

SCHOLA

(From International Quarterly Book.)

Studies in the Acts of the Apostles.

LESSON XI.—MARCH 15.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.—ACTS 26: 1-18.

COMMIT VERSES 16-18.

GOLDEN TEXT

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.—Acts 26: 15.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The Gospel is shown to be true by what it does for men.

DAILY READINGS.

- M. Acts 25: 13-27. T. Acts 26: 1-18. W. Acts 9: 1-20. Th. Matt. 17: 1-9. F. Gal. 1: 11-24. Sa. Luke 1: 67-80. Su. Isa. 42: 1-12.

INTRODUCTION.—Paul had lain in prison at Caesarea when a change was made in governors. Immediately on his arrival in Jerusalem (July 1-12), the leading Jews ask the governor to send Paul to Jerusalem intending to kill him. The governor refuses, and summons the Jews to Caesarea. They accuse Paul bitterly. Paul denies the charges, but, fearing lest the governor be persuaded to send him to Jerusalem, he appeals to Caesar, and it is determined to send him to Rome for trial; but Festus can find no charges to send with him. King Agrippa and his sister Bernice about this time visit Festus, and Paul is called before him, in order that he, being a Jew by education, may discover some accusation.

THE TRIAL SCENE.—(1) THE PLACE.—Herod's judgment-hall or palace. (2) THE PRISONER.—Paul, aged 58, bound by one hand to a Roman soldier. (3) THE JUDGES.—Festus, of good character, comparatively; Agrippa, a bad, hard man; Bernice, his sister, living with him as his wife. (4) THE AUDIENCE.—The leading people of Caesarea, officials in their rich robes, military officers in gorgeous uniforms and a brilliant assembly.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

3. EXPERT.—Agrippa was trained as a Jew, and had studied their sacred books. His father, though not a Jew, lived in the Jewish ways. 5. STRAITEST.—most exact, particular. 7. OUR TWELVE TRIBES.—The nation as a whole. Many of what are called the lost ten tribes were mingled with the tribe of Judah, and the Jews were a commingling of all the tribes. 11. COMPELLED.—strove to compel. 14. PRICKS.—goads with which oxen were driven; the more they kicked against them the worse they were hurt.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How long did Paul remain in prison at Caesarea? What change was made in the governors of Judea? What did the Jews ask of the new governor? Where were they summoned to accuse Paul? What was the result of this trial? Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? How was this aiding him in his desire to go to Rome? Who came to visit Festus? What favor did Festus ask of them? Why? What trial was now held? Who were the audience? Was this a favorable time to preach the Gospel?

SUBJECT: THE GOSPEL DEFENDED AND PROVED.

I. BECAUSE IT IS THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES (vs 1-7).—How did Paul open his address? What can you tell about Agrippa? What special fitness had he for judging Paul's case? What does Paul say of his early life? Why does he refer to this? What was the promise made by God to the fathers? (Job 19: 26; Dan. 12: 2, 3; Luke 20: 37, 38; Ps. 72: 8-11; Isa. 7: 10; 1-22; Dan. 7: 9, 10, 14, 27.) How did the Israelites feel toward this promise? Meaning of "instantly serving God day and night"? How was the Gospel a fulfillment of this hope? How does this show the truth of the Gospel?

II. BECAUSE IT IS REASONABLE (v. 8).—How did Paul come now to speak of the resurrection? Why was it not incredible? Had they been raised from the dead? (1 Kings 17: 22, 23; 2 Kings 4: 32-35; 13: 21; see also Luke 20: 37, 38.) Is the Gospel reasonable? Are all its teachings reasonable?

III. BECAUSE OF THE WONDERFUL CHANGES IT WORKS IN INDIVIDUALS (vs. 9-16).—Give a brief account of Paul's conversion? Did he see Jesus in the bright light? What did he hear him say? Was this a proof that Jesus was living, and divine? (v. 16; ch. 9: 17.) Meaning of "hard to kick against the pricks"? How did it apply to Paul? How does it apply to us? What change was wrought in Paul? How do the wonderful changes the Gospel works in the character of men prove the truth of the Gospel?

