

THE PENTECOST OF THE GENTILES.

While Peter was yet proclaiming the glad news of salvation through Christ the Holy Spirit fell on the entire company. To the amazement of Peter and his Jewish companions these Gentiles began speaking with tongues and magnifying God, just as the believers in Jerusalem had done on the day of Pentecost. This miraculous interposition swept away the last lingering doubt, and lifted the Gentiles to the same spiritual plane as the Jews. They were one in Christ. So everywhere Christianity itself proves a divine life in the soul rather than a creed in the head or an external ritual. In every age men have tried to shut up God and humanity within narrow theological definitions. Each Church or sect has rather suspected, if not boldly asserted, that salvation was cribbed and cabined within its own petty domain, conditioned on an acceptance of its particular dogmas and practices. And all the time the Holy Spirit has been showing; what men are so slow to believe, that beneath all diversities of creeds and rituals the life of Christ in the soul is evermore and everywhere bringing forth the same fruits of peace and joy of faith and hope, of love and service.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XI.—SAUL, THE PERSECUTOR, CONVERTED.—MARCH 14.
(Acts ix. 1-12; 17-20.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—1 Tim. i. 15.

TIME AND PLACE.—A.D. 37. Damascus, Syria.

INTRODUCTION.—In the eighth lesson, three Sabbaths ago, we were introduced to Saul, the young man of Tarsus, as one of those consenting to the death of Stephen, the first martyr, and in the following lesson we were told of his leadership in the persecution which followed, in which the disciples were driven from Jerusalem, and went everywhere preaching the word. The result of this was the conversion of many in Samaria under the preaching of Philip, who also was permitted to carry the message of the Gospel to the Ethiopian on his way from Jerusalem to his home, as related in the last lesson. The fierce zeal of Saul led him to follow, with the same persecuting spirit, the disciples whom he had driven from their homes; and our present lesson gives us an account of his visit to Damascus with this object in view.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 1. "Breathing out."—So full of hatred was he that it was as his very breath. "The high-priest."—At Jerusalem.

V. 2. "Letters."—Letters of authority, addressed to the Jews at Damascus. "This way."—That is, disciples of Christ. "Bring them bound."—For trial before the council at Jerusalem. "Damascus."—This city was 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

V. 3. "A light from heaven."—This was a supernatural glory, a token of the divine presence.

V. 4. "Fell to the earth."—Not only Saul, but his companions, were stricken down by the light. "Heard a voice."—The voice of Jesus. "Why persecutest thou me?"—Jesus felt the wrongs offered His people as His own.

V. 5. "Kick against the pricks."—To kick against goads, as oxen which will not submit to be driven.

V. 6. "What wilt thou?"—In this Saul expressed his submission to Jesus.

V. 7. "The men."—Of Saul's company. "Stood speechless."—Overpowered by what they saw and heard. "Seeing no man."—They heard the voice, but did not see the speaker.

V. 8. "When his eyes were opened, he saw no man."—The meaning is, that when Saul arose and opened his eyes he found that he was blind.

V. 10. "A certain disciple."—Nothing more is known of Ananias except what Paul says of him in chap. xxii. 12. He was evidently a Jew, who had received the knowledge of Jesus. "The Lord."—The Lord Jesus. "Behold, I am here, Lord."—Expressive of his readiness to obey any command.

V. 11. "Behold, he prayeth."—Showing the subdued and humbled spirit of Saul at this point.

V. 12. "Hath seen in a vision."—As in the case of Peter and Cornelius, Saul had a vision at the same time that one was given to Ananias, and so was prepared to receive him.

V. 17. "Putting his hands on him."—The laying on of hands in this case was accompanied by a miraculous evidence of the gift of the Holy Ghost in the restoration of Saul's sight.

V. 18. "As it had been scales."—Not actual scales, but the effect was the same as though scales had been taken from his eyes. "Was baptized."—As a disciple of Jesus.

