

his books, (for he had a fine private library, the largest I had then ever seen) he asked me, "Do you read, W—?" I replied "yes sir, when I can get books." After a little further conversation he generously gave me free access to his library. This was a privilege indeed, and one of which I was not slow to avail myself. Every spare moment which I could possibly save from my duties I devoted to reading. I sat every night, as long as I was permitted, and more than once, when I could manage to do, the maid off to bed before me, I sat all night long; napping occasionally with my head upon the table, and then rousing, snuffing my candle, and reading on till morning. But I had no one to guide or direct me, and my reading therefore was perfectly indiscriminate; without plan or purpose, except the gratification, of an insatiable thirst, almost mania. Still my reading was not altogether useless to me. It at least gave me a better command of language; it expanded my vocabulary and enlarged the realm of thought. It revealed, or half revealed to me a vast number of existences and phenomena, which, though I could not classify them nor assign them their proper place, seemed to surround me on every side, inviting me forth, further to explore and enquire.

Sunday School Department.

International Bible Lessons, 1877.

Dec. 23.—Paul's Last Words.—2 Tim. iv. 2-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.

1 Tim. iv. 7-8. "I have fought a good fight, I have kept my course, I have kept the faith."

INTRODUCTORY.

The history of Paul subsequent to the narrative of the Acts is the subject of various traditions, but very little trustworthy information can be obtained. An outline only can be given here, and the teacher is directed to the fuller details given by Conybeare and Howson.

He was probably liberated after his first trial, the charge against him breaking down on examination. He then revisited the churches he had established, and executed the intention he had expressed of journeying through the western parts of the Roman Empire, possibly reaching even to Spain, some think even to the British Isles. He subsequently returned to Rome, but whether freely or as a prisoner cannot be decided. There he became involved in the results of the prosecutions raised against the Christians in connection with the burning of Rome. On this occasion he was kept in confinement in prison. Probably from the loathsome manner in which he was taken to Aquæ Salvia, a position about two miles from the present limits of the city, and there beheaded. Conybeare thinks he was arrested by the magistrate at Nicopolis, and forwarded to Rome for trial, the Christians at that time being obnoxious to the Roman authorities.

Timothy, to whom the epistle was written, became a convert on Paul's first visit to Lystra, and on the second journey Paul took him with him as an attendant or minister. Paul was very tenderly attached to him and calls him "his son in the faith." Timothy appears to have been of a mild, studious, retiring disposition, and Paul writes to urge him to more active and earnest efforts in preaching Christ.

The epistle was written from Rome during his second imprisonment, and immediately before his martyrdom. So these are called "Paul's Last Words."

EXPLANATORY.

V. 1. Charge thee. Call upon thee, urge thee. **Before God, &c.** Bringing in the name of God thus makes Paul's words a most solemn adjuration. **Shall judge.** So in anticipation of that judgment all our lives should be lived. The judgment of all human works is here referred to. (See Acts x. 42; 1 Pet. iv. 5.) **The quick.** Those who may be alive on the earth at the time of His coming (1 Thes. iv. 17). **His kingdom.** That feature of which it is to be established when Christ comes again.

V. 2. Preach; or proclaim like a herald. The one great Christian commission is, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Taken up with Church societies, Timothy seems hardly neglecting his preaching. Paul says let other things give way for it. Be sure to set the preaching first. **Be instant.** Active, urgent, quick to seize times and opportunities. **Out of season, &c.** when inconvenient to yourself. Paul does not mean that he is to force his preaching at improper times, and raise prejudice by inappropriateness; but he wants him to master himself: so as to be always ready for Christian work. **Reprove, &c.** Adapting your teaching to each occasion that arises, but in everything taking care to preserve the Christian spirit of "long-suffering," and to keep safely within the Christian truth or "doctrine."

V. 3. They will not, &c. the members of Church societies. **Sound doctrine.** Should be the sound doctrine—the apostolic teachings. **Own lusts, or desires;** in a self-willed way deciding what they prefer rather than what is revealed. **Itching ears.** Preferring to be tickled and pleased rather than to be instructed.

V. 4. Be turned, is a judicial punishment. **Fables,** having no foundation in truth; mere tales (1 Timothy i. 4).

V. 5. Watch thou; with the wakefulness of one sober. Very earnestly Christ pressed on His disciples the duty of "watching" (Mark xiii. 37). **Afflictions.** Such as are sure to attend earnest Christian work. **Evangelist, or missionary;** distinguished from a pastor as going about finding new opportunities for preaching the Gospel. **Full proof.** Let the demands made on you be fully met.

V. 6. To be offered; or poured out, as a libation on a sacrifice. "Every sacrifice began with an initiatory libation (or pouring of wine) on the victim's head." Paul held himself as "a living sacrifice," now he knew death was near. By his own earnest spirit he seeks to inspire Timothy to earnest work. **My departure;** literally *leaving speedily*, bringing in figure of ship ready to sail from land.

