

THE LESSON FOR SUNDAY

Some Little Light on the Character of Saul the Pharisee.

STEPHEN THE MARTYR IS STONED

Saul Starts Out to Destroy Every Vestige of Christianity With the Consent of Jewish Leaders—Great Apostasy Is Seen in the Role of Enemy of Christianity.

(By the Teacher). My Friends:— We learn of the confession of Saul, afterward known as Paul, the great apostle in our lesson for the coming Sunday. In the Scripture lesson as we have it here, he makes a clean breast of his connection with the stoning of Saint Stephen and he justifies his action on the ground that he was one of the strictest of the strict Pharisees and that Saint Stephen had blasphemed against God as Paul understood God and His commands. You may be impressed after reading the confession of Saul who was really the leader of the mob that stoned Stephen to death, that there runs all through it a tone of regret and remorse and great sorrow at his action. That is the way it impresses me whether such is the case or not.

Saul Vs. Jesus. The conversion of Saul or Paul to Christianity is to my mind one of the most remarkable events in sacred history. Some commentators say that Saul or Paul was a man who would naturally have been drawn to Jesus and to Christianity. But I can't see it that way. Paul was a Pharisee—a member of the haughtiest, proudest, most bigoted sect of the Jews. He belonged to a ring of selfish, arrogant gangsters who were determined to rule or ruin and who would brook no opposition to their views of religion no matter what might be the cost in putting down opposition. At any rate they were so cock sure that they were right that they were not amenable to reason. Paul was a leader of that crowd.

Jesus, on the other hand was the first Christian and one of the plainest and most democratic of men. He was a man broad and generous in his views. He taught the doctrine of peace and love on the part of one for another and affecting every man and woman in the world.

What a contrast with Saul the Pharisee! Therefore I maintain that it was most remarkable that Saul afterward known as Paul should yield even to Jesus Christ.

The Scripture Lesson. But before we go into any further discussion let us read the Scripture lesson which describes the stoning of Stephen as it is found in Acts 7:54-8:3; 4:26; 4:5, 9-10.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord.

58 And cast him out of the city and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, sin to their charge. And when he had called upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and halting men and women committed them to prison.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews: 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if I would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

7 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

8 Stephen was lynched or stoned to death about four years after Jesus Christ was put to death on Calvary's cross. Let us play on our imaginations here just a minute.

Stoning of Stephen. Stephen had been teaching and preaching to the people the story of Jesus and his love. He made many converts. The Scribes and Pharisees, ever the enemies of Jesus and Christianity, were worried. They held council together. They went over the list of bright and influential men of their sects who were bitterly opposed to Jesus. Finally they decided upon the young man Saul to work up opposition against Stephen, and to organize the mob into a seething, howling mass, who like a vicious bull when he sees a red rag or a rat when he is cornered, would not hesitate to kill and maim.

The young man Saul was admirably fitted for the work. A fine orator, a thorough student, and a man of wide learning, a man of great physique who had traveled much and who knew the ways of the world, he was the very

man to frame Stephen. No doubt the chief priests furnished him with plenty of money. He admits he had the authority and backing of the Jewish leaders when he says: "And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them." Stephen is preaching. He looks toward heaven. His countenance is lighted up like the morning. In a voice of silver he declares: "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Paul has his henchmen all set. They hiss Stephen and hurl cat-calls toward him. They stop their ears.

The young man Saul gives a nod and his leading satellites catch hold of Stephen. They carry him out of the city. The hirelings lay their outer garments at the feet of Saul. Then they hurl great stones at Stephen.

A great stone strikes him on the head. He is not rendered unconscious by the blow, but he knows that another blow there will lay him out.

Prays for His Enemies. Brave and true Christian that he is, he prepares for his death which he knows is inevitable. There is no tremor and no fear. He kneels down to receive the death blows and before those blows come he again lifts his face toward heaven and prays: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

How much like Jesus that was! The

Savior, you remember, prayed for his executioners—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Then Saul begins to persecute the disciples and converts that Stephen had made.

He destroys church property and creates such terror and consternation that it appeared to some perhaps, that the Christian church was doomed.

But it was not doomed, my friends. The Christian church will never die. And as we shall learn later on, this same Saul, who afterwards came to be known as Paul, was destined to become the mightiest champion as he had been its bitterest enemy.

PLOT WAS FOILED

Conspiracy to Revive Men After Hanging Bared. The Chicago News has the following unusual story:

For an hour after the bodies of Grover C. Redding and Oscar McGavick, colored chief of the Abyssinian riot, had been cut down from the gallows, armed guards stood beside them to make sure that they stayed dead. Redding and McGavick were hanged for the murder of Robert L. Rose, a sailor, in the "Abyssinian" riot June 20, 1920.

