



LESSON,—SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1909.

## The Apostles Imprisoned.

Acts v., 17-32. Memory verses 19, 20. Read Acts v., 17-42.

### Golden Text.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Matt. v., 10.

### Home Readings.

Monday, February 8.—Acts v., 17-28.  
 Tuesday, February 9.—Acts v., 29-42.  
 Wednesday, February 10.—Jer. xxvi., 8-16.  
 Thursday, February 11.—Matt. x., 16-22.  
 Friday, February 12.—I. Pet. iii., 8-18.  
 Saturday, February 13.—I. Pet. iv., 12-19.  
 Sunday, February 14.—Matt. v., 1-16.

#### FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Can anyone tell me what happened to Peter and John after they had healed the poor lame man in the Temple? Yes, they were put in prison and tried by the judges just as though they had done something wicked. When the judges let them go they told Peter and John not to preach about Jesus any more. Did Peter and John promise not to, and did they go home and say, 'Well, we got off safely then, we had better keep very quiet now or they may catch us again?' No, indeed. Peter and John told their judges plainly that God had given them a message and they would have to obey God. Then they went home and prayed that God would make them brave and help them to preach and teach about Jesus more. So the Christian Church grew stronger and stronger until all the people in Jerusalem heard about Christ, and a great many accepted Him as their Saviour. Then the Jewish authorities got angry again and sent soldiers who arrested not only Peter and John, but all the apostles who had been Christ's disciples, and they were all put in prison. Our lesson to-day is to see what happened after that.

#### FOR THE SENIORS.

The deliverance of the apostles from prison by God's hand during the night has made some question why God does not use some such method to-day when His servants are in danger or difficulty. Such deliverance, however, was by no means usual even at this early stage of His church, for at the previous trial (Acts iv.,) the two apostles had to suffer the night's imprisonment, later James had to die when Peter was again delivered (Acts xii.,) and although Paul escaped from his first imprisonment at Rome, it was only after two years of endurance (Acts xxviii., 16, 30) and the only escape from his second imprisonment was by death. This deliverance is not an example of what may be expected by God's servants, but was only a sign to attract the attention of the people. For one such deliverance the early Christians suffered by the thousands in imprisonments where there was no miraculous intervention of God. God was not the less thoughtful for the ones that suffered than for the ones He released. Had God miraculously delivered John Bunyan from prison the world would have been the poorer by 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Nor did the apostles' deliverance mean freedom, for they were none the less taken before the Sanhedrin and called to suffer for Christ's sake (verse 40). These were the first strokes of centuries of persecution of the Christian Church. The apostles were absolutely fearless, for Peter's intrepid speech (verses 29-32) spoke for them all. It is interesting to notice how differently the one truth will affect different hearers. The rulers who heard this message at this time were 'cut to the heart' and 'took counsel to slay them,' while the common people

hearing almost the same message on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii., 36) were 'pricked in the heart' and cried 'men and brethren, what shall we do?' The message was a two-edged sword that found its way home in each case, but how differently was it received. The last two verses in this chapter should have our serious thought at this day. The Christian no longer is liable to imprisonment for preaching God's word, but is there no penalty for a true holding forth of the gospel light in our lives? When the sneer comes from a companion for some declaration of a principle on your part as a Christian, do you hold your head higher as one who is proud of his cause, or does the hot flush of shame come that you have been found under the banner of your Master?

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

Verse 17. 'An angel.' Upon one occasion John Bunyan having been permitted to go out and visit his family, with whom he intended to spend the night, felt so uneasy that at a very late hour he went back to prison. Information was given to a neighboring clerical magistrate that there was strong suspicion of Bunyan having broken prison. At midnight he sent a messenger to the jail, that he might be a witness against the merciful keeper. On his arrival he demanded, 'Are all the prisoners safe?' The answer was 'Yes.' 'Is John Bunyan safe?' 'Yes.' 'Let me see him.' He was called up and confronted with the astonished witness, and all passed off well. His kind-hearted jailer said to him, 'You may go out when you will, for you know much better when to return than I can tell you.' We do not call that a miracle, yet who shall dare to say that an angel had nothing to do with it?—William M. Taylor, in Peter, the Apostle.