IV. BECAUSE OF ITS RESULTS IN THE WORLD (vs. 16-18).—Why did Jesus appear to Paul? Was he to have new light? How does this bear upon the inspiration of his epistles? What was to be the effect of the Gospel? What is the darkness referred to? How does the Gospel bring light? What are the four steps in the Gospel work, in v. 18? What is the inheritance of saints?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- I. The hopes and promises of the Gospel are fulfilled. II. The Gospel changes it has wrought. III. It is proved. Note the results of forming nations. IV. When God calls us to some work. V. Christian know progress. VI. We should be turning men from the kingdom of God.

Studies in the Acts of the Apostles.

LESSON XII.—MARCH 22.

PAUL VINDICATED.—ACTS 26: 19-32.

COMMIT VERSES 22, 23.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.—Acts 26: 22.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God calls us; let us obey.

DAILY READINGS.

- M. Acts 26: 1-18. T. Acts 26: 19-32. W. Matt. 3: 1-12. Th. Isa. 53: 1-12. F. Isa. 60: 1-22. Sa. John 10: 1-21. Su. Luke 18: 18-30.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

19. WHEREUPON.—after seeing Christ and hearing him, before Damascus. 20. THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT.—Paul's preaching was practical, this, and the following, was the aim of his labors. 21. CAUGHT ME IN THE TEMPLE.—(see Acts 21: 26-31) two years before. 22. RISE FROM THE DEAD.—his Saviour and King was a living Saviour, and divine. 27. I KNOW THAT THOU BELIEVEST.—he believed with the head, not the heart. 28. ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME.—there are three interpretations of this phrase: (1) As given here. (2) As in the Revised Version, "With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian." Do you expect to change me with so little argument as you can use in this brief speech? (3) "In a little time thou persuadest me"; i.e., either seriously, "If you keep on, you will soon persuade me," or ironically, "Do you expect to persuade me in this brief time?" 29. WERE BOTH ALMOST AND ALTOGETHER.—or as in the Revised Version, "Whether with little or with much"; or as Alford, "Both in small measure and in great."

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Where was Paul? How long since his imprisonment? Before what audience was he speaking? What point in the history of his conversion had he reached in his address?

SUBJECT: DIFFERENT WAYS OF TREATING GOD'S INVITATIONS.

I. PAUL'S WAY (vs. 19-23).

(1) OBEDIENCE.—To what "heavenly vision" does Paul refer? To what had God in this vision called him? How did Paul treat the call? Have we had similar invitations? (Isa. 55: 1; Matt. 4: 17; 11: 28-30; Rev. 22: 17.) How have you treated these invitations? How far does our salvation depend on God, and how far on ourselves?

(2) WORKS FOR CHRIST.—What did Paul do as soon as converted? In what places did he preach? Meaning of "coasts"? Do all who really love Christ want to tell others of him? By whose help did Paul continue in the Christian life and work?

(3) TEACHINGS.—What was the practical teaching of Paul? (v. 20.) What is repentance? What is it to turn to God? What are the works meet for repentance? What was his doctrinal teaching? Where were these things taught in the Old Testament? Is Christ the centre of all true Christian doctrine?

II. FESTUS' WAY (vs. 24-25).—What did Festus think of Paul's teachings. Why did Paul seem to him to be a lunatic? Does the Christian life seem thus to any persons now? Who are the ones who are "beside themselves"? What was Paul's reply to Festus?

III. AGRIPPA'S WAY (vs. 26-29).—What was King Agrippa's knowledge of the Gospel? What was his belief? Did his faith and knowledge make him a Christian? What was lacking? What did he say to Paul? Was he sincere? What would it have cost him to become a Christian? What was Paul's answer? What had Paul that was superior to what Agrippa possessed? What exception did Paul make? Apply this to the Christians' desire that all men should be like them?

