

hearted women, had been treated like criminals of the lowest class. (4) *Bigotry blinds the eyes and hardens the heart.*

6. The high-priest. The high-priest of that day was Ananias, but Paul probably refers to Theophilus, who was in office at the time of the early persecution, was still living, and may have been present. **Estimate of the elders.** The Sanhedrin, or Jewish council, many of whom were still in office, through twenty years, had passed. Paul had been here on purpose in this opening, to win the attention of his hearers by showing that his own zeal had been like theirs, and thus to make all the more emphatic the story of his conversion, which he is now about to relate. **Letters unto the brethren.** There was a close relation subsisting between the Jews in different countries, and the high-priest held a measure of authority over his people even in foreign lands. **Then which were there.** The believers in Jesus, many of whom had fled from the persecution at Jerusalem. **To be punished.** The murder of Stephen and the scorings in the synagogues show what treatment they were likely to receive.

6. Made my journey. Requiring about a week, as it was over one hundred and thirty miles. **Night unto Damascus.** The traditional place of this event is shown, in sight of the city. **About noon.** In the light of midday, showing that the manifestation was no delusion. **There shone.** This was the glory surrounding the ascended Saviour, who then appeared to Saul, and was seen as well as heard.

7. I fell. Overcome by the sudden manifestation of the divine glory, and the terrible consciousness of his own guilt. **Heard a voice.** That this was a real voice is shown by the fact that it spoke in the Hebrew tongue, and that Saul's companions heard the sound, but not the words, for the message was to him alone. Acts 9: 7; 26: 14. **Saul, Saul.** (5) *God's call is always individual, to each man, and not to men in general.* **Why persecutest thou me?** Christ in glory so completely identifies himself with his people on the earth that he feels their sufferings. (6) *Our Head in heaven beholds and sympathizes with his Church in all its members.*

8. Who art thou, Lord. At that hour it was the voice of a stranger, but from that hour the voice of a Friend. **I am Jesus of Nazareth.** Our Lord in heaven does not call himself the Son of God, but is known by his earthly name and remembers his earthly home. (7) *Does this give us a hint of our knowledge and recollection of the earthly state hereafter?* **Whom thou persecutest.** All this would be listened to with the most breathless interest by a company of Jews, for the *hath-kol*, or voice from heaven, was recognized by them as a possibility and believed in as an experience.

9. They that were with me. In the account of this event in Acts 9: 7, there is an apparent discrepancy with this statement, which, however, is easily explained. They heard a sound, and saw a sudden flash; but could distinguish neither the words nor the form. **Him that spake to me.** We are not to suppose that this came upon Saul without any mental preparation. For months he had been resisting conviction, struggling against his conscience, battling vainly with Stephen's arguments, and trying to forget his glorified foe. On any other view it is not easy to account for the words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," Acts 9: 4.

10. What shall I do, Saul. Saul was by nature prompt to resolve and to act, and never was a better resolution taken than this. (8) *Teacher, urge Saul's decision upon your scholars.* **The Lord said.** Before his enemies Paul reiterates the assertion that he knows the Lord who spoke to him on that day. **It shall be told thee.** In every conversion there is a human instrumentality, for Christ makes men his co-workers in salvation. (9) *Let us not fail to embrace our privilege and do our work in showing men the way of faith.*

11. I could not see. Saul alone was blinded, because he alone had felt the sudden shock of divine power upon the weak human frame. (10) *Our earthly bodies are but ill adapted to endure heavenly glories.* **Led by the hand.** Their physical eyes were open, but their spiritual eyes were closed, so that it was the blind leading the blind. (11) *Which blindness would you choose, theirs or Saul's?* **Came into Damascus.** He had started as the haughty and merciless ruler; he reached his goal the humble suppliant.