V. 7. Fight. Here the term includes more than hand-combat, and the figure is taken from the familiar Grecian games. **My course.** The space allotted for the race of life. **Kept the faith.** As a servant set under a high trust. Observe the rich blending of metaphors in this passage, and how perfectly they harmonize with each other.

V. 8. Laid up for me. His life-work being now complete, he felt sure the reward was ready, waiting to be given him. **Crown.** Wreaths of parsley, myrtle, and olive were the usual rewards given to the Grecian games. **Of righteousness.** Compare the terms "crown of glory," "crown of life." "A crown which consists in righteousness." At that day. The day of Christ's appearing and judgment. **Thine only hope.** Paul hints to Timothy that of an earnest and noble life he might win, through grace, "a crown of righteousness" also.

EXPLANATORY, &c.

I. PAUL'S LAST IDEAS OF THE MINISTRY. Solemn to listen to the last counsels of such an apostle. He had the right of authority, and the right of experience to speak. His idea is that ministry for Christ is a most earnest work, that should call out all a man's manhood. He feels the special importance of evangelistic work, and says Christian work is so surrounded with difficulty that there must be exceeding watchfulness of the truth, and even willingness to suffer and die for it.

II. PAUL'S LAST FEELINGS ABOUT HIMSELF. Verses 6-8 are among the richest and tenderest utterances of the saints of God. There is no boasting in them; only such an opening of his inner, deeper feelings as may encourage and inspire us "as son in the faith." The aged man may very properly look back over life and give his impression of it.

Then show what Paul thought about his Christian life and work. It had been a great sacrifice, but he did not draw back, he was willing to complete it now in his death. It had been a fight, but he could call it a good fight. It had been a long race-course, but he had kept well up, "looking off unto Jesus," and now the goal was nearly won. It had been the meeting of the responsibilities of a great trust, but he felt confident the Master would say, "Well done, faithful."

And he cherished a bright and glorious hope. Heaven was before him, but no trace of selfishness is seen. Heaven was so bright because others would be there too.

Learn—1. That God gives dying grace to dying saints. 2. That the good man may teach us much by his review of life. 3. That those who have the true spirit will heaven for others as well as themselves.—S. S. Union Notes.

Dec. 30.—Quarterly Review.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."—Phil. iii. 8.

SUBJECT.

GOLDEN TEXT.

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| 1. Paul at Cæsarea, Acts xxi. 8-15. | Acts, xx. 24. |
| 2. Paul at Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 27-30. | John, xiv. 120. |
| 3. Paul and the Ephesian Jews, Acts, xxii. 17-30. | Matt., xxi. 12. |
| 4. Paul before the Council, Acts, xxiii. 1-10. | Acts, vi. 10. |
| 5. Paul before Felix, Acts, xxiv. 10-25. | Acts, xxiv. 20. |
| 6. Paul before Agrippa, Acts, xxv. 13-26. | Acts, xxv. 19. |
| 7. Almost Persecuted, Acts, xxvi. 11-20. | Acts, xxi. 28. |
| 8. Paul in the Storm, Acts, xxvii. 14-20. | Psalm, lvi. 17. |
| 9. The Deliv'rance, Acts, xxviii. 32-44. | Psalm, cxviii. 30. |
| 10. Paul at Malta, Acts, xxviii. 1-10. | Rom., i. 14. |
| 11. Paul at Rome, Acts, xxviii. 16-31. | Rom., i. 12-16. |
| 12. Paul's Last Words, 2 Tim., iv. 1-8. | 2 Tim., iv. 7. |

International Bible Lessons, 1878.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

FIRST QUARTER.

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| Jan. 6. Rehoboam, 1st King of Judah 2 Chron. xii. 1-19. | xxxv. 1-11 |
| " 13. Aas Faithful to his God.... | xxxv. 1-11 |
| " 20. The Covenant Renewed.... | xxxv. 8-15 |
| " 27. Jehoshaphat's Prosperity.... | xxxvi. 1-10 |
| Feb. 3. Jehoshaphat Reproved.... | xxxv. 1-9 |
| " 10. Jehoshaphat Humbled of God.... | xxxv. 14-22 |
| " 17. Josiah's Reformation.... | xxxvi. 1-12 |
| " 24. Uziah's Pride Punished.... | xxxvi. 16-22 |
| Mar. 3. Ahas' Persistent Wickedness.... | xxxviii. 1-27 |
| " 10. Hezekiah's Good Reign.... | xxxix. 1-21 |
| " 17. Hezekiah and the Assyrians.... | xxxix. 19-27 |
| " 24. Manasse's Wickedness.... | xxxix. 1-27 |
| " 31. REVIEW.... | xxxix. 1-27 |