IV. THE VINDICATION (v. 30-32).—What was the result of this hearing? Why was it better for Paul that he was not set at liberty?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- I. God gives us all a call to the Christian life. II. We must each for himself decide whether we will obey the call. III. As soon as we know Christ we should seek to lead others to him. IV. Our teachings should be both practical and doctrinal. V. True repentance will be proved by its fruits. VI. An earnest, devoted, self-denying Christian seems to be beside himself in the eyes of the worldly. VII. There is no madness so great as the neglect of eternal life for the sake of worldly pleasures. VIII. One may know the truth, and believe it, and yet not be a Christian.

"ALMOST THERE."

—BY REV. T. D. WITHERSPOON, D. D.

message lay on my study-table. What could not be startled by its sudden significance? "Our Katie was ill last night. The doctors say, 'hope. Please come at once.' Impossible! Katie, the very picture of health, the very impersonation of beauty! Katie the lighthearted, the romping girl, the very life of all gatherings! Why, it seems that I listened to her ringing laughter into the merry face that to have been shadowed

with a thought of death. How will she dare to face the king of terrors, this young, light-hearted, frolicsome thing? Thus I soliloquized with myself as I hurried to the scene of distress. True it had been just a year now since Katie had stood before the pulpit and made her confession of Christ. True also, in all that time I could recall no instance in which she had in anyway compromised her Christian character. She had renounced at some sacrifice the amusements forbidden by the church. She had been punctual and apparently happy in attention to her religious duties. There had never been anything irreverent, or indecorous in her mirth. "May there not have been," I found myself asking as I approached the door, "some deep undercurrent of spiritual life of which we who watched her were not fully aware?" May she not after all "be ready for her Lord when he cometh"?

To my first question on entering the house, which was as to her physical condition, the answer of the attending physician was but too decisive. A few hours at most was all that we could hope for. To my second question, addressed to the mother, "Has anything been said to her about preparation for death?" the answer came, "Oh, how could we say anything to her? poor thing, she never thought of dying in her life. It would frighten her to death." "And yet she must know it." "Oh, yes; we want you to tell her; but, oh, do it as gently as you can." So, taking only the mother with me to the bedside, I said in the calmest tone I could command, "How are you this evening, Katie?" A smile of recognition and the softly-whispered words, "Almost there." I could with difficulty restrain the outburst of the mother's anguish, as I replied, "Almost where, Katie?" Another bright smile. "At the end of the journey." "And that end is heaven?" With a bright look upward, "Yes." For one moment I had to soothe the torrent of struggling emotion in the breast of the heroic mother, and then amid the solemn stillness I asked one question more, "And are you ready, Katie?" "I am not only ready, but if it is the Lord's will, I am glad to go."

I will not unveil further the secrets of that chamber which seemed nearer to heaven than to earth, but as I walked away in the calm starlight I thought, What a transcendent power there is in the religion of Christ! What unheralded victories it wins, and what silent but potent influence it is often wielding in hearts that are themselves perhaps all unconscious of its power! How wonderful that this young girl, who had everything to live for, who had never had a reasonable wish denied, in the midst of home, wealth, friends, all that heart could wish, was not only willing, but even glad, to leave all at the Master's call! And how much divine grace is often effecting in young hearts all unknown to us Illustrated Christian Weekly.

HOW TO BECOME HAPPY.

Many young persons are ever thinking over some new ways of adding to their pleasures. They always look for chances for more "fun," more joy. Once there was a wealthy and powerful king, full of care and very unhappy. He heard of a man famed for his wisdom and piety, and found him in a cave on the borders of a wilderness. "Holy man," said the king, "I come to learn how I may be happy." Without making a reply, the wise man led the king over a rough path, till he brought him in front of a high rock, on the top of which an eagle had built her nest. "Why has the eagle built her nest yonder?" "Doubtless," answered the king, "that it may be out of danger." "Then imitate the bird," said the wise man; "build thy home in heaven, and thou shalt have peace and happiness."—Child's World.

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