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The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON

First Quarter—Lesson XI.—March 14

SAUL THE PERSECUTOR CONVERTED.—Acts 9:1-12, 17-20.

Read chapter 9:1-30. Commit verses 17-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*—1 Tim 1:15.

SAUL OF TARSUS AND HIS EARLY TRAINING. Saul was his Hebrew name, and Paul his Greek name. He was born at Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, probably about A. D. 2. His parents, though living among heathen, were Jews of pure descent, strict observers of the law, and of the sect of Pharisees. He had a sister and a nephew at Jerusalem, and the names of six kinsmen are given in Romans 16. His family was one of wealth, influence and refinement. Hence we see that he had suffered the loss of all things for Christ. He was not merely born in Tarsus, but had a citizen's right there, which was much more than merely being a resident. But he was first of all a Roman citizen, which may be taken as proof that his family was one of distinction. As was the custom for every Rabbi, Paul learned the trade of tent-making.

At an early age he was sent to Jerusalem, where he studied the law under Gamaliel.

He was probably small of stature for his opponents in Corinth said his bodily presence was weak and insignificant.

HIS BITTER OPPOSITION TO CHRIST.

—Vs. 1, 2. And yet, ever since the persecution began on the day of Stephen's death. *Breathing out threatenings, etc.* He lived in an atmosphere of threats and slaughter. It must have greatly intensified his rage to see that the more he persecuted the church, the faster it grew. It is quite probable that the fierceness of his zeal against Christians at this time may have been caused partly by the inner conflict of his soul. *Slaughter.* Acts 26:10 implies that others were martyred besides Stephen. *Went.* of his own accord, a proof of his intense eagerness. *Letters to Damascus.* A large part of the Christians were driven away from Jerusalem and vicinity; probably not a few had gone to Damascus. Damascus is the oldest city in the world. It is situated about one hundred and forty miles northeast of Jerusalem. In Paul's time it must have had a large population. The Jewish population alone was 50,000. It has a present population of between 150,000 and 250,000, composed of Jews, Moslems and Christians. It is now under Turkish rule. *Of this Way.* This name for the gospel describes one of its chief peculiarities which distinguish it from all other religions. Christ is the Way to heaven, the Way to holiness. *Bring them bound unto Jerusalem.* To be tried by the Sanhedrin, which would be severer than the Damascus court.

There are three accounts of the conversion of Paul, and they are here placed side by side. The details are treated differently, but it is the same picture in all, and there are no real discrepancies. CHRIST APPEARS TO SAUL ON THE WAY TO DAMASCUS.—Vs. 3-8. *As he journeyed.* Perhaps on horseback. *Near Damascus.* Probably within sight of the city. *Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.* The light was above the brightness of the sun. It was in the midst of this glory that Christ was seen by Saul. *Fell to the earth.* Blinded and amazed. *Heard a voice.* Clear and distinct to him, but a mysterious sound to others. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* He thought he was persecuting the disciples of an impostor, a crucified malefactor; he now saw that he was persecuting the living and glorified Jesus. *Who art thou, Lord?* I am Jesus. Saviour, helper, of whom he had heard. *Whom thou persecutest.* In the person of his disciples, and in the cause which was identified with Jesus. *It is hard, to kick against the pricks,* i. e., goods, as unruly oxen sometimes did. The more they kicked against them, the more they injured themselves.

Paul was kicking against the goads (1) by resisting the kingdom of God, which was moving resistlessly on; (2) by resisting the influences of the Holy Spirit urging him to repent and accept of Jesus the Messiah; (3) by striving against his own conscience and the new impulses awaking in his soul; (4) by opposing the goodness and providence of God. It was useless, for he was fighting against eternal principles and omnipotent power. *Trembling and astonished.* Many a sinner feels in the same way when he first sees himself as he is. *What wilt thou have me to do?* He would see clearly what is required of him. *Arise, and go into the city (Damascus), and it shall be told thee, etc.*

He was not yet prepared for the full revelation of his duty. *The men which journeyed with him stood speechless.* The expression stood is not used in opposition to falling, but to moving on. *Hearing a voice (the sound) but seeing no man.* They did not hear the word as words, could attach no meaning to the sounds. *And when his eyes were opened.* After some interval. *Saw no man.* Saw nothing. He was totally blind.

THREE DAYS OF DARKNESS AND CONFLICT.—V. 9. *He was three days without sight.* The blindness of Saul was, no doubt, intended to compel him to attend without distraction to the great matters which had been placed before him. These days were a season of intense inward conflict. Could he give up all his ambitious hopes? Could he enter the service of one so despised, and suffer reproach, and danger, and death? During this time probably was brought before him the vision of what God would have him do.

