

Lesson XI. March 15. Paul Before Agrippa. Acts 26. 1-18.

1. Chapter 25 clearly illustrates God's way of carrying out his purposes, both protective and retributive, by moving even unassisted human choice to do his bidding. Isa. 10. 5-12; 31. 5; Gen. 45. 5-7; 50. 20; Exod. 15. 9-11; Psa. 91. 5; Prov. 20. 24; Acts 3. 17, 18; Phil. 1. 12.

2. The intelligent propriety of Paul's appeal to Caesar; Roman justice, when he was assailed by an ecclesiastical mob, chap. 25. Dan. 2. 33; 7; Acts 15. 2; 19. 21; Luke 2. 1; 3. 1; Acts 25. 34; 25. 1; John 18. 31, 39; 19. 10; Acts 16. 37; Dan. 6. 18, 19; Acts 22. 25-28; 23; 25. 16; 26. 32.

3. Paul's long imprisonment at Caesarea by Romans, to please the Jews, prompts the reflection as to the class of persons whom the Jewish Scriptures allowed to be thus confined. Gen. 42. 16-19; 1 Kings 22. 27; 2 Chron. 28. 10; Jer. 37. 21; 38. 6; Matt. 18. 30; Luke 23. 19; Rev. 2. 10.

4. Also, the kinds of prisons then in use. Gen. 39. 20; 41. 14; Jer. 38. 6; Zech. 9. 11; Acts 5. 18; 16. 24; Gen. 40. 22; Matt. 14. 10.

5. While in such horrible confinement, what additional punishments were often inflicted? Judges 16. 21; 1 Kings 22. 27; Psa. 79. 11; 102. 20; Jer. 38. 6; Ezek. 19. 9; Mark 6. 17; Acts 12. 6; 16. 24.

6. A bright spot in the appalling darkness of prison life in the ancient East. Gen. 39. 21; Psa. 106. 46; Prov. 16. 7; Dan. 1. 9; Matt. 11. 2; Acts 16. 33, 34; 24. 23; 25. 30; 27. 3; 28. 16, 30; 2 Tim. 1. 16.

7. Paul's artful method, the method of inspiration, to predispose a distinguished and powerful individual, or assemblage of individuals, to listen long and attentively to an argument, an appeal, or a reproof, verses 2, 3. Rev. 2. 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 30; Acts 24. 10; Rom. 12. 20; Prov. 25. 21, 22; Col. 3. 11-13.

8. Paul was bold to reveal to King Agrippa, and to others who may have been present, the real reason why he was thus persecuted, doubtless that he might in so distinguished a presence again preach Christ, ver. 7. Gen. 3. 15; 22. 18; 49. 10; Dent. 18. 15; 2 Sam. 7. 12; Isa. 4. 2; 9. 6, 7; 11. 1, 5; Ezek. 21. 27; Zech. 13. 1, 7.

9. We have reason to think that only the barest outline of this sermon has come down to us. This may be a part, and a very natural part, of the last remainder. Psa. 69. 4; 118. 22; Isa. 8. 14; Matt. 21. 42; Luke 2. 1; John 7. 48; 15. 24, 25; Acts 3. 20-22; Rom. 9. 32; Gal. 3. 16; 4. 4.

10. No other conversion was ever so remarkable, phenomenal, overwhelming, but all genuine ones are equally satisfactory in revealing to the "new creature" whom they produce the personal atoning Cause. 1 Kings 18. 37; Prov. 1. 23; Dan. 12. 3; John 6. 44; Acts 3. 26; Rom. 1. 16; 15. 18; 1 Cor. 1. 18; 2 Tim. 2. 10; James 5. 19, 20; Heb. 7. 25.

The lesson teacher:

1. Opportunely, being always providentially presented, should be fully embraced, ver. 1.

2. It is wise, artful, in beginning an address to one, or more, to use a trifle of judicious flattery, ver. 2, 3.

3. One whom you publicly skillfully pronounce "pert" will listen long and well to your address, and henceforth be your disciple.

4. Constitutional, or organic, greatness, whether it be meritorious or otherwise, in human character, cannot remain long popularly unobserved, ver. 4.

5. Conscientious changes of religious conviction being possible, and, it may be, frequent, should always be tenderly revered by those whose convictions change not, ver. 6.

6. The honesty, if not the intelligence, of a conviction is clearly enough proved when a man joyfully suffers that he may indulge it, ver. 6.

7. Paul believed, and so do I, in the physiological possibility of the resumption of physical living by the power of God, after the singular providence of mortality, ver. 8.

8. A strong mind may be conscientiously set in a horrid purpose of persecution and murder, ver. 9.

9. I am surprised, not at the power and glory of this conversion, but that it is not being repeated thousands of times daily.

10. This was the same voice that had tried ineffectually to make missionaries of the original apostles. Acts 1. 8; ver. 15.

Lesson XII. March 22. Paul Vindicated. Acts 26. 19-32.

