

## LESSON NOTES.

## FIRST QUARTER.

## PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

A.D. 58.] LESSON VIII. [Feb. 22.

*Acts 23. 1-11. Commit to mem. vs. 9-11.*

## GOLDEN TEXT.

And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul.—*Acts 23. 11.*

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

## DAILY READINGS.

M. *Acts 22. 17-30. Th. Rom. 1. 1-17.*T. *Acts 23. 1-11. F. Ps. 91. 1-16.*W. *Mat. 22. 15-40. Sa. Ps. 116. 1-19.*Su. *Ps. 130. 1-8.*

TIME.—Wednesday, May 24, A.D. 58, the day after the mob in the temple courts.

PLACE.—Jerusalem. In the council hall, just outside the temple, adjoining the western cloister.

THE SANHEDRIM.—The chief Jewish council, consisting of 72 members: 24 chief priests, or heads of courses, 24 elders, leading Jewish laymen, 24 scribes, or doctors of the law.

INTERVENING EVENTS.—As soon as Paul, in his address which we studied last week, mentioned his call to preach to the Gentiles, the Jews in the court of the Gentiles below him grew greatly excited, and shouted, and threw dust in the air. Lysias, the chief captain, not understanding a word Paul spoke, it being in Hebrew, and thinking that he must be a great criminal to awaken such hatred, took Paul into the castle, and commanded his soldiers to torture him by scourging, to compel him to confess his crime. Paul then declared that he was a Roman citizen, and it was contrary to law to scourge such an one. He was then kept in prison over night; and the next morning Lysias brought him before the Jewish council, in order to learn with what crime they charged him.

THE SCENE.—Ananias, the high priest, was in the president's chair. On one side were ranged the Sadducees, on the other the Pharisees. Among the Pharisees were two sons of Gamaliel, Paul's old teacher. Among the Sadducees were Caiaphas, who had procured our Saviour's crucifixion, and the sons of Annas, who had joined with his son-in-law Caiaphas. Here was also Theophilus, from whom, when high priest, Paul had received his commission to persecute in Damascus.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—2. *Smile on the mouth*—As was the custom in the East to punish for speaking words not liked. It was usually done with a shoe, as more insulting. 3. *Paul said*—They probably had not struck him. *Whited wall*—A mean mud or stone wall covered with whitewash to make it look like marble. A term for hypocrite. 5. *I wist not*—I did not know, or it was not in my mind. He either did not know that the command came from the high priest, or he forgot in his indignation that he was high priest. 6. *I am a Pharisee*—See Phil. 3. 4-6. *Of the hope, etc.* Paul believed with the Pharisees, in the future life, and in the resurrection, and preached Christ as the one by whom they could be attained. 11. *Be of good cheer*—Paul would be tempted to be discouraged, lest his life should be taken, and he should fail to preach the Gospel in Rome, as he had desired and prayed. (See Rom. 1. 10-12; *Acts 19-21.*)

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—The intervening history.—Paul as a Roman citizen.—The Sanhedrim.—Pharisees and Sadducees.—Smiting on the mouth.—A whited wall.—Was Paul wrong in his indignant answer?—Why Paul needed encouragement.—What were the sources of good cheer from the vision?

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Where was Paul speaking, in our last lesson? To what audience? How did they behave when he spoke of the Gentiles? What did the chief captain command to be done to Paul? For what purpose? How did Paul escape? What were the privileges of Roman citizens? Where was Paul taken the next day? Of whom was the Council, or Sanhedrim composed? Who were some of its members?

SUBJECT: GOOD CHEER IN THE HOUR OF TROUBLE.

I. FIRST TROUBLE.—HIS ANSWER INTERRUPTED (vs. 1, 2).—Why did Paul gaze earnestly at the Council? What was his first sentence? Had he lived in all good conscience before he was converted? (*Acts*

26. 9.) What more do we need than a good conscience? Should every one live according to the dictates of his conscience?

