

## ✻ The Sunday School ✻

### BIBLE LESSON.

Adapted from Hurlbut's Notes.

Fourth Quarter.

PAUL BEFORE KING AGRIPPA.

Lesson IV. October 24.—Acts 26: 19-32.

(Read chapters 25 and 26.)

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. Matt. 10, 32.

#### I. THE APOSTLE. VERSES 19-23.

19. O KING AGRIPPA—The son of the Herod Agrippa who slew James and imprisoned Peter. Acts 12. The Romans did not permit him to reign over all the dominions of his father, but gave him the principality of Bashan, east of the Sea of Galilee. After the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, he was dethroned, but permitted to retain his wealth, and lived at Rome until A. D. 100. He was immoral in life, but not unjust in his rule, and has been considered the best of the Herodian family. I WAS NOT DISOBEYENT—Great as was the revelation, it was requisite that Paul should accept the commission which it brought to him. Man's free will is a necessary link in the chain of God's purpose. Only by his own choice could Saul become a disciple and an apostle.

20. FIRST UNTO THEM OF DAMASCUS—His active ministry began at Damascus, after two years or more, spent probably in that part of Arabia bordering on Syria. At JERUSALEM—Escaping from Damascus by being let down over the wall in a basket, he went to Jerusalem, where he had not been seen for three years. His ministry there, of only a fortnight, was long enough to excite the anger of the Jews and the fear of the disciples. COASTS OF JUDEA—There is no mention of a distinct ministry of Paul throughout Judea, though his visits to Ptolemais, Tyre, Caesarea and Samaria are referred to. AND THEN—The word "then" is not in the original. This is not intended to give a chronological, so much as a logical, account of Paul's labors, which were everywhere first among the Jews and then among the Gentiles. TO THE GENTILES—It was Paul's preaching to the Gentiles, to whom he felt a peculiar call, that cost him his popularity among the Jews. REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, AND DO WORKS MEET FOR REPENTANCE—In these three sentences Paul states the practical rather than the doctrinal side of his teaching. Repentance in the Bible means more than sorrow for sin, however sincere and deep; its vital meaning is a purpose of the will to renounce sin.

21. FOR THESE CAUSES—Because he believed and taught that Gentiles might be saved on the same terms as Jews, thus obliterating the distinction between them. IN THE TEMPLE—Paul was worshipping in the temple when the Jews seized him, and they were about to murder him when he was taken from them by the Romans. WENT ABOUT—Rather, assayed or undertook.

22. HELP OF GOD—The word translated "help" means the succor or relief which comes to an army in battle. The Christian warrior has an almighty ally. I CONTINUE UNTO THIS DAY—Undeterred by enemies and undisturbed by dangers. WITNESSING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT—"Meyer holds that the verb should be rendered as a passive in accordance with usage elsewhere. Hence, the reading should be, 'as one witnessed to by small and great.' That is, all who had ever heard him could, if they would, testify that he always justified his doctrine of Christ by the authority of Moses and the prophets, who predicted the sufferings of the coming Messiah and his resurrection as a confirmation of his divine mission to 'proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.'

23. THAT CHRIST SHOULD SUFFER—He did not say "that Christ should come," for this was the firm belief of every Jew. Predictions of a suffering Saviour are recorded in the Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah. THE FIRST THAT SHOULD RISE—He was not the first that was raised from death, but the first who by his resurrection gave the promise of eternal life. "Note the stress Paul here and elsewhere lays on the resurrection as an evidence of Christ's claims. SHOULD SHOW LIGHT—in the darkness of sin and death light comes to man through the risen Christ alone. THE PEOPLE—That is, the Jews; no people ever could say, 'We are the people,' with such enthusiasm and exclusiveness as they. TO THE GENTILES—Remember, in reading this, that Agrippa was a Jew.

#### II. THE GOVERNOR. VERSES 24, 25.

24. FESTUS SAID WITH A LOUD VOICE—He interrupted the prisoner's address, not

jestingly, but probably as a disbeliever in all religion and any hereafter, and who had absolutely no knowledge of the doctrinal subjects which Agrippa so thoroughly understood. THOU ART BESIDE THYSELF—"You are insane, Paul; many writings have turned you to insanity."

25. MOST NOBLE FESTUS—Paul's reply is at once dignified and respectful. TRUTH AND SOBERNESS—The latter word means "thoughtfulness," or that which is the opposite of insanity. "The words were true, and the manner of presenting them was sober and thoughtful." "If all great and good men who meet with rude and insolent treatment in the defense of the Gospel would behave with such moderation it would be a great accession of strength to the Christian cause."

#### III. THE KING. VERSES 26-32.

26. THE KING KNOWETH—Agrippa as a Jew was acquainted with Scripture, and as a ruler in Palestine had become conversant with the facts upon which the Gospel was founded, so that he could comprehend much that Festus could not. These things—The events of our Lord's life. NOT DONE IN A CORNER—The wide knowledge of the facts connected with the life, death and resurrection of Christ, thus appealed to is a strong evidence for the Gospel.

27. KING AGRIPPA—He now turns from his discourse to fix its direct application upon his royal hearer, a bold and striking culmination of his address. BELIEVEST THOU THE PROPHETS—He who believes heartily the Old Testament cannot reject the New, as Paul would have shown if he had not been interrupted. I KNOW THAT THOU BELIEVEST—While guilty of personal immorality Agrippa was orthodox in creed and devout in formal worship.

28. THEN AGRIPPA SAID—Taking into view Agrippa's condition as a worldly-minded, pleasure-loving Sadducee, and his use of the word "Christian," at that time a term of contempt, we conclude that his words were a blending of compliments to Paul's skill as a reasoner, with scorn of the cause which he represented, such as many unbelievers feel when they hear the Gospel. ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST—Among the many proposed renderings we find none better than that of the Revised Version: "With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian," somewhat evasive as well as derisive. A CHRISTIAN—This word is used only thrice in the New Testament: in Acts 11, 26, here, and in 1 Peter 4, 16. In every instance it is a name given to disciples and not used by them, though the last reference indicates that it was slowly becoming accepted by believers; a generation later it was their current name.

29. AND PAUL SAID—Probably lifting his fettered hand, which must have given pathetic emphasis to his reply, which for opportuneness and beauty has never been exceeded. NOT ONLY THOU, BUT ALSO ALL THAT HEAR ME—A brilliant assembly of notable men and women were listening, in various degrees of interest, and Paul's large heart took them all into its aspirations. ALMOST, AND ALTOGETHER—Better, "with little persuasion or with much." SUCH AS I AM—There was a wide apparent difference between the princes and the prisoner; but a wider real difference between the heir of salvation and the slaves of sin. EXCEPT THESE BONDS—"Paul indeed gloried in his bonds, but he was too farseeing to consider them other than an evidence of the cruelty of ignorance and bigotry which some day the universal acceptance of his Gospel would forever render impossible.

31. THEY WERE GONE ASIDE—The entire company of princes and nobles united in the conference and also in its verdict. THIS MAN DOTH NOTHING—To us it is immaterial what may have been the opinions of that company, but when Luke wrote it was a matter of interest and of value to know that they, people of high rank, who had listened to his defense, pronounced him innocent.

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