

didn't pay; or that it was a work from which the "pastor" might excuse himself.

Brethren, it does pay. Our churches languish for the lack of it. Impressions made by the ministrations of the pulpit are speedily effaced because they are not followed up by personal entreaty and warning. And no minister can say to his people as Paul said to the Ephesian elders: "I take you to record to-day that I am pure from the blood of all men," if that people have, for years, seen him only in the pulpit and in the weekly—we had almost written, "social"—prayer-meeting.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S SPECIAL INFIRMITY.

BY REV. S. G. GREEN, D.D., IN THE BRYAN LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

Several writers have latterly maintained that the infirmity with which the apostle Paul, in more than one place, states himself to have been afflicted, was a disease of the eyes; and have striven, with great ingenuity, to show that this malady was caused by the lingering effects of "the glory of that light" (xii. 1) which had shone around him on the way to Damascus (ix. 3, 8, &c.). It is obviously impossible to attain more than a probability in the case; but the passages in which the apostle speaks of his affliction, as well as other incidental notices of his demeanor, are curiously in accordance with the above view.

When writing of this infirmity to the Galatians, among whom it had attacked him with peculiar severity, he says, (Gal. iv. 14, 15).—"My temptation (*i.e.*, trial) which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected, * * for I bear you record that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me." The statement is made as a strong argument of their affection; but why should their attachment take this form? and does not the expression, *if possible*, shew that the supposition was that of a literal exchange of organs?

Again, in the second epistle to the Corinthians, ch. xii., the mention of "the thorn in the flesh" is closely associated with that of "visions and revelations of the Lord" and the affliction is expressly said to have been sent "lest" he "should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations." Now while any affliction would have been in a measure humbling, it is evident that an infirmity which was the immediate consequence of the display of the Divine glory, would serve, with peculiar appropriateness and force, to remind the favoured apostle of his human weakness.

Tending in the same direction are several indications of his demeanor scattered through the Acts. Three times he is said (in an expressive word peculiar in the New Testament to Luke and Paul) to have "gazed steadfastly" when there seemed nothing peculiar so to rivet his gaze (xii. 9; xiv. 9; xxiii. 1). Then on this last occasion he made a mistake, almost inexplicable in a Jew, in not recognizing the high priest (xxiii. 5). "One can picture the great Apostle, who was a thorough gentleman, stretching forward, and shading his eyes to see better, and saying, 'Pardon me, I did not see it was the high priest.' 'I wish not.'—Brown, *Hours Sub-*

Once more, the fact of Paul's employing an amanuensis for his Epistles, is suggestive of some weakness which prevented him from writing with his own hand. One Epistle, we know, was so written, either wholly or in part—that to the Galatians: and the fact is especially mentioned by him (vi. 11) as a proof of his great earnestness. The passage shoud, moreover, be in all probability recorded, "Observe in what large letters I have written to you,"—*i.e.*, "mark the size of the characters." So Conybeare and Howson, who, however, think that only the close of the Epistle, from verse 11 to 18, was actually penned by the apostle. Com. 1 Cor. xvi. 21, 24; 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18. The "large characters" were probably the result of imperfect vision.

This partial blindness would be a constant testimony to the reality of the apostle's vision of the Lord. "Often, no doubt, when St. Paul told of that memorable meeting with the Lord Jesus, he was met by the reply, 'Paul, thou art beside thyself;—delusion—heated imagination—has deceived and betrayed thee.' But he had only to point to his branded, half-quenched orbs, and to ask the objectors if mental hallucinations were accustomed to produce such effects on the bodily frame. To such a question there could obviously be no answer." It is very remarkable, too, that the Galatians are commended for not having rejected Paul's trial, which was in his flesh, (v. 14);—an expression very intelligible, if this infirmity be regarded in the light of evidence. "St. Paul came among the Galatians proclaiming to them the glad truth that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. How did he know it? Because he himself had seen Him alive after His passion, 'when he came near to Damascus.' Was he quite sure that the vision was not a dream, or a delusion? He pointed to his eyes in proof that it was a great certainty, a terrible as well as joyous reality. And this evidence the Galatians 'despised not, nor rejected.'" See a very able and ingenious essay, by J. T. Brown, in Dr. Brown's *Hours Subsequent*, first series. Mr. Lewin, with Conybeare and Howson, and others, admits the great probability of the above view. See Conybeare and Howson on the passages in Galatians, and vol. i, p. 294.

