

The Quiet Hour.

The Arrest Of Stephen.

S. S. Lesson, February 23rd, Acts 6 : 7-15.

Golden Text—Matt. 10 : 28. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.

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The word of God increased, v. 7. Of no century could this statement be made with more truth than of the century which has just passed. A few figures may help us to see what progress the Christian religion has made during the last hundred years. Only proximate and round numbers are given. A hundred years ago there were about 20 mission stations in the whole pagan world, with not far from the same number of missionaries and a communion roll of about 1,000 converts. There are now 5,000 stations with 15,000 outstations. The missionary force now consists of 13,000 European and American men and women missionaries and 62,000 native helpers, or 75,000 workers in all. Connected with these mission stations are educational institutions, from the primary school to the splendidly equipped college, hospitals, dispensaries and other institutions for the relief of physical suffering. The word of God can now be read in 400 translations by seven-tenths of the human race, as against fifty translations in 1800. Protestant church members in foreign lands now number 1,500,000. The home churches in America and Europe contribute \$17,000,000 annually for foreign mission work.

Full of grace, v. 8. Every endowment and talent is a divine gift. The sovereign of Great Britain reigns "by the grace of God." Those of lowlier station hold their place by the same tenure. The gifts of God are as varied as the features of the human countenance. They include physical beauty and strength, intellectual powers and attainments, natural amiability and social attractiveness, spiritual qualities and powers. Realizing that we have nothing which God does not bestow should keep us, on the one hand, from pride, and on the other from unfaithfulness. From pride, because we have nothing which we did not receive. From unfaithfulness, because the Bestower of our blessings will hold us responsible for the right use of them.

And power, v. 8. We must not miss the significant connection of the two words grace and power. Stephen would not have been full of power had he not been full of grace. In other words, all power to serve God and advance His kingdom comes through dependence on Him. It will not be enough for the church to have the most perfect organization, the most learned and eloquent ministry, the most beautiful music. Behind all these human means and agencies, necessary and good in themselves, must be the living, moving power of the Holy Spirit, unless they are all to be so much dead, inert, useless machinery.

And they stirred up the people. v. 12. These were the same people who so lately were ready to stone any one who should harm the apostles. The populace was as fickle as when it shouted, one day, "Hosanna!" to the Messiah entering Jerusalem, and almost on the next shrieked, "Crucify Him!" The accusation that Stephen was advocating the destruction of the temple

touched their pockets. If the temple were destroyed, foreign Jews would cease to visit Jerusalem in crowds, and their gain from supplying the visitors with food and with animals for sacrifice would cease. It is not uncharitable to look upon the fervid rage of many of them as another case of, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," Acts 19 : 26 28. The sincerity of our attachment to any cause is put to the test when the interests of that cause run counter to our worldly interests.

Change the customs, v. 14. Ruskin says: "That which is incapable of change has no history, and the records which state only the invariable need not be written." From 1688 till 1792 the Church in Britain undertook no new enterprise, but sank into monotonous apathy. The latter date marks the quickening of spiritual life in the church and the beginning of modern missions. We need not be too greatly afraid of change in the church. There must be change if there is life.

The face of an angel, v. 15. We should look for the glory of God not in any temple made with hands, but in the Christian soul, which is the living sanctuary of God.

Activity a Blessing.

We may overcome depression by duty. It is a blessed thing to have something to do. Some disaster overtakes us or a great sorrow swoops down on our spirit, and it seems as though life can have nothing in store that is desirable. But life still has its wants, it still has its humble duties and we take them up, almost mechanically at first, but before long we find that they are medicinal. Thank God for something to do! The depression of an active spirit frequently arises from enforced idleness. It was after John the Baptist was shut up in prison that he sent his disciples to say to Jesus, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not reproach the prophet of the wilderness for asking such a question. His forerunner had not lost his faith, but his active spirit was depressed by confinement within the black wall of the mountain fortress of Machaerus.—Advance.

Carelessness a Duty.

There is a difference between improvidence and the care free life which Jesus desires for his followers. The two are at opposite ends of the scale. The man who plans anxiously for the morrow, fretting, and groaning over his losses before they hit him, is not a happy man, but he ranks higher than the shiftless fellow who lives for the day, and trusts to luck for the future. Mr. Micawber is not the sort of saint Jesus had in mind in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the mark of the savage and the criminal that they gorge to day and gorge to morrow. The divine carelessness of Jesus includes wisdom and thoughtfulness, but it adds to them trust in God, and the pre-eminence of higher things. The sordid smallness of worry is eliminated when the kingdom of God is made the primary aim in life, and when righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit are felt to be more than meat and drink. The acid that corrodes our peace in fretting is neutralized when we trust to the Father in heaven.—Sunday School Times.

The Life To Come.

All things that we see have their bounds and limitations. We grasp them and take them in as a whole, and within their narrow bounds we form our convictions and draw our conclusions. The things, however, that are out of sight are transcendently greater than those which are seen. Only a child or a savage has his life bounded by the visible horizon or the limit of the present moment. And no more should the things of the present existence bound our thoughts. We have been endowed with faculties and powers most wonderful in their far reaching, and these have been given us that we may reach far out beyond the present, and even grasp intelligently many of the unseen verities that belong to the life to come.

On what ineffable realities does Christian faith lay hold? This world is a mere starting-point, simply a mere vantage ground for the Christian to stand upon and take in the wide-reaching prospect that stretches out illicitly before him and around him. Beyond lies an eternity as certain as tomorrow, transcendent with glories which the highest human imagination can but dimly paint. We stand on the brink of a sublime future. It does not become us to live with our lives closed to it and our hearts without interest in it. Seadily looked at, there is power enough even in the anticipation to fill us with rejoicing strength, with peace untold, and with victory complete.

Perhaps you are beset with the cares and anxieties of life, the perplexities of bread-winning and of household ordering. Let not these things darken your life with painful apprehension, or fill the whole measure of your thoughts. A few years, and you shall look back on them and smile at the thought that they should have clouded your way for a moment. Are you weighed down with weakness of body, crippling your powers and crushing out your enjoyments? Still keep up good heart and have courage. The divine strength shall be your strength. No athlete, rejoicing in the perfection of manly power, tastes the supreme freedom and joy of the spiritual body that awaits you. Do trouble and care assail you with bitter and heart piercing blows? Rejoice and lift up your head for the time of your redemption draweth nigh. The night is already far spent, and the day is at hand. Already its advancing glory flashes with roseate hues the coming dawn. One hour of that life to come will more than repay all you have done and suffered here.

The homeward traveler complains not at the blustering wind and the pitiless, drenching storm. He hardly feels them, still less cares for them. He knows that just before him lies the blessed home, from whose windows streams the promise of warmth and comfort, and within are the dear ones, the very thought of whom makes him forget the discomforts of cold and storm. Is your life darkened through the absence of loved ones whose presence brightened and glorified it? Remember how the brief parting gave added sweetness to the meeting. The parting now, long though it may seem, is but a moment, comparatively, to the re-union to which you are drawing. Its sweetness, its full certainty of an unbroken future, shall have a depth which the bitterest pang now cannot measure. You are a prince whose kingdom has been bought with a great price, even the precious blood of the Son of God. Do not dishonor him and destroy yourself.

Are you walking in the ways of sin, leaving often your higher life to grovel in the mire of the earth? Oh, be not ungrateful to that wonderful love that environs you! Are you