



LESSON XI.—Mar 14.

**Saul the Persecutor Converted.**

Acts ix., 1-12, 17-20. Read chapter ix., 1-30. Commit vs. 17-20.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**

'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'—1 Tim., 1-15.

**Home Readings.**

- M. Acts 9: 1-31.—Saul, the Persecutor, Converted.
- T. Acts 22: 1-16.—His Own Account of It.
- W. Acts 26: 9-20.—Obedient to the Heavenly Vision.
- Th. 1 Tim. 1: 1-20.—Once a Blasphemer and a Persecutor.
- F. Gal. 1: 1-17.—Called by God's Grace.
- S. Eph. 3: 1-21.—To Preach Among the Gentiles.
- S. Phil. 3: 1-21.—He gave up All for Christ.

Time.—About A.D. 36.

Places.—On the road to Damascus; later, at Damascus.

**Lesson Story.**

Saul, whose one wish and ambition now seems to have been to persecute and slay all those who had anything to do with the faith of Jesus, went and asked the high priest for letters to the rulers of the synagogue at Damascus. He had had authority in Jerusalem to cast into prison all those who believed on Jesus, now he was given power to bring from Damascus all he could lay hands on. He set out from Jerusalem with a large party, probably a good many of them soldiers who would take in charge the prisoners.

As he came near the city of Damascus suddenly a great light shone out, and Saul, blinded by the light, fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice calling to him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' 'Who art Thou, Lord?' he answered tremblingly. Then Jesus told him how in persecuting His followers he was really persecuting Him. He told him that it was hard to fight against God and his own conscience.

Saul was very much astonished when he found that the Lord knew all his thoughts, and the hitherto proud and self-willed man gave up his own will once for all into the keeping of his new found Lord, asking in utter humility—'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' 'And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.'

Those who were travelling with Saul were dazzled by the great light and astonished with the sound, but they had not heard the words which were spoken to Saul. Saul had been blinded by the glory of the light and remained blind for some time. His companions led him into the city, where he fasted and prayed three days in the house of Judas on Straight street. Then the Lord sent a vision to a disciple named Ananias and told him to go to Saul and baptize and instruct him. Ananias was rather afraid to go at first, but the Lord told him how he had chosen Saul to be His messenger to the Gentiles. Ananias therefore went and laid his hands upon Saul praying that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately the prayer was answered, and when he had taken some refreshment he was strengthened. Saul stayed with the disciples at Damascus for some days learning more about Jesus, and at once began to preach Christ in the synagogues. All that heard him were amazed, and some of the Jews plotted to kill him, but the disciples let him down by the wall in a basket at night.

**Lesson Hymn.**

Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Can give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.

'But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our guilt away;  
A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.'

My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.  
My soul looks back to see  
The burden Thou didst bear,  
When hanging on th' accursed tree,  
And knows her guilt is there.

**Lesson Hints.**

Damascus is the oldest city in the world. 'Of this Way,—Jesus is the Way of Life; the Japanese use this same expression, calling the Christian life 'the Jesus-way.'

'Why persecutest thou Me?'—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Saul may not have thought of persecuting Jesus, but he soon found that he could not touch any of the members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. xii., 27; Eph. v., 30) without the Head feeling the sufferings.

'Trembling and astonished'—Beginning to realize that his life, which had always seemed to him so righteous, was not 'perfect before God.' No man can be saved by good works. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved' but by the precious name of Jesus.

'Who art Thou, Lord?' He saw the Lord Jesus in glorious human form, (1 Cor. xv., 8). 'I am Jesus'—the Saviour of mankind. 'It shall be told thee,' Saul was not yet ready for all that the Lord had to show him. (vs. 15, 16). 'Hearing a voice'—they heard the sound but could not distinguish the words, (xxii., 19).

'He was three days without sight'—these days he spent alone with the Lord, learning of Him and of the Christian life, realizing the difference between the life of ease and honor, wealth and earthly success which seemed to stretch before him on one hand, and on the other, the life of self-denial, self-sacrifice, yea, self-crucifixion and bitter trials and persecutions sweetened by the love and fellowship of Jesus on earth and the hope of glory hereafter. He counted the cost and reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

'Ananias'—very different from the other Ananias, this man was filled with the Holy Ghost. 'The Lord said . . . Go.' We must live very near to God to be able to hear His voice, and when He speaks we must obey at once.

'Brother Saul'—thus at once receiving him into fellowship. 'Be filled with the Holy Ghost,' the endowment for life and service. Without the Holy Ghost the Christian must live a life of limited power and frequent defeat, for it is not we but the Spirit of the Lord who alone has power to 'lift up a standard' when the enemy comes in like a flood. 'He received meat'—food. We must attend to the needs of the body, as well as the soul, they are closely connected. Straightway he preached'—immediately he told his wonderful experience and preached the love and power of Jesus, and how He is the Son of God and Saviour of men.