1. The only sufficient explanation, and contradiction to the heathen nations, of the Jewish people, was their hope of the Messianic Deliverer whom Paul here preached. 1 Sam. 2. 10; Num. 24. 17; Psa. 6. 8, 9, 45; 72. 8; Isa. 9. 7; 13. 9, 34; 2; Jer. 23. 5; 25. 31; Dan. 2. 44; 7. 14; 9. 24, 25; Micah 5. 2; Zech. 9. 9; 14. 9; Mal. 3. 1.

2. Paul having been thus miraculously called to the missionary field of the Gentile world, "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," he instantly and mightily went, ver. 19, 20. Rom. 1. 1, 7; 1 Cor. 1. 3; 15. 1-9; 2 Cor. 1. 1; Gal. 1. 1, 3-12; Eph. 1. 1-3; 3; Phil. 1. 1, 10; Col. 1. 3-4; 1 Thess. 1. 1-5.

3. The Gentile world which Paul was called to evangelize, together with prophecies relating to its conversion, etc. Gen. 10. 5; Rom. 1. 21; 1 Cor. 12. 2; Eph. 2. 4, 17; 1 Thess. 4. 5; Isa. 11. 10; 42. 1, 49; 6; 62. 2; Jer. 16. 9; Hosea 2:29; Joel 3. 9; Micah 5. 8; Mal. 1. 11.

4. The subjects of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles were: turning from sin, turning to God, and turning out righteousness, ver. 20. Dent. 6. 25, with Rom. 10. 5; 1 Kings 8. 33, 38; Matt. 9. 13; Acts 2. 38; 3. 19; 8. 22; 11. 15; 17. 30; James 4. 9, 10; Rev. 2. 5, 16; 3. 3; Rom. 14. 17.

5. Paul's authority for saying that he was delivered from the murderous wrath of the Jews by an act of God, ver. 22. Acts 21. 30; Exod. 15. 9-11; 2 Sam. 17. 14, 15; Psa. 91. 3, 11; 33. 10; 46. 1, 2; Matt. 6. 53-54; 10. 30; 5. 6. What had "the prophets and Moses" said should come? ver. 23. Luke 24. 27, 46; Num. 14. 17; Dent. 18. 15; Isa. 9. 7; 52. 7; Jer. 23. 5; Nah. 1. 15; Micah 5. 2; Zech. 9. 9.

7. The Gospel of Christ as Paul presented it to the Jews was mainly objectionable to them on account of its atonement ("should suffer"), conversion ("rise from the dead"), and universality ("to the Gentiles"), ver. 23. Psa. 16. 10; 22. 6, 14, 15; 69. 7, 9, 20; Isa. 11. 10; 42. 1; 49. 7; 53. 2, 4-6, 12; 26. 19; Dan. 7. 14; 9. 26; Zech. 11. 12, 13.

8. One of the many blessed meanings to us of Christ's resurrection, ver. 23. 1 Cor. 15. 20, 23, 53; Eccles. 3. 2; 12. 7; Matt. 10. 28; 22. 30; Luke 20. 37; John 19. 28; 2 Tim. 1. 10.

9. As Christ began to live again after his death, so the lives we are now living in the physical are to resume in the resurrection, and both soul and body are thus to live forever. Job 19. 26; Psa. 49. 15; Isa. 26. 19; Dan. 12. 2; Matt. 20. 28; Mark 12. 24; John 11. 24; 1 Cor. 15. 15, 35-44; Rev. 20. 13.

10. Paul, being justified by faith, had more than the peace and joy of a king, or a brilliant assemblage associated with a king, and he had the courteous hardihood to say so in the presence of both, ver. 29. Rom. 6. 23; 8. 17, 18, 28; 1 Cor. 9. 25; 2 Cor. 4. 17, 15; 1 Phil. 1. 23; 2 Tim. 2. 12, 4, 8; Col. 1. 12; Heb. 11. 10.

The lesson teaches:

1. The primary purpose of this address was individual Christian persuasion; incidentally it was intended for self-defense, whether Agrippa's famous concession was ironical or candid, as the exegetes are unprepared to agree.

2. When a duty is clearly known it should at once be done, ver. 19.

3. Let preaching be upon the subjects of repentance, conversion, and growth by pure service, ver. 30.

4. An effort will always be made by Satan to put a stop to faithful preaching, ver. 31.

5. Having found the will of God, any man who is determined to do it, regardless of the personal sacrifice involved, may depend upon divine help, ver. 22.

6. That is not preaching, but speculating, which presents any other than the few biblical themes, ver. 22.

7. A suffering Christ to atone for sin, a risen Christ for spiritual recreation, and an impartial Christ for every sinner, are the preacher's inexhaustible stock of material for sermons, ver. 23.

8. A proud, obstinate, dishonest sinner cannot now understand a Gospel sermon, and could not then, ver. 24.

9. Paul, unembarrassed by this abrupt but complimentary intrusion, responded most courteously in self-defense, ver. 25, 26.

10. How could Agrippa, a Roman "king," be a believer in the Jewish prophets, ver. 27.

11. Better give up an impressive text than insist upon an incorrect rendering of it, ver. 28, 29.

12. Paul, with genuine Christian spirit, would gladly have shared with his persecutors the joys, but not the ills, of his experience, ver. 29.