12. One Ananias. It was by a lowly but godly man that the blinded seeker was led to light. **A devout man according to the law.** Paul, speaking to Jews, does

not fail to mention the character and reputation of Ananias as a Jew, that he was faithful to the Jewish observances, and held in regard by his people. **Having a good report.** We see here, and from the account in Acts 9, what the character of a worker for Christ should be. 1.) Upright; 2.) Of good reputation; 3.) Living in fellowship with the Spirit; 4.) Quick to obey the call to duty.

13. Brother Saul. He saw "the brother" even in the man who had been a bitter enemy. **Receive thy sight.** The words were spoken with faith in God's power, and at Christ's command; and they were honored by an instant result. **I looked up.** The bodily miracle was a picture of the more wonderful change wrought within Saul's nature, transforming his character, views, aims, and affections, and opening his spiritual eyes to new truth.

14. The Lord God of our fathers. Another appeal to Jewish thought, which would tend to hold the sympathies of his hearers. **Hath chosen thee.** Rev. Ver., "Hath appointed." It means that God had previously appointed Paul for his great work; an appointment, however, which required the free acceptance of Paul's will, and from other expressions, we may infer that Saul actually saw as well as heard Jesus. **Shouldest hear.** This personal call of Christ's living voice was essential to Paul's apostleship, for only those who had "seen the Lord," and had been chosen by him, could be apostles. See 1 Cor. 9: 1; Gal. 1: 1. The original apostles appointed no successors in the Church.

15. His witness. The twelve had been called to become witnesses of Jesus (Acts 1: 8), and now this recent persecutor is accredited to a place among them. **Unto all men.** Jews and Gentiles alike, though Paul skillfully avoids naming the latter for the present. We can understand his reason, when we see the tumult excited by the mention of "Gentiles" soon after. Vers. 21, 22. **Seen and heard.** In those two words lie the power of Christian experience and Christian testimony. (12) *Let every believer in Christ bear witness to all men of what he has seen and heard, and the world will be speedily converted.*

16. Why tarriest thou? Now that his sins were forgiven, and his call was revealed, there was no reason for delay. (13) *Every converted person should unite with the Church as soon as possible.* **Be baptized.** As the outward token of union with the body of believers. **Wash away thy sins.** Not that sins are washed away by baptism, but by the acceptance of God's grace, of which baptism is the outward token. **Call on the name.** It was this prayer to Christ, which would invoke the cleansing blood and wash away his sins.

17. It came to pass. In his rapid recital of personal experience, Paul here passes over an interval of three years. **Come again to Jerusalem.** This is the visit referred to in Acts 9: 26-29, though this event is not there related. **Prayed in the temple.** Thus he showed to his hearers, all zealous for Judaism, that after his conversion he did not forget Jerusalem, nor lose interest in the temple, nor neglect the public worship. **I was in a trance.** This is a state in which the body is held in suspense, while the spirit receives revelation from on high. Paul's object in this account is to show that it was by special divine command, received in the temple, that he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles.

18. Saw him. Another manifestation of Christ. No need now for Saul to ask, "Who art thou, Lord?" **Get thee quickly out.** He had not willingly left the city or the temple, but only in obedience to a peremptory command to enter upon other work. **They will not receive thy testimony.** Perhaps this refers to the distrust of the Jewish Christians, as well as to the rejection of the unbelieving Jews.

19, 20. Lord, they know. Paul thought that his former opposition to the Gospel would make him all the more powerful in its behalf, or he may have wished to undo the evil he had wrought among the Jews. **Thy martyr.** Rev. Ver., "thy witness." *Martyr* is a Greek word, meaning *witness*, but it was early used by the Church with special reference to those who bore witness to Christ by dying for his cause. **Kept the raiment.** Took charge of the garments thrown off by the men who, as witnesses, cast the first stones on the martyr.

21. Depart. The command is reiterated. **Far hence.** He was yet to wait in quiet years before the way should be opened for this distant mission. **To the Gentiles.** Step by step he has led his hearers up to this word, but when it breaks upon them they are still no more, for the name itself aroused all their intolerance and their hate.