

risers were glad to avail themselves of the help even of Paul, and to defend him again in turn.

V. 11. The Lord stood by him. After all that Paul had gone through those two days, no wonder if, in his lonely cell, he began to give way to discouragement, and to wonder whether it was not a mistake to disregard the advice of friends given in chap. xxi, 12, 13. *How blessed, then, such a visit, at such a time!*

OUTLINE.

1. Unjust words—v. 2.
2. Hasty words—v. 3.
3. Conflict of words—v. 7-10.
4. Cheering words—v. 11.

PRACTICAL LESSON.

1. A good conscience is invaluable, not only because it enables its possessor to look his fellow-man straight in the face, but gives him courage and self-confidence in trial.—v. 1.
2. Those in high office must act worthily if they would be treated reverently.—v. 2, 3.
3. Hasty and intemperate words on the part of a Christian are unjustifiable, even under the most aggravating circumstances, and demand immediate retraction and apology.—v. 5.
4. Union based on a sacrifice of principle is unsound, insecure and liable at any moment to disruption: for "a house divided against itself cannot stand."—v. 6-10.
5. "Men may hold much truth, like the Pharisees, and yet hold it in unrighteousness."—v. 9.
6. God stands by His people, and has much "good cheer" for all His faithful servants."—v. 11.

NOV. 4.—Paul before Felix.—Acts xxiv, 10-27. A.D. 58 (Summer).

GOLDEN TEXT.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.—Acts xxi, 25.

INTRODUCTORY.

Our last lesson left Paul in the Castle of Antonia at Jerusalem, cheered and encouraged in the midst of his trials by a visit from the Lord. On the day following, a conspiracy, in which more than forty Jews were banded together with the intention of seizing and killing the apostle, was discovered. A nephew of Paul informs him and the Chief Captain of it, and the latter at once sends Paul under a strong guard to Caesarea with a letter to Felix the Governor, explaining the case. In this letter Lysias finds it convenient to deviate slightly from the truth in order to cover up his own misconduct, when he states that he "rescued him [Paul], having understood that he was a Roman," whereas in point of fact he knew nothing about this until after he had arrested him "and bade that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know wherefore they cried so much against him" (chap. xxi, 24-26). Having arrived safely in Caesarea and having been presented before the Governor, Paul was remanded by him until his accusers should arrive. He had not long to wait. "Thus, 'after five days' the high priest Ananias, and certain members of the Sanhedrim appeared, with one of those advocates who practised in the law courts of the provinces. The criminal information was formally laid before the Governor. The prisoner was summoned, and Tertullus brought forward the charges against him in a set speech which need not quote at length. He began by loading Felix with unmerited praises, and then proceeded to allege three distinct heads of accusation against St. Paul,—charging him, first, with causing factious disturbances among all the Jews throughout the Empire (which was an offence against the Roman Government), and amounting to treason against the Emperor), secondly, with being 'a ringleader of the sect of

Nazarenes' (which involved Arrey against the law of Moses), and thirdly, with an attempt to profane the Temple at Jerusalem (an offence not only against the Jewish, but also against the Roman law, which protected the Jews in the exercise of their worship). He concluded by assenting (with serious deviations from the truth) that Lysias, the commandant of the garrison, had forcibly taken the prisoner away, when the Jews were about to judge him by their own ecclesiastical law, and had thus improperly brought the matter before Felix. The drift of this representation was evidently to persuade Felix to give up St. Paul to the Jewish courts, in which case his assassination would have been easily accomplished."—*Conybeare and Howson*. Having made his charges, the Jews present "also assented, saying that these things were so."—verse 9.

Our lesson proper divides naturally into two parts, in the first of which we have Paul pleading in the Court, and in the second, Paul pleading in the Palace.

I.—PAUL PLEADING IN THE COURT.—v. 10-23.

V. 10. Then Paul answered. Notice to which calm dignity and skillful reasoning, Paul, who was himself a lawyer, conducts his own defence.—Acts xxi, 3; v. 34. Forasmuch as I know that thou, etc.

Contrast Paul's manly introduction with the abject flattery of Tertullus.—verse 2.

V. 11. But twelve days. The best mode of reckoning these is the following: 1st, the day of his arrival at Jerusalem (xxi, 17); 2nd, the interview with James (xxi, 18); 3rd, the assumption of the vow (xxi, 26); 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th, the vow continued, which was to have been kept seven days (being interrupted on the fifth); 8th, Paul before the Sanhedrim (xxii, 30; xxiii, 1-10); 9th, the plot of the Jews, and the journey by night to Antipatris (xxiii, 12-31); 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th, the days at Caesarea (xxiv, 1), on the last of which the trial was then taking place. The number of complete days, therefore, would be two, the day in progress at the time of speaking not being counted.—*Hackett*. For to worship—not 'to profane the Temple' as Tertullus had charged.—See chap. xxi, 26, 27.