**Search Questions.**

1. Is anything else known about this Ananias?
2. Is the name of any other street mentioned in the Bible?

**Primary Lesson.**

Do you remember who took care of the clothes of the men who threw the first stones at Stephen? A young man named Saul who afterward persecuted and put in prison a great many people just because they were Christians. What would you say if anyone asked you what a Christian was? A Christian is a person who loves Jesus and does what Jesus tells him, and is not afraid to say he belongs to Jesus.

Saul was going on a journey to a city called Damascus. Suddenly he saw a great light and heard Jesus speaking to him. Jesus called to him, saying, 'Saul Saul, don't you know that when you hurt the people that belong to Me, you hurt Me, too?'

Then Saul looked up and saw Jesus, he knew it was the voice of God calling him, so he said 'Who art Thou, Lord.' Jesus told him that He was the Saviour of men, and that it was no use for Saul to try to fight against Him, because He was God.

Then Saul was very sorry that he had been trying to fight God; so he said, 'Lord Jesus, I'll do whatever you tell me.' 'What would you like me to do?' And the Lord said, 'Arise, and go into the city,' and He promised to send some one there to tell him

what to do. Saul obeyed. The first thing we have to do is to obey. Suppose Saul had said—'No, I don't want to do that. Tell me something grand to do.' Would that have pleased Jesus? No, He wants us to show our love by obeying Him.

God let Saul wait three days, so as to prepare him, and teach him to trust, then He sent a good man named Ananias to pray with him and teach him. Ananias was afraid to go at first, because he had heard how cruel Saul used to be, but Jesus told him not to be afraid because Saul had given his heart to Jesus, and Jesus had filled him with love. It is always safe to go on God's errands. It is never safe to go anywhere without Jesus.

Ananias went to Saul and prayed with him. Then God sent His Holy Spirit into Saul's heart to make him strong to work and speak for Jesus. Ask God to send the Holy Spirit into your heart to make you strong to love and work for Jesus.

**Suggested Hymns.**

'Stand up, stand up for Jesus,' 'What can wash away my sin?' 'There is a fountain filled with blood,' 'Why do you wait?' 'She only touched the hem,' 'Why not now?'

**Practical Points.**

A. H. CAMERON.

A man may be earnest, energetic and conscientious, and still be committing sin. (v. 1, 2.)

Darkness always flees before light. (v. 3, 4.) There is a point in every man's life that marks his destiny either to glory or despair. (v. 5, 6.)

A deep-seated disease requires a severe remedy. (v. 8, 9.)

The Lord knows where His people are, though Satan may not discover their hiding place. (v. 10.)

When the Master sends us on a mission, He will give us all the information we need. (v. 11, 12.)

A man may be converted and yet be partially blind. Many have not received the second touch. (v. 17-19. Mark 8: 2.)

Tiverton, Ont.

**CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPIC.**

March 7.—Opportunities to do good—seeing them, using them.—John 4: 5-15; 1 Cor. 9: 19-22.

**JUNIOR PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.**

March 7.—Chances to do good: what are some of them, and how are they to be used?—John 4: 7-15.

**What the Teacher May do.**

A minister writes to 'The Interior':—'The excuse given by not a few of our young people for non-attendance at the week-night meeting is that they have their school tasks to prepare. Pardon, then, a reference to personal experience. When a young man of seventeen or eighteen years of age, and preparing for college, I undertook to make the foolish experiment of crowding two years' work into one. This involved working night and day until twelve or one o'clock, but I do not think that it ever interfered with my attendance at the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting. I do not take the slightest credit to myself on this account. The meetings, as I recall them, were lamentably dry and wearisome; but I had been trained to be regular in the discharge of my church duties, and I went as a matter of course, regardless of my studies and the state of the weather. Later on in years, when the meetings were really helpful, the practice of habitual attendance on them was of immeasurable benefit to my Christian life.'

Here is something for us all to think about. The habit of planning study so as to have Wednesday free for a religious meeting will do much more to make a student's life systematic and spiritual. It will regulate his pleasures and his sport. Teachers can arrange the studies of Wednesday and Thursday so that this may be done, if parents desire. They will do so if asked. Much more than church attendance on Sunday does prayer-meeting attendance on a mid-week night prepare a boy or girl to go away from home or to grow up at home a vigorous helpful Christian. It makes them acquainted with Christian people. The very self-denial in attending increases their sense of responsibility for the religious tone of the church. From time to time they receive such helps to spirituality as sparsely anywhere else reach their lives.—American Messenger.

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