

darkness, that northern harbor has never once been without the light of that small candle. However far the fisherman might be standing out at sea, he had only to bear down straight for that lighted window, and he was sure of safe entrance into the harbor. And so for all those fifty years that tiny light, flaming thus out of devotion and self-sacrifice, has helped and cheered and saved.

Surely this was finding chance for service in a humble place; surely this was lowliness glorified by faithfulness; surely the smile of the Lord Jesus must have followed along the beams of that poor candle, glimmering from that humble window, as they went wandering forth to bless and guide the fishermen tossing in their little boats upon the sea.

A CITY PASTOR'S DREAM.

It came after a busy day of visiting in one of the newer portions of our city.

St. Peter stood at heaven's portal. A company of self-complacent men and women came smiling up to the glistening gate. "And who are you?" said St. Peter. "Church members, every one of us," replied the spokesman of the party. "Indeed?" "Yes, here are our letters, Peter. We kept them stored away in our trunks, and specially requested that they might be placed within our hands, when we should lie in our caskets. We knew you would be asking for them." "Let me see the dates," quoth Peter. "1879—h'm, eighteen years ago. Here is another—1884—1889—well, that is a trifle better. 1892—Can it be that all these years you have failed to identify yourselves with any church of Jesus?" "Well, Peter, you see we were 'moving' so often, when we were down below, and then the ties to the dear old home church were so sacred. We did not wish to hurt the feelings of our old pastors, who baptized us and married us. So we have simply gone from church to church, but; oh, Peter, we have become wonderful 'sermon-tasters'."

A quiet smile crept over the face of the heavenly warder. "My children, you may as well linger awhile outside the portal, until the ties to the 'dear old home church' are snapped. For the sake of a sentiment, you have through these years been disobeying Christ. I fear you would not be happy in the upper temple."

I awoke. It was a dream.—*The Evangelist.*

BE KIND TO THE AGED.

The loneliness of age! How few think of this and treat with due consideration those who have outlived their generation, and whose early companions and friends have been taken from them. Unable to engage in the activities of life, they are no longer brought into contact and sympathy with those around them, and no tie of common interest and mutual dependence binds them together. Their views and tastes have naturally grown apart. They share but little in common with others. The future of this life has nothing to inspire their ambition or excite their hopes. What calls forth the energies of others has no inspiration for them. They necessarily to a great extent live in a world of their own, with which those around them are not familiar. The communion of their hearts is with the scenes of the past, and the companions of other years who have long ago passed away. Lover and friend have been taken from them and their acquaintance laid in darkness. The forms they admired and loved are gone, and eyes that looked into theirs with the tenderest affections are sightless and the voices that cheered and stirred their souls have long been silent. Their early world of hope and joy has become a desolation, and they in silence contemplating the ruin that has been wrought. They have but little to interest them in the world. They are

Only waiting till the shadows
Are a little longer grown,

to pass on to the reunion that awaits them, and the glad greetings of those they love. Who would not do what he can to cheer the loneliness of age to smooth their pathway and comfort them in their declining years.

A PRACTICAL RELIGION.

We want a religion that softens the step and tunes the voice to melody, and checks the impatient exclamation and harsh rebuke; a religion that is polite, deferential to superiors, courteous to inferiors, and considerate to friends; a religion that goes into the family and keeps the husband from being cross when dinner is late, and keeps the wife from fretting when the husband tracks the newly washed floor with his muddy boots, and makes the husband mindful of the scraper and the doormat; keeps the mother patient when the baby is cross, and amuses the children as well as instructs them; cares for the servant maid besides paying them promptly; projects the honeymoon into the harvest moon, and makes the happy home like the Eastern fig tree, bearing in its bosom at once the beauty of its tender blossoms and the glory of the ripened fruit. We want a religion that shall interpose between the ruts and gullies and rocks of the highway of life, and the sensitive souls that are travelling over them.

THE BIBLE CLASS.

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA.