THE COMFORT.—Would Paul have been likely to have won the Jews to Christ if he had been permitted to go on? How would this comfort him?

II. SECOND TROUBLE.—INJUSTICE IN A COURT OF JUSTICE (vs. 2, 3).—What did the high priest command to be done to Paul? What did this act signify? Was it a great insult? Did they probably do it?

THE COMFORT.—What did Paul say to this? Was it said in indignant passion? Was it a threat, or a prophecy? Was it fulfilled? Did Paul speak the exact truth in calling Ananias a "whited wall"? Is it a relief to speak out indignation against wrong? Would this occurrence tend to produce a reaction in Paul's favour?

III. THIRD TROUBLE.—HASTY WORDS (vs. 3-5).—What did the bystanders reply to Paul's indignant remark? Was Paul wrong in saying what he did? Is it right to be indignant at wrong? What harm might come to his cause from speaking so to a high priest?

THE COMFORT.—Did Paul confess that he had done wrong, or did he explain the seeming wrong? Meaning of "Wist not"? How could Paul help knowing? What good rule does he quote as to speaking about parents, teachers, and rulers? What comfort is there in confession? In explanation?

IV. FOURTH TROUBLE.—THE INTENSE HATRED OF THE JEWS (vs. 6-9).—Why did the Jews hate Paul? What did they wish to do to him? (*Acts 21. 31, 22. 22.*)

THE COMFORT.—DIVISION AMONG HIS ENEMIES.—Into what parties were the Council divided? What was the difference between them? How did Paul gain one party to his side? Was this wise? Was it right? How was Paul on trial for his hope, and the resurrection of the dead?

V. FIFTH TROUBLE.—ANOTHER MOB (v. 10).—What was the effect of Paul's apple of discord in the Council? Why were they so fierce?

THE COMFORT.—How was Paul rescued? Where did he spend the night?

VI. SIXTH TROUBLE.—THE SEEMING FAILURE OF HIS HOPES.—To what dangers was Paul yet exposed? How would the reaction after the last two days' excitement affect him? What was the result of his efforts to convert his countrymen? What other great hope seemed likely to fail? (*Acts 19. 21; Rom. 1. 10, 11.*)

THE COMFORT (v. 11).—How did Jesus comfort Paul? How would the mere fact of his presence comfort him? What was there in this vision to meet each of the troubles noted above? What similar good cheer may we have in trouble?

REVIEW EXERCISE. (For the whole School in concert.)

16. How was Paul's address interrupted? *ANS.* By the angry cries of the mob. 17. How was he rescued? *ANS.* By the Roman commander, and through his Roman citizenship. 18. What took place the next day? *ANS.* He was brought before the Jewish council. 19. How was he treated? *ANS.* With gross injustice. 20. How did he escape? *ANS.* By appealing to the Pharisees of the Council against the Sadducees. 21. How was Paul comforted and encouraged? (Repeat v. 11.)

A.D. 58.] LESSON IX. [March. 1.

## PAUL SENT TO FELIX.

*Acts 23. 12-24. Commit to mem. vs. 20-22.*

## GOLDEN TEXT.

If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.—1 Pet. 4. 16.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

God makes all things to work together for good to those who love him.

## DAILY READINGS.

M. *Acts 23. 12-24. Th. Ps. 37. 1-40.*T. *Acts 23. 25-35. F. 1 Pet. 4. 1-19.*W. *Ps. 7. 1-17. Sa. Dan. 3. 1-30.*Su. *Dan. 6. 1-23.*

TIME.—Thursday, May 25, A.D. 58, the day following the last lesson.

PLACE.—Jerusalem; the castle of Antonia. CIRCUMSTANCES.—Paul had been rescued from the contending parties in the Sanhedrim, and sent back to his prison in the Castle Antonia. There, in the night, Jesus appeared to him in vision, with promises and encouragement. At the same time the Jews were plotting in private to kill Paul, and by morning had matured their plans.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—12. *When it was day*—After the night of Paul's vision.

