

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

PAUL A PRISONER—BEFORE FESTUS AND AGRIPPA.*

By Rev. Professor Falconer, B.D.

The heavenly vision, v. 19. This included Christ's vision of Saul and Saul's vision of Christ. The Lord saw what Saul the persecutor might, by His grace, become. As, in Old Testament times, Jacob "the Supplanter" was transformed into Israel, "a Prince with God;" Moses, the hot-headed and slow of speech, into the keder and lawgiver of his race; Jeremiah, the timid and fearful, into the intrepid and outspoken prophet; so the Lord beheld in this raging foe of His people the making of the greatest of Christian preachers and missionaries. And because Christ saw the man He had in Saul, Saul was brought to see the Master and Saviour who had in Christ. Not in the same way, but in some way, does God give to each of us a vision of what we may be and do. Everything depends for us, as for Saul, in our being "not disobedient."

Damascus . . . Jerusalem . . . Judaea . . . Gentiles, v. 20. In the tropic highlands are numerous chains of lakes, each opening into another, sometimes through a narrow channel, winding through overhanging trees on either side, and suddenly widening out into a broad and beautiful sheet of water. It is one of the delights of the summer tourist or camper to explore these charming waterways. In like manner, the lead-hearted follower of Jesus Christ rejoices when he sees new regions constantly opening up to the spread of His blessed gospel. It is ours, by our prayers and gifts and work, to share in the glad work of spreading the good news throughout the whole world.

Repent . . . turn to God . . . works meet, v. 20. Here the beginning and the growth of the Christian life and character are pictured in a few strong and simple sketches. "Repent," there is the root. First of all, there must be a change of mind, so that instead of loving and following sin, we hate and forsake it. "Turn to God"—there is the trunk. With our backs to sin and faith Godwards in our hearts, we grow in spiritual strength and symmetry. "Works meet" there are the branches laden with precious fruit. There can be no genuine repentance and faith that do not bring forth right-doing towards God and man. Repentance, faith, good works—these three God has joined; no man dare put them asunder.

A Christian, v. 28. It was in the wicked city of Antioch in Syria that this name was first given to the followers of Jesus. From the scornful lips of the surrounding heathen the title was hissed out in hot contempt at those who banded themselves together against the idolatry and vice with which the city was crammed. But the highest compliment is paid to Christianity when its adherents are thus made the aim of a wicked world's hate and scorn. It sometimes happens that a boy in school, or a workman in a shop, or a man in business, is made the butt of his associates' scoffing ridicule, because he takes his stand as a Christian. But every contemptuous word hurled at one who lives as a consistent follower of Christ is an unconscious testimony to the religion that he professes.

Except these bonds, v. 29. But Agrippa was wrapped round by far worse chains than those which bound Paul. His own passions and desires, his cowardly conformity to the evil practices of his time—these held him in a slavery that was far more terrible, because he was unconscious of it all, and boasted himself of his freedom. Like the wreckers on some stormy

coast, who begin their operations by taking the tongue out of the bell that hangs on the buoy and putting out the light that beams from the beacon, so, by his wicked deeds, the king had choked his conscience into silence. That warning voice no longer heard, he went on, ever forging for himself stronger chains of sin. No one is in greater soul peril than he who has lost all sense of his danger.

THE OTHER MAN.

The world is filled with mysteries and every man has his share. There are depths in the Word of God which we cannot fathom; but there are similar depths in the men who walk life's path with us. We know them, we call them by name and we visit them in their homes; but how little we know of those who we know best! As there are unsounded depths in the other nature so there are failures of vision in our own nature. We hear our neighbor's voice; but how many voices are there in his soul which we do not hear. We see him in his daily walk, by his fire-side and in his place of business; but there is an undiscovered country in that nature of his on which no mortal eye has ever rested. We may hear the voice of God, but we cannot hear the music in the soul of him who walks by our side. There are a thousand melodies, not one of which ever reaches our ears. We can measure the planets and the distances to the sun; but there is not a man of us that can measure the yearnings of the soul which we believe in and love the most. What a lack of vision there is; how feeble the grasp! There are paths along which that other spirit moves of which we know nothing. There is for him a continent on which we cannot set foot. The mystery of our neighbor is greater than the mystery of the sea, for the fathoms may be rounded, but there is no plummet for the spirit of man. God gives to every man a nature all its own. It is his to care for and to train for humanity's good and for God's glory. We may see the dim shining of his light, but it is his to walk by, not ours. He is his own ultimate arbiter, not we. It is ours to help by the knowledge we have; but his to decide what the issue of his life will be. He may be far above us, dwelling in altitudes of divine favor which we have never reached. His hold on God may be stronger, his love deeper, his faith purer, and the lines along which his hope runs may be too ethereal for our vision; too profound for our knowledge, but the very purity of his life, the fervor of his prayers and the supreme grasp of his faith only deepen the mystery and emphasize our inability to comprehend the sublimity of his outlook. If we cannot fathom the nature that is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, whose environment is similar to ours, how can we grasp the All-Divine? When our fellow man is a mystery, should we wonder at the fathoms of the Divine man? If our plummet will not sound the depths by our side, we must expect to be hopeless when we stand before God.—United Presbyterian.

