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**THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON**

**PAUL'S CONVERSION AT DAMASCUS**  
Golden Text.—I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. —Phil. 3:8

**THE LESSON AS A WHOLE**  
Approach to the Lesson  
For the next six months we shall be studying the life and letters of the Apostle Paul, who apart from the Lord himself, is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the history of Christianity. In three respects he towers above all others. First he is the pattern of the grace of God (1 Tim. 1:15,16). The salvation of this man demonstrated that none is beyond the reach of God's grace. Second, he is par excellence the interpreter of Jesus Christ and the expounder of Christian doctrine. He was chosen for this very purpose, and frankly claims special revelation (Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:3-9). In the third place, he so thoroughly realized the life in Christ, that he was able to say "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). See also Phil. 3:17). It is true that, in the ultimate sense, Christ himself is our pattern, but Paul is the supreme sample of a sinner transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Much has been made of the fact that our Lord chose unlettered men as His disciples, but in Paul we see the Lord choosing a man of massive mentality, and one who had known the discipline of the schools. And it was to this man of intellect that the special task of expounding the doctrine was committed. Paul is indeed the first one to admit that God takes the foolish things of the world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1:27), but this is putting no premium on ignorance, nor is it any encouragement to a candidate for the ministry to neglect the rigors of mental discipline. The most unlearned of God's children may be a true witness for his Lord, but he who would effectively "preach the word" must have his mind as well as his heart trained. Paul gives the lie to an all-too-common delusion, that learning and spirituality are not compatible.

I would suggest the following books on the life of Paul: "Life of St. Paul," by James Stalker (Fleming H. Revell Co., 316 Third Ave., Westwood, N.J., \$1.25); "Epochs in the Life of St. Paul," by A. T. Robertson (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 17; \$2.50).  
Verse by Verse

Acts 22:3.—"A Jew, born in Tarsus, . . . at the feet of Gamaliel . . . zealous toward God." Saul's earliest contacts were with the Greek world, but he had been thoroughly trained in Hebrew lore. For Gamaliel see Acts 5:34. In national sentiment and religious zeal Saul was an ardent Jew.

Verse 4.—"And I persecuted this way unto the death." "This way" refers to the followers of Christ. See chapters 9:2; 19:9; 23; 24:14, 22. For Saul's persecuting zeal see chapter 9:1, 2. The mention of "both men and women" indicates the extremity of his wrath.

Verse 5.—"The high priest doth bear me witness . . . from whom also I received letters . . . to Damascus." His persecutions had official sanction, and he was bent on destroying the Christian testimony wherever it had established itself. Hence his northern journey.

Verse 6.—"Nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light." Notice that he was permitted to come near the place of his new operation, before God broke in on him. This got him well away from Jerusalem, to a place where God could deal with him without interruption.

Verse 7.—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul thought that those whom he persecuted dwelt in the darkness; here he was challenged by One who dwelt in the very light of Heaven. The shock of this challenge must have been startling.

Verse 8.—"Who art thou, Lord? . . . I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Whoever this was whose voice Saul heard, His presence in such supernatural light indicated that He must be addressed by a title of dignity and honor. To learn that the One was Jesus must have shaken Saul to the depths. See how the risen, glorified Lord identifies Himself with His persecuted people.

Verse 9.—"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, . . . but they heard not the voice." Compare chapter 9:7. The seeming contradiction is lessened in the Greek, where "the voice" is genitive in chapter 9:7 and accusative here. The sense seems to be that Saul's companions heard the sound of the voice, but did not distinguish the articulate words, and so were ignorant of the conversation.

Verse 10.—"What shall I do, Lord? . . . go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee." Now he uses the word, "Lord," with a new meaning, submitting himself as an obedient servant to One who has a right to command. From now on this man's actions are directed by the One whose name he had hated, but who is now Lord.

Verse 11.—"Being led by the hand . . . I came into Damascus." The proud leader and director of the party is forced to submit to the humiliation of being led by the hand! God knows how to make haughty spirits bow.

Verse 12.—"One Ananias, a devout man." For the Lord's dealing with this disciple see chapter 9:10-16. At first he thought he was facing the lion, but instead he found a very lamb for meekness.

Verse 13.—"Brother Saul, receive thy sight." He who a few days before was a bitter enemy and destroyer was now a "brother." I wonder how Saul felt on being so addressed by a Christian? So the Lord Jesus establishes the true brotherhood.

