

## The Quiet Hour.

### The Second Persecution.

S. S. Lesson, Feb. 16th; Acts 3: 1-10.

Golden Text—Matt. 5: 10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

BY REV. J. MCD. DUNCAN, B. D.

They were cut to the heart . . . and were minded (Rev. Ver.) to slay them, v. 33. The gospel may make us mad or glad. The multitude on the Day of Pentecost were "pricked in their heart" (Acts 2: 37): as were these proud Sanhedrists. In each case the preaching of the apostles reached the hearts of the hearers, but with very different results. Those were filled with conviction of sin, these with rage. The heat from the sun melts wax and hardens clay. The effect which hearing the gospel is to have upon us, depends upon our own state of mind and heart.

There stood up . . . a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, v. 35. This same Gamaliel likely held with his pupil, Saul of Tarsus, when the latter took sides against Stephen, although he favored the apostles now when they proclaimed the resurrection in opposition to the Sadducees. Many are ready enough to stand by the preacher so long as he supports their favorite political or religious views. They are equally ready to oppose him when they can no longer claim him for their side. The lesson for the Christian worker is to remain perfectly independent of the approval or disapproval of worldly men. "The whole world is against you," it was said to a certain reformer. "Very well," was the quiet reply, "I am against the whole world." Perfect independence of the world's opinion, combined with perfect courtesy to all men, is the true attitude for the servant of God. "God and one man," always constitute a majority. We need not be greatly concerned if men withdraw their support from us, so long as we are conscious of being in the right.

Take heed to yourselves, v. 35. "The man who sits on the fence and thinks" is not wasting his time. Work well planned accomplishes more than ill-directed activity. The mapping out of the campaign by the general gives effectiveness to the courage and endurance of the soldiers. A little hard thinking before entering on a given course of conduct always pays. A few hours of serious thought would have kept that young fellow the other day from following the race tracks, and then he would not have lost all his money or become a safe-cracker, or gone to spend some of the best years of his life in prison. Spending a very short time in straight thinking would have kept many a bright boy from taking the first glass of strong drink and would have saved him in the end from the misery and dishonor of a drunkard. Take time to think before you act. An ounce of foresight is worth a ton of hind-sight.

For before these days rose up Theudas . . . who was slain . . . After this man rose up Juas of Galilee . . . he also perished vs. 36, 37. "Probability," said Bishop Butler, "is the guide of life." There are some circumstances, in which every man who does not wish to be considered a fool guards against not only probabilities, but even against possibilities. It is not certain

that a house will take fire, yet the wise householder insures his house and furniture; it is not certain that a ship will be lost at sea, yet the wise ship owner underwrites it to the full. It is not certain that if you begin tipping you will become a drunkard, or that if you begin playing cards for small stakes you will end by being a hopeless gambler. But experience shows that, even as these rebels mentioned by Gamaliel were subdued and slain one after another, there is at least the possibility, not to say the probability, of the seemingly harmless beginning leading to a disastrous end. It is wise to inure ourselves against even the possibility of moral ruin, as well as against material loss.

But if it be of God, v. 39. How much worse off the world would be if its heroes had waited always until the right had won the victory, before they became its champions! If Wilberforce in Britain or William Lloyd Garrison in America had delayed their agitation for the liberation of the slaves until their cause had become popular, the day of freedom for the blacks might have lingered sadly. If John B. Gough and Frances Willard had held aloof from the cause of temperance until public sentiment had begun to favor it, the progress of that cause would have been greatly retarded. Are we not to espouse the cause of righteousness until that cause has triumphed? Then we shall have to wait until the last day, and then it will not be a question of our choosing God but of God condemning us.

Even to be fighting (Rev. Ver.) against God, v. 39. Contrast this language with that of the apostles in v. 29: "We must obey God rather than men." This breathes the spirit of cold, calculating, timid prudence, that glows with noble and exalted enthusiasm. In the one we have an expression of the worldly wisdom which says: "Keep a whole skin," in the other of the true wisdom which exclaims: "Do the right and leave results with God."

To suffer dishonor for the Name (Rev. Ver.), v. 41. We suffer for the name of Jesus only when our sufferings resemble His. There are three marks which distinguish the sufferings of Christ. They were wrongful sufferings, they were willing sufferings, and they were sufferings on behalf of enemies.

In the temple and at home (Rev. Ver.) v. 41. From the beginning there have been these two fields of labor for Christ, the public assembly and the home. It will be a loss to the church if either of these two fields ceases to be cultivated. Those who are prevented by any necessary cause from coming to the church can work for Christ by teaching and studying and worshipping at home; and in the union of church and home we have the ideal method. The church and the home should ever reinforce one another. The Sabbath School and the family should cordially cooperate.

People sometimes worry for fear they have committed the unpardonable sin. They may be sure that if they are sorry for their sin, it is not the unpardonable sin. George Eliot once wisely said, "No evil dooms us hopelessly, except the evil we love and desire to continue in and make no effort to escape from."

### The Pastor's Wife.

There are few positions more difficult to fill than that of a pastor's wife. In the single matter of her social relations with the congregation there is required of her a flexibility, tact and good-nature such as few persons are called upon to exercise. There is perhaps not another woman in the church whose social duties are so exacting. Other women, as a rule, restrict their visiting to a limited circle, and their intimate associations are determined by congeniality of taste, feeling, and other affinities. There is no other woman in the congregation whose social sphere is so completely determined for her by circumstances, whose visiting list rises into the hundreds, and who is called upon to adjust herself to such a variety of temperaments and tastes. The difficulties of her position must be apparent to all who will try to put themselves in her place.

Now unfortunately these difficulties are often increased by the determination of even well-meaning persons to thrust her to the front in all the organized work of the congregation. They insist upon making her president of the church societies and head of various committees, and through her desire to cultivate the good-will of the people and to appear to shirk no duty which they may think binding upon her, she too often allows herself to accept these positions. The result is that the woman of all others in the church who should not be obliged to decide between conflicting opinions and tastes, is placed where she must render decision, and, in so doing, run the risk of offending. For not only is it true that things which another person might do without causing offense are resented if done by her, but that offense taken at her is very apt to have serious consequences for the congregation. It embarrasses the relations which both the pastor and his wife must necessarily continue to sustain to every member of the church, and introduces points of friction that ought not to exist, if the success and comfort of the work are to be considered. Members of a church ought to be very slow in insisting upon putting their pastor's wife into positions which her own good judgment would lead her to decline, and which needlessly subject her to the disfavor of any of the people. As an unofficial member of the various church societies she can do just as much work and perform just as earnest service, and she can do it without risks and embarrassments that are inseparably involved in asking her to take the lead.—Selected.

### Here, There!

The graves grow thicker, and life's way more bare,  
As years on years go by;  
Nay, thou hast more green gardens in thy care  
And more stars in thy sky.

Behind, hopes turned to griefs, and joys to memories,  
Are fading out of sight;  
Before, pain changed to peace, and dreams to certainties,  
Are growing in God's light.

Hither come backslidings, defeats, distresses,  
Vexing this mortal strife;  
Thither go progress, victories, successes,  
Crowning immortal life!

—Great Thoughts.

When a traveller is riding through a country where robbers are likely to be in ambush, he urges his horses at full speed. Now temptations are lying in ambush all around our lives, and this is one of the reasons why it is best for us to live strenuous lives—lives crowded with earnest work and healthful play.