

Aug. 27. PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.

Lesson, Acts 26 : 19-32. Golden Text, 1 Cor. 1 : 24.
Memory vs. 22-23. Catechism Q. 76, 77.

Two years of inaction. Two years in jail. But he had comfort, and perhaps these years were needed to recruit the strength that his restless energy led him to expend, and the lesson in patient trust would not be lost.

Felix had hoped that he might get a bribe from Paul or his friends, to let him off, and so sent for him often to talk with him.

Then came trouble with the Jews. Felix killed a member of them. The people complained to Rome, Felix was recalled and Porcius Festus was sent. The Jews thinking to succeed with a new Governor, asked for Paul. The latter that he might not fall into their hands appealed unto Caesar, and Festus prepared to send him. But what charges should he send against the prisoner? He could not tell, and when king Agrippa and Bernice came to call on the new governor, he brought Paul out, and had him address them. Here again Paul's address is a model of courtesy and skill.

I. Paul's history and teaching vs. 19-23.

Paul's conversion set him at once to work for others. *Damascus*—He preached there immediately after his conversion, and then after a probable retirement of 2 or 3 years, he came back and preached again. Gal. 1 : 17, 18 ; Acts 9 : 23 ; 25. And then throughout all the coasts of Judea. No record of this is given, but some time between 40 A. D. when he left Jerusalem and 48 A. D. at his first missionary journey.

Hethen gives the sum of his preaching, doctrine and practice.

For these causes—What a ground for seeking to kill him! *Witnessing*—Paul's ministry is summed up here, (1) as to the substance of it, viz. what the prophets had foretold, and what Christ had accomplished. (2) As to the objects of it, to small and great. All were alike to him, sinners needing salvation.

II. Paul and Festus vs. 24-26.

Festus was a heathen Roman. He knew nothing of Christianity, and as he listened to the new strange doctrine and saw the enthusiasm and earnestness of Paul, he could explain it on no other ground than insanity, and cried out accordingly.

What a model of courtesy and candor is the Apostle. Read his answer : Then he appeals to Agrippa who being a Jew and resident in the country was familiar with the story of Christ and His cause.

III. Paul and Agrippa vs. 27-29. *Believest*—Being a Jew, he must acknowledge that he believed the prophets? But passing that question by, the king gives his famous answer. *Almost*—Literally, "a in a little" or "with a little" thou persuadest me. Most writers think it implies a sneer on the part of Agrippa, or perhaps a jest, that, being impressed, he turned it off with a laugh, as if he would say, "Ha, you would make a Christian of me in short order, would you?"

Then comes the conference. But he could not now be freed. And it was better thus. Had he been freed, the Jews might have killed him. At all events he would not have got so quickly to Rome.

1. The Old Testament witnesses to the New.

2. That Christ died for our sins and rose again, is the sum and substance of the Gospel.

3. How often Christian work and experience seems madness, fanaticism, to the unbeliever.

4. Compare the treatment which Felix and Agrippa give to the Gospel.

5. Almost..... but lost!

Sep. 3. PAUL SHIPWRECKED.

Les., Acts 27 : 30-44.
Memory vs. 42-44.

Gol. Text, Ps. 46 : 1.
Catechism Q. 78.

Last lesson found Paul still a prisoner at Caesarea. At length a sufficient number of prisoners was gathered to warrant the sending of a special escort with them, and the voyage began. Trace its progress day by day, until we find them anchored, on a stormy night, off the coast of Malta.

1. Keeping the Sailors, vs. 30-32.

Shipmen—There was but one boat, it would carry but few, and the cowardly sailors determined to escape, leaving the others to their fate. *Colour*—Under pretence of doing some work, they were already anchored by the stern and pretended that they were going to carry out anchors from the bow. Paul had seen a good deal of the sea, he judged their purpose. He saw that if these were let go there would be none to manage the ship. He spoke to the centurion. *Except*—How does that agree with what he had said to them, as told by the angel, that God had determined to save them. How can these two statements be reconciled? Man cannot reconcile them. It simply means that while God carries out his plans, he does so by human agency, that men are responsible to the extent of their power. But, how to reconcile the two, is for God not for us. His sovereignty and our free agency can only be reconciled by Himself. Our part is to obey His commands, claim His promises and trust Him for results.

II. Taking food, vs. 33-38.

The great struggle was to come and they were weak with fasting. In their anxiety they had eaten but little, now Paul wisely urges them to eat as they wait for the day. He cheers them, gives thanks and sings. They take courage and follow his example. Then, to lighten the vessel, so that she would run as far in as possible, they threw overboard their cargo.

III. Getting ashore, vs. 39-44.

Verses 39-41 describe the work, v. 42. *Soldiers*—They were responsible for the prisoners with their lives and feared that if these prisoners should escape they would be put to death. *Centurion*—Paul had made a deep impression upon him so all were saved.

Note what a blessing Paul was to the whole crew, (1) in keeping the sailors who alone could manage the ship and thus saving the rest, (2) in being the means through the centurion's favor of saving the lives of the prisoners.

This scene is full of truths. Note a few that have been suggested.

1. How peaceful in danger are those who trust in God.

2. Though our salvation is of God we are commanded to do our duty regarding it.

3. Though we do our duty it is still of God.

4. In the midst of the hurry that dark morning Paul took time to thank God before eating. The greater the hurry and danger the more need for trust in Him.

5. Lightening the ship, a type of what men must do in living loosely to the world if they would be saved.

6. Our voyage may be stormy but God is in the storm.

7. All safe to land a type of Christ's own people. None truly regenerate shall be lost.

8. The blessedness of having the good among us. Five righteous would have saved Sodom, and God said to Paul, I have given thee all them that sail with thee.