Verse 14.—"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee," Saul had believed that all along, but what followed was the new thing—"that thou shouldst . . . see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth." The One whom Saul had regarded as an imposter and blasphemer is named in his hearing, "that Just One," and he assents. What a conversion! The term "Just One," or "Righteous One," is a messianic title. See Isaiah 53:11.

Verse 15.—"For thou shalt be his witness." From chief persecutor to chief witness—that was the measure of Saul's conversion. Notice the universality of the witness—"unto all men." And he is still witnessing, in his inspired letters.

Verse 16.—"Be baptized . . . wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." The washing away of sins is not said to be effected by baptism, but by calling on His name. Baptism is an accompanying act of obedience, in which the washing away of sins is symbolically set forth.

**The Heart of the Lesson**  
Conversion for Saul was completely revolutionary. It changed him from core to circumference. It was not just "getting religion." The fact is, he had lots of that before conversion (Acts 26:5). It was not "turning over a new leaf." With regard to upright moral living, he did not need that (Phil. 3:6). It was not just embracing the Christian faith as an over against the Jewish. The Christian faith was in reality the fulfillment of the Jewish.

What, then, was involved in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? Conversion for him revolved around a person—Jesus of Nazareth. From being a persecutor, he became an apostle. From being the most ardent of the persecutors, determined to stamp out the very name of Jesus, he became the most ardent laborer among all who sought to serve the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 15:10). From being a blasphemer of the name of Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13) he became an intrepid witness. From an insatiable hatred he turned to an intensity of love that was willing to do and endure to the uttermost. The implacable enemy became a devoted servant, even unto death.

This whole radical change can be summed up in one word, the word by which Saul addressed Jesus when he met Him on the Damascus road—Lord! Notice that he did not use this title lightly or hypocritically (Matt. 7:21), but as signifying Christ's right to command—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" That is the very heart of conversion. We have a practice of offering Jesus as Saviour, leaving the invitation to accept Him as Lord to some later time. This is not New Testament procedure. It was recently pointed out to me that nowhere in the New Testament is Jesus called "Saviour and Lord," but He is called "Lord and Saviour" (2 Pet. 1:11; 2; 20; 3; 2; 18; see also Titus 1:4). It is as Lord that He is Saviour, and the Apostle Paul teaches us that our salvation is wrapped up in our confessing Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9, A.S.V.) as a corollary of believing. The fact is that no man is morally capable of receiving salvation until he owns the lordship of Christ.

**MT. PISGAH**

(Thursday, April 2)

There were three tables of crokinole and ten tables of euchre at the Vandorf Hall on Friday evening. This party was sponsored by the Gormley W.I. ladies. Prize winners for crokinole were Misses Elsie Crawford, Susanna Dewsbury and Ruth Chambers and Mr. Clifford Eade. Euchre prizes went to Mrs. Meredith Ash, Mrs. Fred Wilson, Miss Frances Smith, Mr. Richard Baycroft, Mr. Stewart Burnett, Mr. Ian Reid and Mr. Cecil Mackey.

On Thursday, April 9th, there will be a crokinole party in Vandorf Hall sponsored by the Gormley W.I. ladies. Ladies are asked to kindly provide and everyone welcome.

The community was shocked to hear of the drowning of nine-year-old Garth Lehman of Todmorden last weekend. Garth was the youngest son of Gordon and Marie (Johnson) Lehman who were former residents of the Gormley district. The boy fell from an old plank bridge over the Don River near his home and was drowned before they could get to him on Saturday of last week. The funeral was at Heise Hill Cemetery on Tuesday afternoon.

Mrs. James D. MacDonald had a very unfortunate accident on Wednesday of last week when she broke a blood vessel in her foot by stepping on a large nail.

Little Dianne and Donna Deeks of Kitchener are on a two week holiday with their grandparents. Mr. and Mrs. Norman Brown.

The Gormley W.I. met at the home of Mrs. Bernard Kays on Thursday, March 26, with fourteen ladies present. A sale of articles made from one sugar bag was very successful. There is to be a convener's meeting to make up their yearly reports on Wednesday, April 15th, at the home of Mrs. Bernard Kays.

The man who hunts trouble is pretty sure to find it, says a judge. Not if it's in the wife's washing machine.

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