



LESSON VIII.—FEBRUARY 23.

The Arrest of Stephen

Acts vi., 1-15. Memory verses 7, 8. Study Matthew x., 23-31.

Golden Text.

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.—Matthew x., 28.

Daily Readings.

Monday, Feb. 17.—Acts vi., 1-15.
Tuesday, Feb. 18.—Exod. xxxiv., 29-35.
Wednesday, Feb. 19.—Isa. liv., 11-17.
Thursday, Feb. 20.—1 Kings xxi., 1-14
Friday, Feb. 21.—Matt. xxvi., 59-66.
Saturday, Feb. 22.—Heb. x., 32-39.
Sunday, Feb. 23.—Phil. i., 19-30.

Lesson Text.

(7) And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (8) And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. (9) Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called 'the synagogue' of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. (10) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. (11) Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. (12) And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council. (13) And set up false witnesses, which said, this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law; (14) For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. (15) And all that sat in the council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Suggestions.

The Church kept increasing both in numbers and in power. There were a great many Greek-speaking Jews as well as native Jews in the Church, and the foreign-born Jews complained that they were being overlooked in the daily distribution of rations. The complaint may have been a just one, but the oversight was unintentional and the Apostles at once set about to remedy the matter.

Having summoned the whole Church they laid the matter before them and then said, 'It will not do for us to neglect God's message to attend to tables. So, Brothers, look for seven spiritually minded men, and we will appoint them to take charge of this business; while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the delivery of the Message.'

This saying pleased the whole multitude of Christians there assembled, and they chose seven deacons: Stephen, a man who was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas from Antioch, a former proselyte or convert to Judaism. They brought these men before the Apostles, who approved their choice and, laying their hands on the seven, consecrated them by prayer to their new office.

This little difficulty being so satisfactorily settled, the gospel spread rapidly, the converts increased, and even from among the priests a great many believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and joined his Church.

Meanwhile Stephen, filled with the grace and sweetness and power of the Holy Spirit, was doing great works among the people. This aroused the anger of the higher classes of foreign born Jews, and many of the members of the synagogue of the Libertines or Freed Slaves with their friends began publicly disputing with Stephen and trying to put

him to shame. But they were quite unable to gainsay his arguments for he was inspired with wisdom from on high.

Then they hired some men to bear false witness against Stephen so that they could get him arrested and brought to trial before the Sanhedrim. These false witnesses declared that Stephen had been saying blasphemous things against Moses and against God. So the Libertines stirred up the people against Stephen and, arresting him, brought him before the Council, there they produced the false witness. 'This man, they said, is incessantly saying things against this Holy Place and the Law; indeed we have heard him declare that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this Place, and change the customs handed down to us by Moses.' Then all the Council fastened their eyes on Stephen and they saw his face shining like the face of an angel. He was transfigured by the inner glory of the abiding presence of the Spirit of God in his heart. He was perfectly fearless for he knew that whatever they did to him, they could not separate him from Christ (Rom. viii., 35-39).

Questions.

Who were the first seven deacons?
What were their necessary characteristics or qualities?
Who was Stephen?
What did he do?
Whose opposition did he arouse?
Why were they not able to withstand the wisdom with which Stephen spoke?
What did they do to him?
Was Stephen afraid of them?
How did he look?

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Feb. 23.—Topic.—Obedience.—1 Sam. xv., 22-23; 1 Kings iii., 14; Rev. xxii., 14.

Junior C. E. Topic.

YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE.

Mon., Feb. 17.—To comfort.—1 Thess. v., 11.
Tues., Feb. 18.—To cheer.—Acts xxvii., 22-25-26.
Wed., Feb. 19.—To help.—Matt. x., 42.
Thurs., Feb. 20.—To encourage.—Deut. xxxi., 6.
Fri., Feb. 21.—To sympathize.—Rom. xii., 15.
Sat. Feb. 22.—To do God's will.—Mark iii., 35.
Sun., Feb. 23.—Topic.—What are you in the world for?—Matt. v., 13-16.



Why He did not go

(By Walter Palmer, in 'Wellspring'.)