V. 19. "Certain days."—A little while only. "The disciples."—The followers of Jesus.

V. 20. "Straightway."—At once. "Preached Christ."—That Jesus was Christ, the Son of God. "In the synagogues."—To the Jewish congregations of the city of Damascus.

THOUGHTS.—Persecuting zeal absorbed all of Saul's energies. His enmity against Christ was intense. It was not enough to scatter the disciples from Jerusalem. His zeal made him devise means to capture them in other cities, and cast them into prison. His enmity was practical. He set to work to carry out his plans. He went before the council. He laid his plan before the high priest. He set out on his journey accompanied by men who would assist in the capture of his victims. The cause of his hatred was a wrong opinion of Christianity, and unholy ambition to protect his own religion, and these because his own heart was corrupt. His opinions sprang from a carnal heart, and his actions were the result of his opinions. He persecuted Jesus in madness, seeking to extirpate His name, His word and His Church.

Redeeming love saw in Saul great powers for usefulness. He was intoxicated with rage, but when brought to a knowledge of the truth he would be inspired and filled with energy in the work of saving souls. Divine love sees good where human eyes would discern only evil. Such love could desire the salvation of one who sought to ruin the cause of Him who alone could atone for his sin. When in the full hope of executing his wild plans, as he neared the city, Saul was made conscious of a higher, nobler power than his own. The great mid-day sun was less brilliant than the light that encircled him. He saw Jesus, though he knew Him not. To him was spoken a question which could not go unanswered, nor could the speaker be deceived. Excited hatred had moved Saul thus far in his error, but one ray of heavenly light prostrated him and his company upon the ground. The tones of his questioner were so pathetic, and the question revealed to Saul the true sense of his undertaking. This truth levelled his foundation, and left him with no merit, no true religion, no real loyalty to God, or love for his neighbor. Who could direct his future except Him who had revealed his true condition? Love had broken down the barrier, and brought Saul in humility to inquire what he must do.

Open confession followed Saul's conversion. In the synagogues, where he expected to denounce Christianity, he openly declared its merits, its power in his soul. The Christ whom he had persecuted he now adored. The Church which he sought to destroy he now upheld. The nation whom he despised was the one to whom he should carry the Gospel. The cause he had so afflicted would henceforth be the cause for which he would suffer and endure hardness. He was as clear and definite in his testimony for Christ as he had been against Him. The world should not stand in doubt in reference to his faith.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—Saul, the persecutor, converted. Acts ix. 1-31.

Second Day—His own account of it. Acts xxii. 1-16.

Third Day—Obedient to the Heavenly Vision. Acts xxvi. 9-20.

Fourth Day—Once a blasphemer and a persecutor. 1 Tim. i. 1-20.

Fifth Day—Called by God's Grace. Gal. i. 1-17.

Sixth Day—To preach among the Gentiles. Eph. iii. 1-21.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, March 14—FOUNDATION WORK: JOHN KNOX AND HIS TIMES. Gen. xii. 1-9; Heb. xi. 8-10.

JOHN KNOX—FOUNDATION WORK.

Our Church has done well in mingling with the doctrinal line of study suggested for Endeavorers, the biography of such a man as John Knox. Undoubtedly his name stands for the great Scottish reformation in the 16th century and all connected therewith. More than that, it shall ever be synonymous with purity of religion, intensity of conviction, love of fatherland, and the impassioned eloquence of a heart that beat a true and faithful response to the claims of God and man.

It is profitable to study Divine providences as they relate to the Church, God is found in history. In the great crises of the world heaven seems to touch the earth, and men awake to the fact that there is a God who takes knowledge of the race and controls the machinery of the world's affairs.

In the village of Haddington, Scotland, in the year 1505, was born of honorable parentage, a child who, to use the words of Froude "became in that extraordinary age, its most extraordinary man and whose character became the mould in which the later fortunes of the country were cast."

As a youth he evinced a deep thirst for knowledge, and having passed through the Grammar school of his native town, he was subsequently sent to the University of Glasgow. There it was that he came under the tutorage of one destined to exercise a moulding