

V. 19. Lord, they know. It seemed strange to Paul that the testimony of himself who had been such a notorious opposer of the new sect should not be admitted. All Jerusalem had known of his thorough, downright conviction that he was doing God service in persecuting the Christians; and they would perceive that nothing could change that conviction unless such a miraculous dealing as he had experienced; but strong as his qualification seemed to him to be to persuade the Jews, his Lord knew,—oh, how much better!—that they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me, but that even then they were plotting his murder.—Acts ix, 28.

V. 20. Thy martyr—literally witness. Stephen. Paul's mention of him is justly called by Bishop Wordsworth "a noble endeavour to make public reparation for a private sin, by a public confession in the same place where the sin was committed."—See Acts vi, 12; vii, 58; viii, 1.

V. 21. Depart. The Master repeats the command to His rather presuming servant, who would faint dictate how and where he would serve his Lord. "Depart,"—as if He would say, "Leave the Jews to Me, Paul, your sphere is among the Gentiles."

V. 22. This word—"Gentiles." "Not that they refused to preach the law to the Gentiles, and make them proselytes; for this they were fond of doing, so that our Lord says, they compassed sea and land to make a proselyte; but they understood the apostle as stating that God had rejected them, and called the Gentiles to be His peculiar people in their place; and this they could not bear."—Adam Clarke.

V. 23. Cast off their clothes. Literally, tossing up.—Shaking, tossing them about, as a manifestation and an effect of their uncontrollable rage.—Hackett. Threw dust into the air. This also indicated their extraordinary contempt and vindictive malice.—Compare 2 Sam. xvi, 13. But this rage was impotent: for Paul was under the safe protection of the Roman guard.

V. 24. That he might know wherefore ye cried, etc. Paul having delivered the speech in Hebrew, the Chief Captain, of course, did not understand his language; and so was really in the dark as to the cause of the tumult. He however concluded that Paul had been guilty of some crime, and would torture him into a confession of it.

V. 25. Is it lawful, to scourge, a Roman? The Roman law absolutely forbade the binding of a Roman citizen.—See Acts xvi, 37.

V. 26. This man is a Roman. "It may excite surprise that the Gentiles believed Paul's word so readily. We have the explanation of this in the fact that a false claim of this nature was easily exposed, and liable to be punished with death."—Hackett.

V. 28. With a great sum. "Roman citizenship was so highly valued that no price was held too high to procure it."—Ripley.

But I was free born. Paul inherited it from some of his ancestors, who had perhaps obtained it as a reward of distinguished services.

V. 30. Commanded the chief priests, etc. "Note here the power to order a Sanhedrin to try this case, assumed by the Roman officers, and acquiesced in on their part."—Brown.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. God's tender watch-care over His faithful servants.—See 1 Sam. ii, 9; Matt. x, 29-31; Isaiah xlii, 14, etc.
2. The best and wisest of men may be mistaken in their peculiar fitness for a certain work. It is well when we leave it to our Divine Master to direct our movements in His service.—verses 18-21; Prov. iii, 5, 6.
3. Spiritual pride and bigotry tend naturally to manifest themselves in intolerance and persecution.—verses 22, 23; see Psm. x, 2; John xvi, 2, 3.
4. In becoming Christians we do not forfeit or

resign our right to use any civil privileges.—verse 25; Acts xvi, 37.

5. Men who have no fear of God before their eyes are often restrained from evil deeds by a fear of their fellow-men.—verses 26, 29.

6. The Chief Captain, Claudius Lysias, obtained the freedom of Roman citizenship by himself paying "a great sum" (verse 28); but we who are made *freemen in Christ*, and whose citizenship is in heaven, cannot become so by any such payment (Psalm xlii, 7), for we are *not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ*. And Christ having thus obtained eternal redemption for us, who are "born of the Spirit"—"born again"—can say with Paul: "I WAS FREE BORN."—Eph. ii, 6-9, 15-19; Col. i, 12-14, etc.

Oct. 28.—Paul before the Council.—Acts xxiii, 1-11. A.D. 58 (Summer).

GOLDEN TEXT.

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.—Acts vi, 10.

INTRODUCTORY.

The best introduction to the study of this lesson will be a brief review, by the teacher, of the events of the preceding day, as contained in chapters xxi and xxii. Paul's speech before the people (xxii, 1-21) must have been delivered under considerable physical disadvantage. He had just come out from under the hands of the infuriated mob, whose intention was to kill him, and who only "left beating of Paul" when he was rescued by the soldiers; and yet under the tremendous excitement of the moment he seems scarcely in danger of having lost the faculty of intellect by his rough treatment. A night of sleepless tossing, aching bones and uncomfortable restraint from his prisoner's bands (xxii, 30) would scarcely be fitting preparation for his appearance before the Jewish Sanhedrin on the following morning with cheerful and dignified composure; and little wonder if he did for a moment, under the unjust and aggravating treatment of the high priest, lose his temper.