Alfred Gaines left the store one night with unmistakable discontent on his face. Even the floor-walker noticed it as the boy walked down the passage between the hosiery and shirt-waist departments, and he wondered a little, for only that morning Haines had been promoted from the gingham to the silk counter, and had received the unusual honor of a nod and smile from the senior proprietor.

Reaching the street, the boy pulled his cap down over his eyes and hurried away, dodging to the right or left as the crowd of pedestrians swerved to one side or the other, and finally darting into a dark, narrow alleyway that was almost wholly given up to lodging houses. Two blocks more, and he slipped into a dimly-lighted hallway and ran up several long flights of stairs to his room on the fourth floor.

It was a very small room, with a bed and trunk and one chair and an unpretentious pine-framed looking-glass on the wall. But the boy was not thinking of the room just then. Something more portentous was on his mind; his hands went deep down into his pockets, and the discontent grew more pronounced and unmistakable on his face.

'What's the use of my being such a milk-sop?' he grumbled, as he kicked off his shoes and kneeled down, preparatory to opening his trunk. 'It's just as the boys say; I'm

still fastened to mother's apron strings and ought to have her here to lead me round. Not that I'm ashamed of it,' a quick flush of contrite shame spreading over his face; 'she's the very best mother in the world. But then I'm sixteen years old, and I am living here in the city with men who know something of the world. I can't be a baby always, and, of course, mother and the girls don't know. If I'm to be a good business man I must get acquainted with people, and do as other folks do. All the clerks at my counter smoke cigars and go to the theatre and races and things. This is such a gentlemanly invitation, too. Baker says it isn't often that a mere clerk receives such an honor. He says—but, oh, pshaw! no matter what he says; it's more than half taffy, anyway.'

He threw open the trunk with the air of one who rises above such trivialities, but still the expression of complacency which the recollection of his fellow-clerk's words had called up remained on his face while he removed his one good suit from the trunk and spread it out on the bed.

'I suppose there'll be more or less smoking and drinking and betting going on,' he thought, as he held up his coat and looked it over critically; 'but that's none of my business. I can't keep folks from doing such things, and because they do it is no reason why I should. As Baker says, it isn't often that a man gets a chance to see such a sparring exhibition as this will be. It's only one night, anyhow, and I'll be none the worse for want of a few hours' sleep. Mother'll never know, and Baker'll be careful not to let it slip out at the store. I don't suppose Mr. Gray and the floor-walker would quite approve of it, but as Baker says, they are old fogies.'

He laid aside the coat and then inspected the vest minutely, 'Looks as good as new,' he thought, as he put it down and took up the trousers. 'It's awfully good of Baker to take me up as he does; I must try and make it all right with him some time. I suppose I might ask him out home to spend his vacation,'—here a slight wrinkle of disapprobation appeared between his eyebrows—'no, I don't think I will, either. He isn't just the sort I would like mother and the girls to meet. I'd rather introduce them to somebody like Marsden or White. Still, Baker's an awfully good fellow, and he uses me right. Hello! here's the patch.'

It was only a neatly darned place on one of the knees; but as he looked at it he could see his mother bending lovingly over his best suit, and his sisters ironing his handkerchiefs and socks and getting him ready for his entrance into the world. Thinking of them, the discontent left his face, and presently he folded his best suit and replaced it in the trunk.

'Oh, pshaw!' he thought, with lightened heart, 'what's the good of going out with a rough drinking crowd, anyhow. Mother and the girls are worth more than the whole lot of them. I'll go to bed.'

The next morning the floor-walker looked at Alfred Gaines approvingly. He liked to see that strong, buoyant expression on the faces of the men who worked under him; and when at night he saw Alfred wait for Marsden and White, his approval did not lessen. Marsden and White were good men for the younger clerks to go with.

The Best Kind of Wine.

One of the best respected and most widely known Vicars in Westmoreland was suffering some years ago from a serious illness. Sir Wm. Gull was consulted, and he at once detected the complaint and gave his instructions accordingly. As no intoxicants had been ordered, the Vicar (who enjoyed a glass of wine) asked: 'Won't a little wine do me good?' 'Yes,' said the famous physician, 'I think it will, but you must only take it in the form I prescribe. If you want wine you must eat grapes.'

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