

the rulers of the Jews. His first business was to justify himself before the rulers of synagogues—his own co-religionists. (c) Hence his statement, vs. 17-20. He pleaded "not guilty" of any offence against the people and customs of their fathers. He was present among them as a prisoner in chains, not to lay charges against his own nation, but to confer with them, because he thus suffered "for the hope of Israel." (d) Their response was frank and reasonable. They had received no letters or charges against him and desired to hear him fully. Accordingly a day was fixed for this purpose, vs. 21, 22. Hence:

2. *The second meeting held by the apostle.* (a) It was held in "his lodging," v. 23. This may have been the "hired house" (v. 30), or a friend's house, such as that of Aquila and Priscilla, where he was guest, Rom. 16: 3. (b) The assembly was large, and doubtless drawn together through various motives. The occasion was memorable, and certainly fraught with momentous significance. (c) His discourse was comprehensive and pointed. "He expounded and testified the kingdom of God," v. 23. This was the grand theme of the Saviour's ministry, and is specially mentioned as having been dwelt upon by Him during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, ch. 1: 3. "Persuading them," that is, arguing, reasoning with them; showing them, from Moses and the predictions of their own prophets, that Jesus was the Messiah. This was Paul's uniform method of instructing his countrymen. See ch. 13: 27; 19: 8; 24: 14; 26: 22, 27. (d) The results of this expository discourse. Some were convinced and believed, while others continued in unbelief. It would seem from what follows that the majority were of the latter class. (e) The apostle closed his long and earnest day's work, "from morning till evening," by a solemn and awful warning to unbelieving Jews, that the salvation of God was now sent unto the Gentiles, vs. 25-28. No wonder that they "had great reasoning among themselves."

3. *The apostle's two years' service.* (a) Our information regarding this period is meagre. His work was preaching the gospel and

writing letters to the churches. (b) He carried on his limited mission with safety and success. He enjoyed the protection of the Roman government, and while excluded from the synagogues, "he received all that came in unto him" (v. 30), and some came from great distances, for example, Epaphroditus from Philippi, bringing gifts to him, Phil. 4: 10-18. The gospel penetrated into Nero's palace, and there were saints of Caesar's household, Phil. 4: 22.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

The scholars have by no means tired of Paul. What last? and what next? are questions that will swing them at once into the excitement of those eventful days of shipwreck, and miracle, and the facing of foes in the world's great capital.

What last? This will call up the weary battle with the storm, the night of anxiety, the swift rush of events in the morning—all at last, little as they could have hoped for it, safe on land. Do not allow the class to forget that Paul's trust in God was the key to the situation. One man's hold on God had saved the lives of all that forlorn, storm-driven ship-load of people.

What next? The story is worth the telling, even before our lesson is reached—a viper fastening itself on Paul's hand, and shaken off into the fire, no hurt following, and the people looking upon Paul as a god. Then many healed of diseases, and Paul and his companions honored "with many honors" and laden with gifts. The voyage, resumed; the journey—on foot, for the prisoners at least—toward Rome. One wonders what Paul was thinking of as the city came in sight. Certainly not sight-seeing, nor yet of ways by which he might escape an adverse verdict; but of how he might glorify his Master's name.

Arrived at Rome, there are first the three days "settling", vs. 16, 17—mark the kindness and the mildness of the military officers. Paul the courteous, high-minded, Christian gentleman, had but to show himself among right-thinking people, to be recognized as genuine.

Then there is the call to his own countrymen—always first in his thoughts (Rom. 9: 1