V. 12. Disputing—so as to raise any excitement. In the synagogues. Compare Stephen's case.—Acts vi, 10-13.

V. 13. Neither can they prove. It is one thing to bring charges, but quite another to prove them.

So much for the charge of treason or sedition.

V. 14. But this I confess. That after the way which they call heresy—literally, *which they call sect*. "Two arguments are contained here: (1) Our nation is divided into what they call 'sects'—the sect of the Pharisees, and that of the Sadducees—all the difference is that I belong to another sect, which they call Nazarenes:—for this reason alone, I am hated."

The Roman law allows every nation to worship its own deity; I claim protection under its law, worshipping the God of my fathers, even as they, only of a different sect of the common religion.—*David Brown*.

Believing all things. Written in law and prophets. He could safely challenge them to show, if they could, a greater loyalty than his to the Old Testament Scriptures.

V. 15. Resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees were not prepared to gain say this doctrine.—chap. xxiii, 8, 9.

Both of the just and unjust. The resurrection of the wicked in order to be punished, is as clearly taught here as that of the righteous to be rewarded.—*Hackett*. The doctrine of the resurrection was believed in not only by the Pharisees, but by the people generally; The Sadducees were so few in number as scarcely to make a very noticeable exception, unless in the Sanhedrim, of which most of them were members.

V. 16. Conscience void of offence—as befits one holding my views of a resurrection and judgment.

So much for the charge of heresy.

V. 17. Alms. See Rom. xv, 25-27; 1 Cor. xvi, 1-4; 2 Cor. viii, 1-4. And offerings. See Acts xxi, 26.

V. 18. Certain Jews from Asia.—See chap. xxi, 27. They were the instigators of the riot,—they were the ones who had 'profaned the Temple.'

V. 19. Who ought to have been here. Paul would like to cross-examine these 'Jews from Asia.'

V. 20. Else let these same here say. What a home-throw to those Pharisees who had found "no evil in this man," when on trial before them a few days before!

So much for the charge of sacrilege.

V. 22. Having knowledge. Means that Felix, from his long residence at Caesarea (6 or 7 years), was too well acquainted with Christianity (that way) to be deceived by the misrepresentation of the Jews.—*Stack*.

V. 23. His acquaintances to come. "This was a precious boon to him. Philip the Evangelist resided there with his family." Cornelius the Centurion may have been there (Acts x); Timothy, Luke and Aristarchus also.—*Kitts*.

II.—PAUL PLEADING IN THE PALACE.—

v. 24-27.

V. 24. Felix—was a vigorous Governor; but Tacitus says "he used the power of a king with the despotism of a slave, through every kind of cruelty and licentiousness." Of his venality we have a specimen in our lesson. He had been about six years Governor at the time when Paul came under his rule (verse 10). He was recalled two years after, to answer certain charges of conniving at a massacre of Jews at Caesarea, but was acquitted through the influence of his brother Pallas. Drusilla—a beautiful but profligate Jewess, who "had been seduced away from her husband, Azizus, king of Emesa, by the Roman procurator (Felix), and was now only in the eighteenth year of her age."—*Kitts*. She and her son by Felix perished in the eruption of Vesuvius which overthrew Herculaneum and Pompeii.

V. 25. Reasoned. We cannot but admire the faithfulness and fearlessness with which Paul addressed this profligate pair.

Righteousness—justice. Temperance—governing oneself.

Judgment to come—which he, Felix, had, too much reason to dread.—Eccl. xii, 9; xii, 14; Rom. ii, 6-9; 1 Cor. vi, 9, 10; Gal. v, 19-21; 2 Thess. i, 8; Rev. xxi, 8. This sermon of Paul's had two heads and an application.—*Arnold*.

Felix trembled—how different the issue from that of the Jailer in Acts xvi, 30. Nothing is said of Drusilla trembling. It is possible that her young heart was already 'soured as with a hot iron,' and 'past feeling.'

Convenient season—but although it was convenient many times afterwards to throw out hints about a certain willingness to take money for Paul's release (v. 26), it was never convenient to talk any more about his own soul's salvation.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

NOV. 11.—Paul before Agrippa.—Acts xxvi, 6-20. A.D. 60 (about August).

GOLDEN TEXT.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.—Acts xxvi, 19.

INTRODUCTORY.

Two years have elapsed since the events of our last lesson. In the interim Paul has remained in