

LAST WORDS OF THE GREATEST TEACHER

The International Sunday School Lesson for December 20 is: "Paul's Summary of His Life."—Second Timothy 2:10, 11; 4:6-18.
By WILLIAM T. ELLIS

Hard by the excavated ruins of the great Roman Forum is a little church that once was a prison. Through a hole in the rock floor many notable victims of Rome's power were let down into a subterranean chamber, mostly cut in the hollow rock—without light of ventilation, a dungeon of dungeons, horrible example of how paganism at its best treated criminals. Such is the Mamertine prison. Such ancient tradition declares to have been the cell of the Apostle Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome.

As I stood, the other day, in that low chamber, cold, damp, dark—the mind refuses to picture its horrible state when it was inhabited by men doomed to a living death—I tried to imagine Paul, the aged, writing in that spot such soaring and sublime words as we have in this letter to Timothy. None but the very greatest of souls, engrossed completely in concern outside of himself, could thus have risen above circumstances, and exulted that, though he himself was in chains, the word of God was not bound.

Despite loneliness caused by the desertion of some friends, Paul's heart overflowed with loving remembrances to others whom he loved. No less than twenty-three

only the vague knowledge afforded by casual allusions. Two years he spent in Arabia, after his conversion; but we know not where or how. Ten silent years followed his return to Tarsus, before Barnabas called him forth into missionary work: "What was he doing there for so long a time?" Two years he spent in prison in Caesarea, with a great measure of freedom; but we have no details. It seems as if God heavily accents preparation time. He wants his servants to get ready. Ripening is the all-important process for character, as for fruit. Paul had to do a good deal of hard, quiet, detached thinking and reading before he could become the master mind of Christianity and of the world. There is no encouragement in the life or words of Paul for superficial thinking or unprepared speaking or service.

This rare thinker was also a mighty doer. He had great cultivated gifts, plus tireless devotion. All of his natural talents would have been unavailing for his achievements had he not been diligent in their use. Many men of extraordinary qualities have failed to leave a mark on their generation; whereas lesser men, more active, have done work regarded as great. This restless and ambitious apostle, divinely discontent with himself, who was forever reaching out to fresh fields and new service, echoes by his example his own admonition: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." Withal, he depended more upon the promulgation of truth than upon the perfecting of organization for the success of his Cause.

Fresh Life for a Stale World. When the world grows stale and jaded, and begins to rot in its own vices, then the only cure is a strong fresh infusion of life by way of a man. Thus, to speak only of the

Christian era, we have had Augustine, and Francis of Assisi, and Savonarola, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Wesley, and Fox, and Whitefield—men who have had the vision to see that the one great need of the world was spiritual. Most of those cited were awakened to their mission by words of the Apostle Paul who himself was first of their line. It was a decaying civilization into which Paul came. He gave it a simple cure for its complex illness. All his preaching and writing is postulated upon the principle that the only way to right moral wrongs—which all quickly grow into social wrongs—is to satisfy the soul hunger of man. So he offered Christ as a complete satisfaction and reward, and as an adequate incentive and motive, for the human spirit. In Paul's eyes, Jesus was the solution to every problem. It was a personal experience of Jesus, on the Damascus Road, that had made him a Christian; it was a conscious fellowship with Christ that had made him a missionary and an apostle, and that sustained him throughout every experience, even to the last tragic hour in a Roman dungeon. Anybody who will follow Paul will find himself at once in the company of the strong and sweet and satisfying Saviour.

Great, Greater Greatness. All that we need to know about the warm human qualities of this matchless old warrior for God is revealed by the fact that wherever he went he drew people to himself personally, especially young men—and the man whom young men admire has to be real. Like most of the great leaders of the race, who have bequeathed a permanent influence, Paul made disciples, who were at once his reward and his helpers. Isn't it remarkable that so few pastors build up disciples for themselves and so also for their Master?

