

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

We are still the unseen spectators of the picture presented in our last lesson; the judgment hall in Caesarea, with arched walls and stone floor; its thrones occupied by Festus the procurator, Agrippa the king, and his sister Bernice. Around them are courtiers, retainers, and guards, and in the midst, with one hand free from his chain, stands one who is the center of all eyes—Paul the prisoner. He has told the simple story of his life, and of his call to the work of winning the world to his Master, and he is now proceeding with an appeal to those before him to believe not only in the prophets, but in their Saviour, when he is interrupted by a sentence, kindly meant, though somewhat contemptuous, from the Roman governor, to whom all this discourse about heavenly visions and heavenly voices is a mystery. Paul answers him that he is not the victim of insane dreams, but speaks forth the utterance of thoughtfulness and truth, and then turns to the king with an impressive question. He is answered in a sentence intended to be vague and complimentary, with a slight shade of scorn, yet under all its politeness revealing a heart touched for the moment by the power of the truth. Then, as if to hide the momentary emotion, King Agrippa breaks up the court; the magnates retire, and the assembly is dispersed, to meet no more until that judgment when king and commoner, prisoner and prince, shall stand equal before God.

Verse 19. O king Agrippa. He was 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 is considered the best of the Herodian family. **I was not disobedient.** Great as was the revelation, it was requisite that Paul should accept the commission which it brought to him. (1) *Man's free will is a necessary link in the chain of God's purpose.* **The heavenly vision.** He had seen the Lord and heard his voice, but that privilege did not make him a believer. 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. **Consts of Juden.** There is no mention of a distinct ministry of Paul throughout Judea, though his visits to Ptolemais, Tyre, Casarea, 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 the loss of his popularity among the Jews. **That they should repent.**

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. **Turn to God.** This is more than reformation of conduct; it is the earnest seeking of the soul after God, in supplication for forgiveness. **Do works meet.** That is, the outward life must be in accordance with the inward purpose to live for God. (2) *A true Gospel experience involves a change of conduct as well as of opinions and feelings.*

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 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. (3) *In the Christian's warfare he has an almighty ally.* **I continue unto this day.** He stood undeterred by enemies and undisturbed by dangers. **Witnessing.** The great business of the preacher is to bear witness to the fact of salvation through Christ and his own experience of it. **To small and great.** On one hand, to the slaves who constituted a large part of the Christian congregation, and on the other, to dignitaries like Festus and Agrippa. **Saying none other things.** To Agrippa, himself a Jew, Paul declared that the Gospel as preached by him was in the direct line of Old Testament teaching, and not contradictory to it. **The prophets and Moses.** The two great divisions of the Old Testament. Most of the historical books were called "former prophets;" the prophetic, "latter