

Oct. 2. SAUL OF TARSUS CONVERTED.

Lesson, Acts 9 : 1-20.
Memory vs. 15-18.Golden Text, John 3 : 3
Catechism, Q. 97.

The time of this lesson was the summer of 37 A.D., shortly after the visit of Philip to Samaria and to the Gaza road. The story is told by Paul himself in Acts 22 : 6-11, 26 : 12-19, and Gal. 1 : 13-24. Read these carefully. The persecution that arose on the death of Stephen, was continued with bitterness. Paul was foremost in it, even to distant Damascus. But his persecuting course was run as we are told in this lesson.

I. Saul pursuing the Christians, vs. 1-2.

II. Saul meeting Christ, vs. 3-9.

III. Saul visited by Ananias, vs. 10-17.

IV. Saul preaching the gospel, vs. 18-20.

I. *Saul*—Afterwards called Paul, was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named perhaps after King Saul who was also a Benjamite. He was born, not in Palestine, but in Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, Asia Minor, probably a year or two after Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His father, for some service to the Romans, was a free Roman citizen, Acts 22 : 28, which descended to Saul and gave him certain privileges. In Tarsus, Athens, and Alexandria, were the three great universities of the heathen world at that time, but most of Saul's learning was obtained in Jerusalem where he was sent at ten years old. As every Jewish child was taught a trade, Paul learned tent making. Both at home and at Jerusalem he was very strictly trained, and was a zealous Jew, Phil. 3-5. His bitterest hate against the Christians seems to have been just before his conversion. Perhaps he was impressed by Stephen's death and was fighting against the Spirit. *Letters*—Officials letters. There was method in his madness, which made him all the more dreaded. *Damascus*—About 140 miles N.E. of Jerusalem, the oldest city in the world. The Romans did not interfere with the Jews in religious matters and consequently the latter were allowed a measure of authority, e.g., they were allowed to put Christ to death on religious grounds.

II. vs. 3-9. *Great light*—Far brighter than the sun. Acts 26 : 13. In the light and glory was Christ, seen by Saul. 1 Cor. 15 : 8. Then blindness for some days, that the vision of Christ might not be erased from his mind. How deeply it would be impressed! *Fell*—Awed, they all fell prostrate, Ch. 26 : 1. *Persecuted*—ME—What a thought for those who scoff at Christianity! What comfort for those who are persecuted for Christ's sake, Christ is with them. Their cause is His. *Pricks*—The prick or goad was a stout stick, some ten feet long, with a nail in one end, and was held by the ploughman in one hand, while he held the handle of the small plough in the other. He thus goaded his team from behind and if the ox kicked, it would but drive the goad more deeply into itself. Paul was kicking against Christ, His Spirit, His Kingdom, but he would only hurt himself. *Trembling*—How different his attitude, *Have me to do*—This should be the question of every life, *Saul arose*—The others at first fell to the ground, then arose, and stood speechless, hearing the sound, not understanding the voice or words. *Saw no man*—He was blinded for a time. Perhaps never wholly recovered. This may have been the thorn in the flesh. See Gal 4 : 14-15, and 6 : 17. *Three days*—Of such intense mental conflict.

III. vs. 10-18. *Ananias*—Hebrew, Hananiah. The Christians at Damascus knew all about Paul and his dreaded visit, vs. 13-14. *Must suffer*—See Acts 20 : 23, also 2 Cor. 11 : 23-27. *Brother Saul*—What a contrast to.

Oct. 9. DORCAS RAISED TO LIFE.

Lesson, Acts 9 : 32-43.
Memory verses, 40-42.Golden Text, Acts 9 : 26
Catechism, Q. 98.

Three years have passed since last lesson. Paul, after his conversion, spent three years in Arabia, Gal. 1 : 17-18, three silent years, alone with God, in training for his life work. He then returned to Jerusalem and began to preach, and this lesson took place shortly afterward.

The verse before the lesson, v. 31, tells that persecution has ceased for a time. "Then had the churches rest, etc." History tells that at this time the Governor of Syria tried to set up a statue of the Roman Emperor in the temple at Jerusalem. The Jews were very much excited over it and had little time or thought to give to persecuting the Christians.

I. Healing the sick, vs. 32-35.

II. Raising the dead, vs. 36-43.

I. vs. 32-35. *Peter passed*—The Apostles were now actively spreading the Gospel on every hand. *Lydda*—On the plain of Sharon, ten miles from Joppa and the Mediterranean. *Eight years*—There could be no deception about the cure. *Palsy*—Or Paralysis; a term used by the ancients with a much wider meaning than now. *Makeh thee whole*—All the honor to Christ just as with the healing of the lame man, Acts 3 : 16. *Turned to the Lord*; i.e., that there was a very general belief that the religion which Peter preached was true. Thus we see the benefit of miracles in these early days. They were one of the means by which the Gospel was spread. The miracles of the Gospel to-day are no less real, though of a different kind. Jesus Christ can make whole the greatest sinner.

II. 36-43. *Joppa*—On the sea coast, ten miles west of Lydda; it has been the seaport of Jerusalem since Solomon's time. *Tabitha*—This was her name in the corrupted Hebrew. The Greek meaning of it was Dorcas. The English is Gazelle. *Full of good works*—This is one of the highest ideals of a Christian life. *Sent to Joppa*—They had heard that Peter was at Lydda and had cured Eneas. And they knew not what help he might give. *Widows shawed*—Some think that the widows were pointing to the clothing on themselves which she had made for them. *Prayed*—Perhaps to know the Lord's will. *Saints and widows*—Those who were gathered at the house, v. 39. *Alive*—She did not go on exhibition. She simply went to work once more among the widows. *Known throughout Joppa*—Here again the miracle in this centre helped to spread the Gospel.

1. Only Christ can heal from sin.

2. We should give Christ all the glory of any work we may do.

3. Woman's work. How has the world been blessed through her ministries.

4. The best monument to leave behind is what we have done to lessen the sum of human ill.

How the Lord has honored the common ministries of life, the widow's mite, the woman Dorcas, &c.

Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto me.