Verse 21. 'They entered into the temple about daybreak and taught.' The people of Palestine have always begun the day much earlier than is customary with us. During most of the year the heat is so great that work is begun very early, and a long rest is taken when the sun is highest in the heavens. The temple gates were opened early for those who came to worship and those who came to trade (John ii., 14). 'To-day worship is often carried on in the synagogues at Jerusalem before the sun appears above Mount Olivet.'

Verse 29. When Daniel Webster was asked what was the greatest thought that had ever come to him, he replied, 'The thought of my personal responsibility before God.' The supremacy of divine authority and the responsibility resting upon us of obeying, is, indeed, the greatest of thoughts.

God's angels open locks as easily as His sunbeams open rosebuds.—H. W. Warren.

It is a great deal easier to do what God gives us to do, than to face the responsibility of not doing it.—J. R. Miller.

I would rather obey than work miracles.—Martin Luther.

(FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES.')

Among young people there are many forms of petty persecution which ought to be carefully avoided, sneers and ridicule for anyone 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. One such case is related in 'Tom Brown at Rugby.' Hazing is often a form of persecution, especially when inflicted on the weak or inexperienced.

'I believe that angels wait on us as truly as ever they waited on Abraham, or Jacob, or Moses, or Elijah, or Jesus Himself. The medieval painters were fond of filling the background of the Infancy with countless angels; the representation, though literally false, was morally true. I believe that angels are encamping around them that fear the Lord.'—George Dana Boardman, D.D.

Verse 29. The Words of Socrates, when he was pleading before his judges who condemned him to death, bear a striking resemblance to this bold utterance: 'Athenians, I will obey God rather than you; and if you would let me go, and give me my life on condition that I should no more teach my fellow-citizens, sooner than agree to your proposal I would prefer to die a thousand times.'—See Livy xxxix., 37.

'And I honor the man who is willing to sink Half his present repute for the freedom to think.'

And when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,  
 Will risk t'other half for the freedom to speak.'

—James Russell Lowell.

## Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, February 14.—Topic—Pleasing God or pleasing men, which? Acts iv., 19, 20.

### C. E. Topic.

Monday, February 8.—My testing. Job i., 12; I. Pet. i., 6, 7.

Tuesday, February 9.—My adversary. Job ii., 1-7; I. Pet. v., 8-11.

Wednesday, February 10.—My perplexity. Job xxi., 7-13; Ps. lxxiii., 13-19.

Thursday, February 11.—My critics. Job xix., 1-8; I. Pet. iv., 12-19.

Friday, February 12.—My humility. Job xl., 3-5; Matt. v., 5.

Saturday, February 13.—My redeemer. Job xix., 21-29.

Sunday, February 14.—Topic—Life lessons for me from the book of Job. Job xlii., 1-6, 10-17. (Consecration meeting.)

## Lift up the Cross.

(By the Rev. Albert Bryant.)

A Sunday-school superintendent was watching the children while they were singing a motion-song. The chorus was 'Lift up the Cross!' and the children were to suit the action to the words by holding up little crosses. They raised their hands scarcely as high as their chins and sang the inspiring chorus in a dull, spiritless way.

'The cross,' said the superintendent, 'stands for the love of Jesus. You lift it up to show how much you love him and to show others his love. How much do you love him?'

'A great deal,' answered a little girl.

'How can you show that with the crosses?'

'By lifting them high up,' said the boys.

'Then do it when you sing the words.'

The class sang the chorus again, raising the crosses over their heads and singing with ringing voices while their eyes sparkled:

'Lift up the Cross! Lift up the Cross!'

Those children were listless and awkward because they did not think that the motions they were making had any importance to anybody. As soon as they felt that they were really serving anybody they awoke to earnest action. There is nothing that will put life into dull meetings, dead societies, cold hearts, but the love of Jesus. If there is any reason to feel that there is such dullness or chill around you, go to Jesus in prayer, and stay there till your hearts are glowing, and you feel anew how sweet it is to serve him.—Selected.

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