This Paul was greater than any of his contemporaries. As in Rome this autumn I have studied the remaining traces of the abiding great it has been surprising to see how little of permanence even the great have left. But Paul, whose best certified memento in Rome is the Mamertine dungeon, is to-day a living world leader. His great teaching, that Christ makes new men out of old, and that Christ changes the world by changing people, is the one vitally hopeful message for our own imperilled generation.

In a brief characterization, Dean Farrar writes that Paul was as "energetic as Peter, and contemplative as John; Paul the hero of unselfishness; Paul the mighty champion of spiritual freedom; Paul a greater preacher than Chrysostom, a greater missionary than Xavier, a greater reformer than Luther, a greater theologian than St. Thomas Aquinas; Paul the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles, the slave of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Though in chains and in an indescribable dungeon, Paul ends his own biography on a triumphant note: "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing."

Indian Is Traced Again. In an effort to ascertain just where the American Indian originated, many years have been spent in study and research, and now the latest theory to receive some confirmation is that he originated in Asia and crossed over to America by way of the Behring straits. It is assumed that many years were consumed in this migration, if it took place at all, because the northern route, while logical in some respects, was undoubtedly accompanied by severe hardships. Archaeologists do not think that there was any wholesale migration, but that the Indians came a few at a time over a period of many years.

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White Christmas Thoughts

In "Thoughts for a White Christmas" in Canadian Homes & Gardens for December, Anne Elizabeth Wilson makes the following commentary on the Canadian's attitude toward snow:

For myself, I have never understood why Canadians are sensitive about their snow. If there is anything magnificent and heart-gripping in its brilliancy and utter beauty, it is the Canadian Winter—fields and hills and rutted roads, all swept into one on-carrying vista under the fresh-fallen snow. Our Summers are delightful as any in the temperate zone, our Autumns are intoxicating in their color, but our Winters are the zenith of wonder and festivity.

I believe a Canadian enjoys a white Winter more than any other out-door excitement. Exhilarating and alluring—is there anything to equal the call of a fresh fall of foot-deep snow? I do not know of anything that can rouse the true-born Canadian so much. Scrambling for snow-shoes, skates, toboggans and skis, he is out in his pull-overs and laid upon his favorite ravine. The rinks are crowded, the hills are dotted with children and men and women, glorying in the advent of real Winter.

It has always been a source of wonder to me why Canada resented Mr. Kipling's allegory! We ourselves look out upon a snowfall with something akin to exultation, sentimentally calling it "the beautiful." Which simply goes to prove that you cannot tell Canadians anything about themselves, any more than you can blame one Scotman in the absence of another, no matter what excellent enemies they may be. But to me, it is a question whether I love the garden more when it is heavy with the color and scent of June—or when the incomparable soft masses of the wind-blown white, like cloudy bloom along the branches, and bushes gem-encased with ice, crackle and wave long, bejewelled arms. And as for Christmas—one might as well try to content oneself without Daffodils in April, as say that the loss of a white Christmas makes no difference.

WANTS BABY



Fight for his year-old child is promised by Count Ludwig Salm von Hoogstraeten, husband of wealthy Millicent Rogers. The count has just returned from Europe and while he holds little hope for a reconciliation, he does insist that he get custody of the baby.

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MISS 1926



Smoked glasses ought to go over big next year. Here's Miss Dorothy Chandler of Los Angeles, garbed as fashion experts say the flapper of 1926 will be garbed—

Desert Flowers Beautiful. The sterile, sandy, stony wastes of the deserts are not entirely devoid of beauty. Nature sees to it that rare beauty at times relieves the monotony. The semi-arid deserts of the American west have many in the plants which, once a year for a short period of time bloom with a beauty that rivals any dream of a Persian garden. One of these flowers is the rock rose or fragrant primrose, which blooms after the rainy season and just before the long drought sets in. It is sometimes called the Cinderella of the desert.

Hoped For the Best. Judge—"I have listened very carefully to you, Mr. Brown, for an hour, but I am none the wiser."
Counsel (politely)—"I hardly expected your honor to be, but I thought you might be better informed."

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