

aged his work arose among them; or heathen vices sprang up and corrupted the purity and destroyed the good name of the church. But the church in Philippi was singularly free from those disturbing influences. Doubtless this fact had much to do with the warm affection with which the Philippians reciprocated the Apostle's love. This was shown in the most practical and efficient manner, by their repeated and unsolicited contributions to his personal comfort. Again and again their love had prompted them to testify in this way their gratitude and devotion.

#### THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

The news of Paul's imprisonment in Rome had reached Philippi, probably through some one of the many Christians who were constantly travelling between the capital and the provinces. They learned that he had appealed to Cæsar, and, like himself, expected no doubt a speedy trial and release. Hence they may not have thought it necessary to send immediate assistance to him. But when they learned of the long and wearisome delays of the law, their love could forbear no longer. By the hand of Epaphroditus, one of their own most trusted and beloved members, they sent a generous contribution for the supply of the imprisoned Apostle's temporal needs. His heart overflowed with tender gratitude, which found expression in a letter sent back to the church by the hand of their messenger. In this letter he points out without restraint his appreciation of their bounty, his personal love for them, and his profound joy over their stability in the Christian faith, and their exemplification of Christian virtues. He knows that he can never repay their kindness, but he feels assured that the God whom he served, who had so abundantly supplied all his own needs would likewise supply every need of theirs. The corrections of false doctrines, the rebukes of heathen vices, or the defense of himself and his apostleship, which fill so large a space in many of his other Epistles, are conspicuous by their absence here. Not a word of disquietude dims the serene confidence and joy which Paul experiences as he thinks of those converts who will constitute his "crown" in the day of Christ's appearing.

#### CHRIST'S HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION.

The most remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, if not in the writings of Paul, is that in which he gives his conception of the relation of Christ to the work of redemption. As usual it occurs incidentally, and for the purpose of enforcing an exhortation. A trifling difference of opinion had arisen among some of the members of the church. In pleading for a spirit of entire unity Paul urged them to cultivate that spirit of humility and unselfishness which was pre-eminently exhibited by the Lord Jesus, who should in all things be the believer's Pattern. This led him to speak in detail of that act of stupendous self-abasement which was revealed in the incarnation of the Son of God. The language in which Paul describes the pre-existent glory of Christ is remarkably forcible and suggestive. He describes Him as existing "in the form of God." The word implies that before the Son of God came into this world as Jesus of Nazareth, He possessed essentially the same mode of existence as that possessed by God. That is to say, whatever might be predicted of the divine mode of being could also be affirmed of Christ in His heavenly glory. This thought is still more forcibly brought out in the statement that antecedent to His incarnation Christ did not regard perfect and absolute equality with God as a prize to be coveted or grasped after, as men seize some extraordinary earthly rank or dignity, because this perfect equality was something which the Son of God had possessed from eternity. It is substantially the same doctrine as that contained in the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel, but, since it was written some thirty years before this Gospel, it is especially interesting from the fact that it reveals how quickly the church had apprehended this profound truth concerning the person of Christ.

Of this glory the divine Son "emptied" Himself in assuming humanity in the "form of a servant." Here again we find the same word used to describe the essential deity of Christ. As He was truly God so He became truly man, combining in Himself the twofold nature of God and man, qualified to understand both and to enter into fullest sympathy with them. This also He was enabled to transact for both, becoming thereby a perfect Mediator between God and man. On the one hand He could enter fully into God's thought concerning sin and sinners, and on the other, though Himself unconquered by temptation, into sympathy with those who had fallen beneath its power, and were helpless to lift themselves in purity and righteousness.