The procedure of posting the guard over the bodies, one of the most remarkable in the history of the county jail, was ordered by Sheriff Peters as a precaution against any attempts at resuscitation on the part of the sealots

who had followed Redding's banner. In explaining his course, the sheriff brought to light for the first time the story of a previous attempt to restore life to a corpse cut down from the gibbet.

"This thing has been done before," he said. "I have heard that in at least one instance—after an execution in the east—it was successful. These men had been hanged and they are going to stay hanged."

Tells of Viana Death. The sheriff gave complete details of an attempt to cheat not only the gallows but death in the case of Nicholas Viana, choir boy, on Dec. 10, 1920.

Viana, who had been convicted of assisting the Cardinella gang in the murder of Albert Babalanza, was dropped through the little trapdoor at the county jail at 10.30 a. m. and was pronounced dead of strangulation fourteen minutes later.

Outside the jail a motor car was waiting with the engine turning and the driver at the wheel—not a hearse or an undertaker's wagon of the variety that usually figures in such grim vigils, but an ambulance with a surgeon in attendance.

The boy's body was cut down, the hood and nose removed. The undertaker's attendants came into the death chamber and took charge of the body. They carried it out in a leisurely fashion to the ambulance, set the stretcher on the floor, closed the door and started away. The jail guards saw nothing unusual in the proceedings.

Try to Cheat Death. But no sooner had the door of the ambulance closed than a surgeon and nurse began to work with feverish energy upon the still warm body of the dead choir boy. They stripped the corpse of the shirt and trousers worn for the execution, rubbed it with liniment, draped it in warm blankets and placed exhaust heaters beside it while the driver beat a wild course through the loop.

The body was taken to the undertaking rooms of an undertaker in Polk street, where it was laid on a warm slab and prepared not for burial, but for resuscitation. A pulmotor was waiting and it was hastily adjusted.

Then, while friends of the dead boy stood about, hoping against hope, skilled hospital attendants manned the oxygen pump. For more than an hour they worked the lungs that the noose had stopped and listened through stethoscopes for a sign that the stilled heart had begun to pulse again.

Attempt Nearly Successful. The attempt failed and Nicholas Viana was taken to his grave. But the rescuers turned away from the slab only after they had seen success within their reach.

Assistant Jailer Lorenz Meisterheim, in verifying the story, admitted that the audacious plan had come close to accomplishing a modern miracle.

"We investigated the story," he said, "and we learned that not only was Viana given oxygen for more than an hour, but that his body actu-

ally showed signs of returning to life. One witness whom I have heard quoted said that the heart had actually picked up, when some unforeseen circumstance halted the resuscitation."

I'm satisfied that the tale is true," commented Sheriff Peters. "I do not say that the undertaker had anything to do with it. But the evidence given us tends to show that this operation took place in his morgue."

"Physicians at today's hanging recalled that a man electrocuted in the east and carried out of the death chamber dead later was revived by a pulmotor. In the present case we are taking no chances."

After the bodies of Redding and McGavick had been held at the jail for an hour they were turned over to McGavick's brother, who is an undertaker, with an establishment in South State street.

W. O. W. REPORT

Commander Frazer Says "Obstacles" Were Thrown in His Way.

W. A. Frazer of Omaha, sovereign commander of the Woodmen of the World in his annual report, submitted to the Woodmen's national convention in New York this week, described the "obstacles which were thrown in the way of the management by those who are always opposed to any new departure regardless of its virtue," and explained what measures were to be put forth to combat the insurging

elements. To harass the management, the insurging faction brought numerous suits in different states, all of which were decided in favor of the society's commander Frazer said.

In the present case, the evolution from what he termed the "unscientific plan of raising fraternal societies from their inception until the present date, when most societies are conforming with the law, requiring adequacy of rates," it was through his suggestion, the report continued, that the Woodmen of the World made a substantial increase in rates, far back as 1901, and at almost every national convention since that date, he strongly urged plans for adequacy and accomplished his purpose, to perpetuate the society at the convention of 1919, which in one stroke increased the society's solvency from 50 to 100 per cent.

The "uniform committee" is an important product of the international organization, Mr. Frazer stated, and he strongly recommended reorganization of this branch on an extensive scale.

Other steps recommended include erection of a monument in honor of organization's soldiers, dead, establishment of a home for aged and a sanitarium for members temporarily afflicted.

Arguments are settled by facts, not by force. Let's not use merely a cloak to hide merit.

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