, if they were disturbers would come to that end. *And all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.* The reason they were not also slain was probably because they did not wait to come into actual conflict with the Roman forces. *Judas of Galilee, with Zedock the Pharisee, during the early years of our Lord, when Quirinus ordered a census for taxation, had raised the standard of revolt, with the watchword, "It is not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar."* The Roman land tax was regarded as an insult. *Refrain from these men.* Do not try to interfere with them by force. *This counsel the purpose or plan of the apostles, work, was the execution of the purpose.* *Be of men, of human origin, of worldly purpose. It will come to nought.* Such work as the apostles conducted in their way could not succeed unless God was in it. *But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.* You will be laboring in vain. *Let, if you undertake to put this new sect down by force; haply, possibly. Ye be found even to fight against God.* That is a battle in which no man can win.

And when they had... beaten them. When the Jews inflicted this punishment the culprit was tied to a pillar in the synagogue; the executioner, armed with a scourge of three lashes, inflicted the punishment. Thirteen strokes of the threefold scourge was equivalent to the thirty-nine stripes. This was the flagging the apostles suffered on this occasion. The Roman scourging was much more severe. *And... commanded... them, as if they would do any good.*

REJOICING IN PERSECUTION.—Vs. 41, 42. *And they departed... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* In this they obeyed Christ, who in his beatitude bade them rejoice when men persecuted them. (1) When bad men hate and oppose us, we have reason to believe that we are not living in vain. (2) "Great shall be the reward in heaven," for it gives an opportunity of gaining the heavenly character and spirit. Only through battlefields can come victory and crowns. (3) It gives an opportunity to express our love to Jesus; to prove it to him, to ourselves, and to the world.

PRACTICAL LESSONS CONCERNING PERSECUTION.—1. What is persecution? The employment of pains or penalties, the administration of any uneasiness to body or mind, in consequence of a man's belief, or with a view to change it.

2. Among young people there are many forms of petty persecutions,—sneers and ridicule for any one who is trying to do better, who is strict in morals, who refrains from some popular amusement, who refuses to touch intoxicating drink, who is trying to live a religious life.

Persecution always has in it an element of meanness.

3. What is not Persecution. Punishment of a crime is not persecution, nor is the refusal to sustain those who hold opinions which we think wrong.

4. Our duty when persecuted. To go on and do what is right at any cost, but in the spirit of peace and piety and kindness and rejoicing.

5. Persecution a failure. The one way to overcome evil is by good. Only moral weapons can really destroy moral evil. But persecution in the end usually helps the good.

Frightening as a Punishment.

Dr. Mary Wood-Allen, who has aroused much interest and thought by her writings and addresses on purity subjects thinks wisely also on other matters affecting character and training of children. In the current number of Trained Motherhood she takes up in narrative style several points; one of which, concerning fright as a punishment, she treats as follows:

That child will be the death of me yet! He is such a little irrepressible conflict.

What have you done with him? asked her sister.

I have shut him up in a dark closet. He is awfully afraid of the dark, and it is the worst punishment I could devise.

If he is afraid of the dark, do you think it wise to shut him in a dark room?

Well, maybe he will learn to mind if he does not like being shut up.

But really, Clara, it is a dangerous proceeding to shut up a nervous child in a place where he is afraid. Let us go and listen and see if he is crying.

Oh, nonsense, said Mrs. Wingate of course he is crying, but he will get over it.

But Mrs. C. Grove was not to be deterred and so n found where the child was by the sound of her outcries.

Clara, she said, that child is frightened almost to death. You must let him out.

I need I won't, replied Mrs. Wingate. I thought you believed in making children mind.

So I do, but not by frightening them. Do you know that the strain upon his nervous system may be very serious? You can devise some other method of punishment, but, I beseech you to open the closet door.

The child's cries were really heart-rendering, and yielding to her sister's entreaties Mrs. Wingate opened the closet door, and the child rushed out with a scream, looking back as if he expected something to follow him.