The incarnation was, however only the first step in the humiliation of the Son of God. The next involved His obedience unto the death on the cross—a sacrificial death which He endured not for Himself, but that He might thereby open a new and living way for the return of fallen humanity to God. Thus He humbled Himself not only to become a Mediator but an atoning Sacrifice. But He

who surrendered Himself to death was not left to its power. God raised Him up, and as a reward for His unparalleled self-abasement lifted Him to an unparalleled dignity in the heavenly world. Nor did He lay aside His human nature when He ascended to that throne where God has made Him the object of universal worship. He is still the God-man, whose triumph over sin and death is the everlasting pledge of victory to those who believe on Him. Humanity glorified in Him is the first-fruits of a redemptive work that reveals as nothing else can the love and mercy of God in seeking to save the world.

## FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

### International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON II.—PAUL A PRISONER AT JERUSALEM.—OCT. 10.

(Acts xxii, 17-30.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed."—1 Peter iv. 16.

TIME AND PLACE—About A.D. 58. Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION—From Cæsarea, where we left Paul at the close of our last lesson, he continued his journey to Jerusalem, his company being increased by the addition of certain of the Cæsarean Christians. On reaching Jerusalem Paul was welcomed by the brethren, and opportunity was given him to give an account of his work in the gospel to the elders of the church. By them he was advised to show his adherence to the Jewish law by observing rites; to this he consented, but while in the temple for this purpose he was seized upon by a mob of the Jews, who drew him out of the temple and attempted to kill him, but he was rescued by the commander of the Roman troops, who bound him and took him to the castle of Antonia, which joined the temple area. On his way to the castle he asked permission to speak to the people, which was granted by the chief captain. In our present lesson we have the latter part of his address.

VERSE BY VERSE—V. 17. "When I was come again,"—This refers to his return to Jerusalem, after three years, his first visit after his conversion. "In a trance."—A trance is a recognized mental condition in which the mind loses consciousness of outer objects, and is borne away, so to speak, into another world of thought.

V. 18. "Saw him."—The Lord Jesus.

V. 20. "Thy martyr."—Literally, 'Thy witness,' but the word martyr early came to be applied to those who witnessed with their blood—were put to death for Christ's sake. "Stephen."—One of the seven deacons. (See Chap. vi.)

V. 21. "Gentiles."—All nations besides the Jews were called Gentiles.

V. 22. "Gave him audience."—Listened to him. "Away with."—That is, kill him.

V. 23. "Cast off their clothes . . . threw dust."—Tokens of their rage against Paul.

V. 24. "The chief captain."—The commander of the Roman garrison at Jerusalem. His name was Claudius Lysias. (Chap. xxiii. 26.) "Be examined by scourging."—Be put to torture, to make him confess.

V. 25. "Centurion."—Commander of a hundred. An officer of the Roman army, corresponding nearly to the captain of modern times. "Is it lawful."—It was unlawful to punish a Roman citizen without formal conviction, and even then he could not be scourged.

V. 28. "With a great sum obtained I this freedom."—Roman citizenship was obtained in several ways, by birth, by purchase, and conferred as a reward for special services. "I was free born."—It is not certain just what this means. Mere birth in Tarsus would not make Paul a Roman. It is probable that his father had by some service to the government obtained the right.

V. 29. "Was afraid."—The penalty of violating the rights of a Roman citizen was death and confiscation of property.

THOUGHTS.—Sincere prayer offered in holy places is often crowned with single answers. The prayer Paul offered in the temple, the most holy sanctuary to him, as a Jew, was honored of the Lord with a manifestation of his presence, and the granting of a special revelation. All true prayer is answered, and God seems to especially delight in supplication offered in places dedicated to his name. This is an argument for the assembling of Christians in the churches for united prayer. Secret prayer is also a necessity of the spiritual life, and, in this case, Paul made a closet of the temple.

God's commands must be executed without delay. "The king's business required haste." 1 Sam. xxi. 8. The great commission rings in the ears of the church to-day—"Go, disciple all nations." Matt. xxviii. 19; but how slowly is it being obeyed! "To-day, if thou wilt hear his voice." Ps. xc. 7. The Lord does not give