

with which, all rhetoric, however approved, must hide its diminished head; and perhaps the highest attestations ever given to the power of a preacher, was in this instance, when a wicked audience refused to hear him to a close, and with one consent arose and shed his blood.

The sacred historian now introduces a young man to our attention, whose name was Saul. He was of Hebrew extraction, and was born in Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia. According to the custom of the Jews he learned a trade, which was that of a tent-maker. He was educated in the Gentile literature, and had studied the Mosaic institutions and doctrines in the city of Jerusalem. Fired with zeal for the ancient glory of his nation, he eagerly joined in opposing the church. He had kept the clothes of the witnesses who had begun the stoning of Stephen, and in the persecution which followed, when a number of christians had fled to Damascus, armed with a warrant from the High Priest, he was proceeding thither to bring them bound to Jerusalem. When he had come near to the city, a sudden light from heaven surrounded him, and he is struck down to the ground, he hears a voice, saying "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me," and he said "Who art thou Lord?" and the Lord said "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul, trembling, asks "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," when he is directed to go into the city, where he remains three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. It would appear from his own account of his spiritual conflict at this time, that Saul was earnest in seeking for some sure ground of acceptance with God. He looked carefully into the nature of the holy commandment, and he saw it to be very broad, taking cognisance of sin in the heart as well as in the outward conduct, so that he seemed to despair of salvation. It was while in this state of distress that Ananias, a disciple at Damascus, is sent to him to preach the way of salvation through Christ. The message brings peace and consolation to his soul; he is baptized, and soon becomes the most laborious and successful of the apostles. Paul now began to preach that gospel which he once destroyed, in the midst of great persecutions from the Jews.—He retired, it appears for three years into Arabia, and on his return to Jerusalem, the disciples, not knowing of his conversion, and remembering his previous conduct, were withdrawing from him, when Barnabas brought him to the apostles, and declared his vision of Christ, on the way, and how he had preached boldly in Da-

mascus. This explanation removed their scruples, and Saul was received as a fellow-laborer with them in the gospel. Here, however, the Jews were so set upon destroying him, that in order to save his life, his friends conducted him to Cæsarea, from whence he went to Tarsus.

By the labors of the apostles, the gospel was preached, and flourishing churches planted throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and when it is remembered that these districts were exceedingly populous, one cannot but admire the success of the gospel in this age as compared with later times. Hitherto the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem appear to have been ignorant that the Gentiles were to be partakers in common with the Jews of the blessings of salvation, but on the conversion of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, and his friends by the preaching of Peter, they received a more enlightened view of the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom, and we are told they glorified God, because he had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life. In consequence of the tidings of this event being spread abroad, the brethren, who were scattered by the persecution that arose about Stephen, now began to preach the gospel to the Greeks as well as to the Jews. Success attended their labors. A numerous church was planted in Antioch, and here the disciples first assumed the name of christians, thereby testifying their relation to Christ, their master in Heaven. And it is not the least of their christian graces that they shewed their charity to their poor brethren in Judea in sending a liberal contribution by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Herod Agrippa (brother to the noted Herodias) being appointed King in Judea, by the Romans, began to vex the church, and went so far that he slew James the brother to John the Evangelist, and the first apostle who suffered. Christ had spoken prophetically of him, that he should drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism, and now the prophesy is fulfilled in his martyrdom. It would appear that by the instigations of their leaders, the Jews generally by this time had become opposed to the christians, and Herod, finding that his conduct was acceptable unto them, proceeded to seize Peter, and shut him up in prison, under charge of a strong guard of soldiers. An angel rescues him from his enemies, and though the guards were without blame, in the matter of his escape, they are ordered to execution. Herod had thus set himself to fight against God, and his destruction was now at hand. Frustrated in his attempts against the apostles, he went down