

Acts 22: 22-30. *Thursday*. Before the council. Acts 23: 1-11. *Friday*. Conspiracy against Paul. Acts 23: 12-24. *Saturday*. Confidence in God. Psalm 27. *Sabbath*. Christ's word of comfort. Luke 21: 10-19. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections*).

EXPOSITORY NOTES.

INTRODUCTORY. Paul arrived at Jerusalem and was cordially received by the brethren there. At a meeting presided over by James, the recognized head of the Christian community at Jerusalem, he recounted the marvellous triumphs of the gospel amongst the gentiles and presented the substantial token of their brotherliness with which he was charged. Such testimony was irresistible. But slanders were abroad concerning Paul. It was said that he tried to dissuade Jews from keeping the law. What he really said was, that gentiles did not require to keep the law when they became christians. To answer these misrepresentations Paul joined himself to some who were fulfilling a vow in order that it might be publicly seen that he was a keeper of the law and not a despiser of it. While in the temple in pursuance of this religious duty the mob was stirred up against him and he was only rescued from a violent death by the prompt action of the commander of the Roman garrison—(Read chap. 21: 18 to 23: 9). Time A. D. 58, middle of May.

LESSON PLAN. I. Saul the Persecutor. vs. 17-21. II. Paul the Persecuted. vs. 22-30.

17. And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance—This was three years after his conversion (Acts 9: 26; Gal. 1: 18). His opponents at that time were the Greek speaking Jews. It is worthy of note how often in this address St. Paul incidentally expresses himself in such wise as to conciliate the crowd. His visit to the temple for the purpose of prayer was at once a proof that he was not likely to despise Jewish ordinances and religious observances. (Lumby). In a trance a person is unconscious of his surroundings but the soul is awake and all his impressions are received from within (ch. 10: 10).

18. And saw him saying unto me, make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me—He staid only 15 days (Gal. 1: 8). In Acts 19:29, 30 it is said that the disciples sent him away. But both statements are true. Paul was warned and the disciples at the same time prompted by prudence to act as they did. A similar coincidence of natural and supernatural causes is found by comparing Acts 15: 2 with Gal. 2: 2. Paul thought himself specially fitted to convince the Jews, but Christ knew him better,—he was a "chosen vessel" for the conversion of the Gentiles. The R. V. reads "they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me."

19. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every syn-

agogue them that believed on thee—R. V. "they themselves know," the pronoun is emphatic. Paul pleads for permission to remain in Jerusalem and tell his former associates the story of his conversion. Be content to labor where God places you and do not fret for what you think would be a more fruitful field.

20. And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him—Paul's object in telling this seems to have been to shew the Jews that his work amongst gentiles was not his own choice. The course which they censured was undertaken by constraint of Christ's explicit command. He would have preferred to labor amongst themselves. "Martyr" originally, and here, means simply "witness." It now means one who dies for the truth. "Stephen" means "a crown."

21. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the gentiles—Jesus does not argue with Paul. Obedience is the best test of loyalty. (Jer 10: 23).

22. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live—The spell of Paul's persuasive pleading had kept them silent and interested, but the whole scene had a fatal resemblance to that which ended Stephen's