Jehovah, the loving God, distinctly promises to answer the prayers of his children. He that gave parents a love for their children, will he not listen to the cries of his own sons and daughters? He has wonders in store for them. What they never heard of, never saw or dreamed of, he will do for them. He will invent blessings, if needful. He will ransack sea and land to feed them; he will send every angel out of heaven to succor them, if their distress requires it. He will astonish them with his grace, and make them feel that it was never before done in this fashion. All he asks of them is that they call upon him.—Spurgeon.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Agrippa II.—Marcus Julius Agrippa, the last of the Herods, was the son of Agrippa I, and was only a youth when his father died. In time, the tetrarchy of Chalcis and the right of nominating the high priest were conferred upon him. Although he was a pagan in culture and morals, he took a deep interest in all Jewish matters. He finished the temple, and, with the consent of the Sanhedrin, modified very considerably its worship. He rebuilt and beautified his capital, Caesarea Philippi; and offended the Jews by building his palace at Jerusalem in such a position that he could look into the courts of the temple where the priests were sacrificing. They erected a wall to keep him from seeing what was done, and as it interfered with the view of the soldiers from the castle of Antonia, the procurator ordered them to take it down. They appealed to the Emperor Nero, who, influenced by his wife, who was a Jewess, gave them permission to retain the wall. Agrippa earnestly endeavored to persuade the Jews not to go to war with the Romans, but it was all in vain. After the war was over he lived in Rome, and was raised to the rank of praetor.

THE DISGRACE OF SIN.

We have just read of a man who had been convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary. To his counsel, as he was led out of the courtroom, he cried, "I cannot bear this disgrace." It was wringing his heart. While he was engaged in sinning he felt it not, but when the public punishment came, he felt it keenly.

This was in human court. But there is another court to be held in the future. In it the Lord Jesus will sit as judge. Then there will be a tremendous gathering of spectators; all the elect angels will be there; all the redeemed of earth will be there; yes, and even the sinners who have rejected the offer of salvation will be there. In the presence of them all we shall each hear the decision of the Judge as to himself, either "Come ye blessed," or "Depart ye cursed."

Then shall we understand the words of the angel as he told Daniel that on that day "some shall awake to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Then will be fulfilled the picture that is found in the sixth chapter of Revelation. It presents to us even the kings of the earth as hiding in the dens in the rocks of the mountains and saying to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb."

Men fear shame. The greatest of all shame is that of the last great day. The time to escape that shame is today.

HOME RELIGION.

The gospel should be all powerful in the home. Horace Bushnell thought that the need of the world was "the out-populating power of a godly stock." When Christ becomes master of the home, it becomes possible to bless the world with a godly stock. Blessed are those homes where every member loves and obeys Christ. The following is a good motto to hang in the home: "Christ is the Head of this house; the Unseen Guest at every meal; the Silent Listener at every conversation." There is no other place where Christ-like qualities shine so brightly. Obedience, love, reverence, forbearance—such as these are household virtues. Let us invite Christ to come into our homes that He may teach us these things.—Selected.

*S.S. Lesson, October 24, 1909. Paul a Prisoner—Before Festus and Agrippa. Acts 26: 19-32. Commit to memory vs. 27-29. Study Acts 25: 6-12; chapter 26. Golden Text—I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.—2 Timothy 1: 12.