(For Sept. 5th.—Acts xxv. 13—xxvi. 32.)

BY PHILIP A. NORDELL, D.D.

Paul's appeal to Cæsar placed Festus in an embarrassing position. The case was now beyond his own jurisdiction, and he had no further responsibility than to furnish the prisoner safe conduct to Rome. But in forwarding him to the supreme court of the empire he was also compelled to transmit with him a copy of the charges under which he rested. Two of these had broken down entirely at the first hearing before Felix, and the third, a difference of opinion touching matters of Jewish belief, was one of which the Roman courts took no cognizance. Festus felt keenly the absurdity of the position in which he was placed. He would gladly have liberated Paul, but the prisoner's appeal had taken even this privilege out of his hands.

THE VISIT OF AGRIPPA AND BERNICE.

Just at this particular juncture an event occurred that held out to Festus a hope of escape from his embarrassment. A congratulatory visit from Agrippa, who held the rather empty title of king from the Romans, was paid to Festus at Cæsarea. Agrippa was accompanied by his sister Bernice. Festus, about totally ignorant of the beliefs and customs of the Jews whom he had been sent to govern, was glad to refer Paul's case to Agrippa who was well acquainted with Jewish affairs. As soon as Paul's name was mentioned both of the royal visitors expressed the strongest desire to hear a man whose name was a household word throughout the Jewish world. In speaking of the religion of King Agrippa Festus did not use so offensive a word as "superstition," but one that meant "fear of divinity," and that might be used in a good sense as well as bad. He himself as a Roman had a nominal religion, but it did not enable him to understand the revelation which God had made of His mercy and truth as otherwise than an unreal and absurd thing. Ignorance and indifference shut Festus off from a world of thought and feeling, of solid truth and high aspiration. Unconsciously to himself he formulated in a few words the very essence of a religion that is the power of God unto salvation for individuals and for the world. When he spoke of "one Jesus, who was dead whom Paul affirmed to be alive," he expressed substantially the same thought as did the risen Lord who said of Himself, "I am the Living one, and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." But Festus was blind to the significance of the memorable words he uttered.

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA.

Agrippa's desire to hear Paul was quickly gratified. The next day, into an assembly that comprised all the pomp and magnificence that Cæsarea could muster, the prisoner, still wearing his chain, was brought forth. After Festus had opened the proceedings Paul was permitted to make his own defense. As on many other occasions, he began by a narrative of his early religious life, well and favorably known to all the Jews. Now he stood here a prisoner accused of no other crime than a firm belief in the great national hope of a Messiah, the sure hope that had been an inspiration and comfort to the Israel of God for ages past. This hope involved a belief in a Messianic kingdom whose glories were to be shared not only by the living, but by the pious dead. This, furthermore, involved the necessity of a resurrection. But a belief in a future resurrection was rejected by the Sadducees, who had been his bitterest enemies. He accordingly was the true Israelite, while they were apostates from the national faith. Agrippa who professed this faith ought not to doubt the possibility of a resurrection.

The fact that such a resurrection had, at least in one instance, taken place Paul now proved by reciting again the oft told story of his conversion. He told how he, the implacable persecutor of the followers of Jesus the Nazarene, had been laid hold of by this same Jesus, now risen from the dead and exalted at the right hand of the heavenly throne. He told how the supernatural glory of that vision had smitten him to the earth and blinded him, of the commission he had received to carry the new Gospel of salvation into the Gentile world, and how he had not been disobedient to the celestial vision. Because he thus believed in the resurrection of Jesus, and had preached Him both to Jews and Gentiles as the promised Messiah, the Jews had seized him and would have killed him.

Such a narrative seemed to the Roman governor too absurd for any man in his senses to believe. Unable to restrain himself he terminated the discourse with an exclamation asserting that Paul was a madman. If giving up every worldly advantage and comfort for the sake of One alleged to be risen from the dead was not a

*An Exposition of Lesson 36 in *The Bible Study Union Sunday School Lessons* on "The Three Great Apostles."