His last appearance in this Council had been some twenty-five years before, when he received those memorable "letters to Damascus."—Acts ix, 1, 2; xxii, 5. In bringing Paul before the Council now, Claudius Lysias has no doubt anxious to clear himself for having arrested a Roman citizen and bound him with tokens preparatory to scourging, and he believed the Sanhedrin could help him to make out his case (in this connection his letter to Felix—xxiii, 26-30—is interesting). Owing to their strong prejudice against Paul, however, and as the latter claimed the rights of Roman citizenship, the Captain was careful to guard his prisoner, "seeing that already, in his treatment of him, he had been guilty of a flagrant violation of the law."—xxii, 26, 29.

EXPLANATORY.

V. 1. Earnestly beholding. "With the unappalled air of a man conscious of integrity, willing to have all his acts scrutinized" and perhaps searching for the faces of old associates, and to see if any were there still who had, 25 years before, granted him his letters to Damascus. The Council. The Jewish Sanhedrin or Great Council consisted, in the time of our Lord and the apostles, of "chief priests, or the heads of the 24 families into which the priests were divided; Levites, men of age and experience, and *Scribes*, lawyers, or those learned in the Jewish law." (Matt. xxvi, 57, 59; Mark xv, 1; Luke xxii, 6; Acts v, 21.) The number of members was about seventy. There was a President and one or two Vice-Presidents; and the high priest was often the President. While in session, the Sanhedrin sat in the form of a half-circle, and the place of

meeting was usually one of the courts near the Temple, but sometimes, in emergency, the residence of the high priest.—*Smith's Dictionary*. It had no power to inflict capital punishment in the time of the Roman Government (John xix, 31); it took cognizance of matters civil and religious among the Jews.

V. 2. Annas. Must not be confused with Annas, mentioned in Acts iv, 6. Annas was originally appointed high priest by Herod, king of Chalcis, in A.D. 48; he soon got into trouble, and was sent to Rome A.D. 52, was pardoned, and afterwards restored in the time of Felix, sometime before the events of our lesson. Josephus says he was "an ambitious, avaricious and cruel man." He was assassinated at the beginning of the Jewish war by a band called the Sicarii.

To smite him on the mouth. Still a common mode in Eastern lands of showing dislike to a man's words. "The stroke is usually inflicted with the heel of a shoe; hence, 'Give him the shoe,' 'Give him plenty of shoe,' are well understood expressions."—*Kilo*.

V. 3. God shall smite thee. Literally, God is about to smite thee. With his naturally impulsive temperament, and labouring under the physical disability above referred to, Paul failed this once to restrain himself, and to follow his Master who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again." The words were, however, more in the way of a prophecy than a threat; and Annas was smitten by God, as stated above. Whited wall—*hypocrite*.—(See Matt. xxiii, 27).

V. 4. Contrary to the law. See Leviticus, xv, 15, 35; Deut. xxv, 1, 2; John vii, 51.

V. 5. I wist not. There is much difference of opinion as to the meaning here. "Any one of several explanations is sufficient. For example: 1. Annas, in those violent times, may have been an intruder and usurper. 2. Some other member of the Sanhedrin had died, and Annas may not have been distinguishable by position or dress from the rest. 3. It is conceivable that Paul meant to say that this brutal act could not have been perpetrated by 'God's high priest,' and he pressed before the Council that such a miscreant should not be the chief of the sacred college; or, 4. As has been lately suggested, Paul may have been short-sighted,—not able, if the light was unfavourable, to distinguish faces across a spacious hall."—*Arnold*.

To the last of these views we incline; and, for further light, refer to the admirable *Notes* on "The Apostle Paul's Special Infirmary" by Dr. Green, to be found in another column of the HELPER.

For it is written. See Exod. xxi, 28. "Paul admits that he had been thrown off his guard; the insult had touched him to the quick, and he had spoken rashly. But what can surpass the grace with which he recovered his self-possession, the frankness with which he acknowledged his error? If his conduct was not that of Christ Himself under a similar provocation (John xvii, 23), certainly the manner in which he atoned for his fault was Christ-like."—*Hackett*.

V. 6-10. When Paul perceived, etc. Very probably some irregular discussion had already passed between the parties; and Paul, seeing no chance of his fair trial on the issue that he was hostile to their law and religion (chap. xxi, 28), seized the opportunity to let the Pharisees know that his own belief, as well as that of his father before him, was in this respect the same as theirs, and therefore diametrically opposed to the *ma-and* views of the Sadducees. Not only could he truthfully say he had always been a believer in the "resurrection of the dead," but he was more than ever so since that day when he met Jesus on the way to Damascus, whom they knew they had previously crucified. Why, since his conversion the burden of his preaching had been JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION. And in their hot hatred of the Sadducees' doctrine, these Pha-