*Under a curse*—i.e., that they invoked certain curses on themselves if they did not do as they agreed. 15. *Bring him down into you*—From the Castle Antonia, north of the temple, to the hall of the Sanhedrim on the south-west. On the way they would mob him. *Inquire more perfectly*—Or exactly, since they failed to do anything at the meeting yesterday. It was a very plausible request. 22. *Tell no man*—Lest these Jews got wind of it, and make another plot. It was also safe for the young man. 23. *Two hundred soldiers*—Common soldiers or legionaries. These, and the 200 spearmen, went as far as Antipatris, about 45 miles, i.e., beyond the point of greatest danger. Then these returned to Jerusalem, and the 70 horsemen went the remaining 25 miles. To *Cesarea*—70 miles by road, north-west of Jerusalem; 47 miles in a straight line. This was the residence of the Roman governors. *Third hour*—9 o'clock. 24. *Felix, the governor*—From A.D. 62-60. He was a wicked, unscrupulous man. They reached Antipatris the same night. The next day, Paul, guarded by the 70 horsemen, went on to Cesarea, and was presented to Felix. He was then sent to prison, to await the coming of his accusers.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—The review of the last lesson.—The conspiracy.—Bound under a curse.—How the conspiracy was discovered.—The journey to Cesarea.—The letter of Lysias to Felix.—God's promises, and the use of means.—God's overruling the plots and plans of men.

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—What was Paul doing in our last lesson? Where did he spend the night? What vision came to him in the night? Give the time and place of this lesson.

SUBJECT: GOD'S OVERRULING PROVIDENCE.

I. THE CONSPIRACY OF THE JEWS.—SOMETHING TO BE OVERRULED (vs. 12-15).—What plan had the Jews formed in the night? How many joined in this conspiracy? How were they "bound under a curse"? What did they ask the Council to do to further their plans? From what place was Paul to be brought down? To what place? What was to be done on the way? Would Lysias naturally grant their request? Of what sins or crimes were the Jews guilty in this conspiracy?

II. THE CONSPIRACY OVERRULED.—BY DISCOVERY (vs. 16-22).—What relative of Paul learned of this plot? What did he do about it? What did Paul do? What promise had been made to Paul? (*Acts 23. 11.*) Why did he need to do anything, since God had promised that he should be safe? Give another example from the life of Paul. (*Acts 27. 24, 31, 43, 44.*) Has God given us many promises? Name some of them. Does faith in these prevent us from doing our part, or are they a reason for doing it? Show from this incident what good a young person can do.

III. THE CONSPIRACY MADE TO FURTHER PAUL'S WORK (vs. 23, 24).—What measures did Lysias take to prevent the Jews from carrying out their plot? Why so many soldiers? When did they start? How far did they go that night? (v. 31.) Who then returned? Who went on to Cesarea? Why was Paul taken to Cesarea? Who was governor there? What message did Lysias send to him? What was Paul's desire, and God's plan for Paul's future work? (*Acts 23. 11; Rom. 1. 11.*) Will God always overrule man's works for the good of his cause and people?

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. We should be more earnest for good than these men were for evil.
2. We should never make a promise to do wrong.
3. But if we have done it, it is better broken than kept. Two wrongs do not make one right.
4. God's promises do not take from us the duty of doing our part.
5. The divine promises strengthen us to go on with every means for their accomplishment.

REVIEW EXERCISE. (For the whole School in concert.)

1. What did the Jews do next against Paul? *ANS.* Forty of them formed a conspiracy to kill him.
2. By whom was this discovered? *ANS.* By a young nephew of St. Paul.
3. What did he do? *ANS.* He revealed it to the chief captain.
4. How was the conspiracy frustrated? *ANS.* Paul was sent under a guard to the governor at Cesarea.
5. What good came from this? *ANS.* It was part of the plan by which Paul was to be sent to Rome, and preach the Gospel there.

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