

lands, and the Sanhedrin the supreme authority over all religious questions. Yet probably the high priest could not have exercised such authority in Damascus as is here indicated but for the fact that there was at this time no Roman governor in Palestine, leaving the rule in the hands of the Sanhedrin. **Damascus.** One of the oldest cities of the world, one hundred and forty miles northeast from Jerusalem. There were probably many Jews there. **Synagogues** were not only meeting-places for Jewish worship, but centers of *rule*, since among the Jews "Church" and "State" were closely united. **This way.** Better "the way." Probably a term by which the Gospel was early known among friends and foes. **Bring them bound unto Jerusalem.** The murder of Stephen was a lurid indication of the treatment they might there expect. (1) *The worst deeds of the worst sinners may be overruled so as to work out God's plan.* The psalmist says, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee" (Psa. 76, 10). (2) *God shows his power and grace in transforming violent enemies into mighty workers.* (3) *The interests of true religion can never be advanced by cruelty.*

**3. As he journeyed.** It was a journey of five or six days. After crossing the Jordan either north or south of the Sea of Galilee, he followed the mountains. **Came near Damascus.** The city bursts upon the traveler's view with such beauty that it is said that Mohammed, beholding it, turned away and refused to enter, saying, "Man can have but one paradise, and mine is not here!" **A light from heaven.** It was noonday, but this light obscured the sun (Acts 26, 13). It was the Shekinah-glory of the heavenly Redeemer, and in it Saul saw the Lord himself (1 Cor. 15, 8).

**4. Fell to the earth.** From the beast on which he was riding, probably an ass or camel. Horses were used only in war in the East. The vision dazzled his companions also, but only Saul heard the words spoken. **Persecutest thou me?** Saul had not driven the nails or spear into Christ's body, yet the Saviour says "me," not "my people." (4) *Deep sympathy unites our Lord to his people.* (5) *Christ loves us individually; there could be no general providence or universal pardon if there were not special providences and individual pardons.* (6) *A humiliating recognition of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" must precede conversion.*

**5. Who art thou?** The question shows that amid all his terror Saul fully retained his consciousness. **I am Jesus.** He does not say, "I am Christ," or, "I am God," but takes the name which was the object of Jewish hate. **To kick against the pricks.** Like an ox kicking against the goad, Saul had been fighting against the Spirit of God.

**6. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?** His surrender is complete. He does not yet know

what Jesus's will may be, but he is determined to do it. **Go into the city.** Damascus. **It shall be told thee.** He was to receive salvation as all receive it, through the instrumentality of a saved man. The narrative given in Acts 26, 16-18, is beautifully complementary of this. (7) *True repentance does not look toward the past, but toward the future.* (8) *True repentance leads to true consecration.* (9) *True repentance sets the penitent to work for God.*

**7. Speechless.** Paralyzed with fear. See Acts 26, 14. **Hearing a voice.** They heard a voice, but not the voice (chap. 22, 9). What was to Saul a definite utterance was to them a sound without words. **Seeing no man.** Saul saw a Form, they saw only a blaze of light. (10) *Whom the Lord designs for a special work he calls in a special way.*

**8. Saw no man.** "Saw nothing" (Revised Version), blinded by the dazzling light which had burst upon him. This probably left its effects on Paul, "the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6, 17), in weakness of sight, and perhaps constant pain.

**9. Three days without sight.** In agony of soul. Perhaps the visions of 2 Cor. 12, 1-4, took place at this time. (11) *One of the holy tasks of the divine Comforter in this world is to help men to think.*

**10. Ananias.** A private member of the Church, unknown to us but for this event. **I am here.** He knew the Lord, and needed not to ask, like Saul, "Who art thou?" (12) *Christ often uses lowly instrumentalities to accomplish great results.* (13) *Christ knows his own by name, however humble.*

**11. Street . . . called Straight.** At that time a magnificent avenue, lined with columns, now a narrow alley. **House of Judas.** Perhaps the name of an innkeeper. **Tarsus.** A city in Cilicia, on the Mediterranean, then one of the largest in the empire; now a town of twenty thousand people. (14) *Notice the precision with which the disciple is directed in the way of duty.* (15) *He who prays aright will not fail to find answer.*

**12. Hath seen in a vision.** While Ananias was receiving a divine message in one place Saul was receiving a corresponding message in another. **Named Ananias.** This he might know by the same supernatural power as imparted the vision.

**13. Ananias answered.** His answer showed the fullness and freedom of his fellowship with the Lord in venturing to tell all his fears. (16) *We should be on terms of intimate communion with the Lord. Thy saints.* "Thy holy ones."

**15. Chosen vessel.** The term "vessel" is used in the Bible for any implement. Paul was our Lord's selected tool or weapon.

**17. Went his way.** Reassured by the promise.