WHERE IS THY BROTHER?

Run, for his feet are nearing

The dreadful river's brink!

Haste, ere his hand is lifted

The poisoned cup to drink!

He sees no thickening darkness,

Hears not the Jordan's swell—

See's but life's guided chalice,

And dreams that all is well.

Oh voiceless, silent Christian,

A word that soul may save!

Run! SPEAK! if thou wold'st snatch it

From sin's eternal grave!

Tell how the Saviour sought thee

And snatched thee back from death!

Speak—though the words drop weakly

From faltering lips and breath!

Haste—for the shadows lengthen,

The night is drawing on

A SOUL waits to be rescued!

A star waits for thy crown!

ANON.

Sunday School Department.

International Bible Lessons, 1877.

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OCT. 21.—Paul and the Bigoted Jews.—
Acts xxiii, 17-30. A.D. 58 (Summer).

GOLDEN TEXT.

But we unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.—Matt. xxiii, 13.

INTRODUCTORY.

Our last lesson left Paul after the riot a prisoner, under the protection of Roman soldiers, standing at the top of the flight of stairs leading from the Temple area to the Castle of Antonia, and requesting permission from the Chief Captain "to speak unto the people." This somewhat unusual request on the part of a prisoner having been granted, Paul, with that wonderful power he had of commanding men, even under such circumstances as the present, had merely to beckon with the hand, and there was "a great silence" (xii, 40), and then with characteristic tact and skill he addressed those turbulent Jews in their own national and sacred Hebrew language. Only the latter part of his speech is contained in our lesson. We commend the following remarks on the address by a good English teacher to the careful notice of our readers.

"St. Paul's address to the angry crowd is a rare example of skillful and conciliatory oratory. His choice of the Hebrew language contributed not a little, as Luke says, to secure him an attentive hearing. (The mention of this, by the way, is an incidental proof that it was an exceptional thing, that he usually addressed even the Jews in Greek, and that the latter language was generally understood.) Then observe both the matter and style of the speech. First he speaks of his Pharisee education, under the great Rabbi; then of his persecuting zeal against this way, acknowledging, in passing, their 'zeal towards God.' And then follows a plain and straightforward narrative of his conversion, and of his subsequent vision, which (he does not omit to state) took place while he was praying in the Temple. Throughout his words are skillfully chosen to disarm prejudice. He speaks respectfully of the Sanhedrin ('all the estate of the elders'), who are not mentioned in chap. ix; he calls the Jews at Damascus 'the brethren'; he does not obtrude the name of Jesus, but speaks of Him simply as 'He,' or as 'that Just One'; he refers to Ananias in terms which his audience would appreciate and approve. And they did listen until the hated name of 'Gentile' revived all the excited feelings which the speech had so far succeeded in allaying."

EXPLANATORY.

V. 17. When I was come again to Jerusalem. Most probably refers to his first visit there, three years after his conversion.—Acts ix, 26. Prayed in the Temple. Some had hinted at a disposition on his part hostile to the Temple.—Acts xxi, 28; he therefore informed them that he was none the less a true Jew for having embraced Christianity, but was still glad to worship God in the sacred place. This occurrence in the Temple is not elsewhere mentioned. Trance—an ecstasy, a state of bodily insensibility, but intense mental activity and absorption. Compare Peter in Acts x.

V. 18. And saw Him—that is, the Lord (verse 16).—Compare Acts ix, 17; 1 Cor. xv, 8; 2 Cor. xii, 24.

Get thee quickly out of Jerusalem. Paul only remained 15 days in Jerusalem at that time.—Gal. i, 18.