Oh, mamma, he exclaimed, something kept hitting me on the head. What was it?

Oh, it was not anything, you foolish child, replied his mother.

Harold, said Mrs. Colgrove, does your finger hurt you?

The child's thoughts thus turned away from the subject of fear became engrossed with the little physical pain he was feeling.

Come here, continued his aunt, let's wash the little finger clean and tie it up, and I will tell you a story.

During the process of dressing the slight wound Mrs. Colgrove interested the child by a pleasant recital of the things she had seen on her journey to the city, and then asked him in a casual way how he had hurt his finger. He had begun to feel that his Aunt Margaret was full of sympathy, and so without hesitation began his little tale.

Why, you see it was this way: Mamma had a little white kitty and a dog got after it and chased it into the next yard and Mamma was awfully afraid and I was afraid that the dog would get the kitty, and there was not time to run along through the gate, and so I just squeezed under the fence and drove the dog away and caught the kitty, and I tore my clothes and hurt my finger. I could not let the kitty get killed, could I?

Mrs. Wingate had listened to the story with feelings that ranged from irritation to admiration.

Why, she said, the child was a little hero. Harold did not understand her remark, but recognized that it was not uncomplimentary, and smiled at his mamma.

I am sorry I tore my clothes mamma, I did not mean to.

Mrs. Wingate was down on her knees beside the child and putting her arms around him said, Mamma is very proud of her little boy that he was so brave.

Mrs. Colgrove, who did not like this method of treating the child, hastened to change the subject.

And now I wonder if he is brave enough to go with Aunt Margaret into the closet and close the door.

Well, but, Auntie, there is something in there that hit me on the head.

Well, shall we go and see what it is? The dark did not hit you on the head. The dark is nothing.

Emboldened by his aunt's presence Harold went into the closet and the door was shut.

There it is! he cried affrightedly. It hits me now. Don't you feel it?

Mrs. Colgrove put up her hand to the child's head and then she laughed. Put up your hand, Harold, right here by mine and you will find out what hits you on the head.

Timidly and yet anxious to prove his bravery, the little fellow put up his hand and he too laughed.

Well, he said, it is mamma's shawl. She always hangs it on the closet door.

Surely said Aunt Margaret, there is always a reason for everything and there is nothing in the closet when the door is shut that is not there when the door is open, except light.—Westminster.

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"I have used Ripans Tablets for a number of years and would not be without them. I was troubled with indigestion and constipation, and have noticed since I have been using them that I am getting rid of those terrible bilious spells which used to be on account of the distress. Of late I have not had any. I had just got every bad spell of bilious fever and was sitting on the step, when a neighbor came to me and remarked how bad I looked. I told him, but just got over the fever and that I was afraid to eat anything on account of indigestion, from which I had suffered since I was quite young. He advised me to take Ripans Tablets, from which I had suffered since I was quite young. I said I would try them, and from that time I have been without them. I can eat anything, providing I finish with a Tablet instead of dinner. I feel very thankful that I have found something that will prolong my life."

GASTRIC TROUBLES.

"I had suffered three years at least from gastric troubles. I could not sleep at night. My head ached and my feet would be cold as ice. My bowels were not regular and I would have much cramps from gases forming on my stomach that I would faint away. I was in such a state that I would have sooner died than live. About three months ago I was suffering and when my body was tied up severely. My brother recommended Ripans Tablets to me. My husband obtained some for me from the nearest drug store and I would not now be without them. They relieved me of all the foul gases that formed in my stomach and they move my bowels regularly, for which I had been taking physics all the time. I have no more gases, my bowels are regular, I have no more headaches and can sleep well. In fact, I feel as light as the air which I breathe, and I am saying a good deal for a woman who weighs 150 pounds. I am sorry that I did not commence using the Tablets a year ago, for they would have saved me a great deal of pain and suffering."

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