



LESSON VI.—MAY 10.

Acts xxiii., 12-22.

Golden Text.

The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer.—Acts xxiii., 11.

Home Readings.

Monday, May 4.—Acts xxiii., 12-22.
 Tuesday, May 5.—Acts xxiii., 1-11.
 Wednesday, May 6.—Acts xxiii., 23-35.
 Thursday, May 7.—I. Pet. iv., 12-19.
 Friday, May 8.—Rom. xii., 14-21.
 Saturday, May 9.—John xv., 17-27.
 Sunday, May 10.—Matt. x., 16-26.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

12. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said: We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul;

15. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16. And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him and said: Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18. So he took him and brought him to the chief captain, and said: Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19. Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him: What is that thou hast to tell me?

20. And he said: The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22. So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him: See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

We left Paul in the hands of the chief captain at Jerusalem, and he was endeavoring to discover who the Apostle was. Paul frankly disclosed his identity, and sought permission to speak, which was granted him. When Paul turns to address his tormenters, they are hushed at once into silence. There he stood, in chains and no doubt bruised, bleeding, and dishevelled on account of the rough treatment he has just received, yet able to launch at once into defence that has been thought worthy of a place in the Bible. He had a quiet audience until he recounted his call to preach to the Gentiles. This statement was like fire to gunpowder. At once there was an uproar again, and the most frenzied exclamations of hate, and desire for his death. The Jews could not comprehend the right of the Gentiles to be made one with them in the Gospel, especially

without becoming regular Jewish proselytes. The chief captain, seeing that the speech was at an end and that the Jews sought Paul's life so determinedly, commanded him to be taken to the castle and examined by scourging, to learn why Paul was so greatly hated by men of his own race. But Paul quietly saved himself from this punishment by asking if it were lawful to scourge an uncondemned Roman citizen. This changed matters, for the captain dared not proceed with this punishment nor keep Paul bound. The next day, the chief captain summoned the chief priests and the Jewish council, in order to pursue his examination in a legal way. A fierce fight arose and the chief captain found it necessary to rescue Paul from the contending factions and take him back to the castle. That night the Lord spoke to the Apostle, encouraging him and assuring him that he should bear testimony to him in Rome as well as in Jerusalem.

The year of these events was A.D. 57 or 58, shortly after the occurrences of the previous lesson.

The lesson for to-day relates to the conspiracy against Paul. For purposes of study let us divide it in this way:

1. The Conspiracy Among the Jews. Verses 12, 13.

2. The Plan Outlined. 14, 15.

3. The Plot Discovered. 16, 17.

4. The Chief Captain Warned. 18-22.

Certain of the Jews bound themselves with a curse to slay the Apostle. It is supposed that some, at least, of these who were plotting against Paul, were members of a fanatical band which figured with some prominence during the last years of Jerusalem. 'More than forty' were involved at the outset in the plot, indicating how common and intense was the feeling against Paul. They agreed under an oath as well as a curse.

Those who first conceived the idea of slaying Paul, and had organized for the purpose, had to find some means of getting at him, for he was in the castle under the protection of the soldiers. What was to be done?

The day before this Paul had been before the council, by order of the chief captain, in order that he might be examined more carefully and accurately. The council had speedily broken up in an uproar, through Paul's remark concerning the resurrection of the dead, for it was partially composed of Sadducees, who denied the resurrection. Those members who were thus opposed to Paul's belief might very easily be won over to consent to his death, even by an illegal way, and, furthermore, they might be induced to aid the original conspirators. The priests were merely asked to provide the opportunity, the 'more than forty' would see that this pestiferous fellow was put out of the way.

Have you ever noticed, in reading the Scriptures, how little, very often, is said about the personal position, circumstances and relationships of characters of importance?

This lesson gives the only direct reference we have to the Apostle's family. It is not even known where Paul's sister, referred to in verse 16, lived, or whether this nephew of Paul was a native of Jerusalem or not. Whatever his circumstances the important thing he did was to discover, somehow, the plot against Paul and warn the Apostle about it.

When Paul heard his nephew's story, he called a centurion, and asked him to conduct the young man to the chief captain as he had something to tell him. The Lord had promised Paul that he should live to see Rome, but he did not say that Paul should not, on that account, take ordinary precaution to protect himself from harm. He was still to use his reason and good sense.

Then again, it was Paul's duty, out of respect to authority, to warn the chief captain of a plot to entrap that officer and cause a renewal of the previous rioting.

This chief captain would appear to have been a man of great force of character, but nevertheless cautious and shrewd, and not unkind when his conduct of affairs allowed him to relax his stern authority. He now

hears the account of what the Jews have conspired to do, and dismisses the young man, after forbidding him to tell anyone that he had told the chief captain of the threatened danger.

That night Paul was sent to Caesarea, to Felix the Governor, under a strong military guard.

C. E. Topic

Sunday, May 10.—Topic—What does the story of Zaccheus teach us? Luke xix., 1-10.

Junior C. E. Topic

BIBLE LESSONS FROM TREES.

Monday, May 4.—Life fire. Gen. ii., 9.

Tuesday, May 5.—Like knowledge. Gen. ii., 17.

Wednesday, May 6.—God's gifts. Gen. i., 29.

Thursday, May 7.—Like the righteous. Ps. i., 3.

Friday, May 8.—Unfruitful. Matt. xxi., 19.

Saturday, May 9.—Fruitful. Matt. vii., 17.

Sunday, May 10.—Topic—Bible lessons from trees. Ps. civ., 16, 17; Jer. xvii., 7, 8.

True Bravery.

In the heat of passion Robert had done something he was ashamed of and sorry for after the excitement had passed away.

'I wish I hadn't let my temper get away with my good sense,' he said; 'but it's done, and what's done can't be undone.'

'But isn't there a way to overcome the effect of wrong-doing, to a great extent?' asked a voice in his heart.

'How?' asked Robert.

'By owning to one's blame in the matter,' answered the voice. 'Confessing one's fault does much to set wrong right. Try it.'

Now, Robert was very much like all the rest of us—he hated to admit that he was in fault. 'I'm wrong—forgive me,' is a hard thing to say. But the more he thought the matter over the more he felt that he ought to say just that.

'It's the right thing to do,' he told himself. 'If I know what's right and don't do it, I'm a moral coward. I'll do it!'

So he went to the one he had wronged and confessed his fault frankly, and the result was that the two boys were better friends than before, and his comrade had a greater respect for him because he had been brave enough to do a disagreeable thing when it was presented to him in the light of a duty.

My boys, remember that there's quite as much bravery in doing right, for right's sake, as there is in the performance of grand and heroic deeds the world will hear about.—Eben E. Rexford.

In a school that I recently visited I observed that the superintendent who was at work at the blackboard upon the platform during the lesson period of the session had the attention of more than two-thirds of the scholars. Again and again have I seen the attention of more than half of the school given to a secretary or other officer who was doing something, while the teacher was endeavoring to interest them in a discussion of the lesson. A person entering the church service late will usually attract the attention of a majority of the congregation from the speaker to himself. Children left to themselves spend little time in mere discussion. They are interested in things, and in doing something. Thus from observation we conclude that native interests lie wholly within the realm of sensation. This further emphasizes the necessity already felt for the constant use of illustrative material in class-work. Objects, pictures, blackboard sketching, work with the sand-table and vivid word-picturing; one or more of these means of exciting interest should be used in every lesson.—James Edmunds.