CONVERSION.—Vs. 10-12; 17, 18. *A certain disciple, named Ananias.* We know nothing further about him except that he was a good man, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt at Damascus. *Street called Straight.* A main thoroughfare of the city. It was a mile long, a hundred feet wide, and divided into three avenues. *Judas.* Nothing further is known of him; but he must have been one of the Pharisees' party in sympathy with Saul. *Behold, he prayeth.* As a Christian, with a new feeling, a new power.

Ananias naturally hesitated to go to the house of the well-known opponent of the gospel. This hesitation does not prove Ananias to be either disobedient or faithless. He wanted to be sure that there was no doubt about the authority bidding him go. *Brother Saul.* Showing that he accepted him as a fellow disciple. *Sight.* Holy Ghost. He brought two great gifts, sight, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. *There fell from his eyes as it had been scales.* He experienced the sensation as if there had fallen something like scales from his eyes. *Was baptized.* As a confession of Christ, and the divine method of admission to the membership of the disciples.

THE YOUNG CONVERT AT WORK.—V. 19. *When he had received meat; i. e., food.* He was strengthened. Due care of the body is sometimes a means of grace. *Certain days.* A few days. *Straightway.* Immediately. *Preached Christ in the synagogues.* He gave his religious experience, testifying to what Jesus had done for him.

LESSONS FROM THE CONVERSION OF SAUL.

The steps of his progress from a persecutor to an apostle. (1) Influences from the death of Stephen and the character of the saints he was trying to destroy; (2) a sudden providence; (3) producing conviction of sin; (4) a desire to know duty; (5) a sharp, severe conflict; (6) light and help from Christians; (7) filled with the Holy Ghost; (8) confessing Christ in baptism; (9) testifying from his experience; (10) increasing in strength.

Before conversion he was sincere, moral, religious. The change was: (1) That before conversion he was sincerely wrong, now he is sincerely right; before he was only partially sincere, not seeking the whole truth before all things; now his sincerity was complete. (2) Before conversion he was moral, but it was self-righteousness, proud and formal. Now he had morality transformed by love to God and man, which is the only true morality.

He repented of sin; he hated sin; he consecrated himself entirely to God. The whole purpose of his life was changed. He was a new man in heart, and life, and character.

Changes in men are the greater proofs of Christianity.

Saul's conversion was sudden. Conversion is but the beginning of the Christian life and character. The turning may be a sudden change of direction, or the movement in a circle so large that one does not know the exact time when the direction of his course was reversed. No one conversion is, in its form and method, the model and form for the conversion of all who are really Christians. John and Matthew became Christians in an entirely different way from Paul, but they reached the same result, the same change of heart. Each one comes to Christ in his own way and the great question is not how he comes, but does he come.

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General Garfield on Margins.

The following is a little speech made many years ago by President Garfield to the students at Hiram College. It was given as a familiar talk, but no one can read it without seeing the elements of true greatness and power on the part of its author:

I was thinking, young ladies and gentlemen, as I sat here this morning, that life is almost wholly made up of margins. The bulk itself of almost anything is not what tells; that exists anyway. That is expected. That is not what gives the profit or makes the distinguishing difference. The greater cares little for the great bulk of the price of his tea. It is the few cents between the cost and the selling price, which he calls the margin, that particularly interests him. Is this to be great or small? Is the thing of importance. Millions of dollars change hands in our great marts of trade just on the question of margins. This same thing is all important in the subject of thought. One mind is not greater than another, perhaps in the great bulk of its contents; but its margin is greater, that's all. I may know just as much as you do about the general details of a subject, but you can go just a little farther than I can. You have a greater margin than I. You can tell me of some single thought just beyond where I have gone. Your margin has got me. I must succumb to your superiority.

A good way to carry out the same idea, and better illustrate it, is by globes. Did you ever see globes whose only difference was that one had half an inch larger diameter than the other? This larger one, although there is so little difference, will entirely enclose the other, and have a quarter of an inch to spare besides. Let these globes be minds, with a living principle of some kind at their centers, which throws out its little tentacle-like arms in every direction as radii to explore for knowledge. The one goes a certain distance and stops. It can reach no farther. It has come to a stand-still. It has reached its maximum of knowledge in that direction. The other sends its arms out, and can reach just a quarter of an inch farther. So far as the first mind is able to tell, the other has gone infinitely farther than it can reach. It goes out to its farthest limit and must stop; the other tells him things he did not know before. Many minds you may consider wonderful in their capacity. They may be able to go only a quarter of an inch beyond you. What an incentive this should be for any young man to work, to make this margin as great as, if not greater, than the margin of his fellows.

I recall a good illustration of this when I was in college. A certain young man was leading the class in Latin. I thought I was studying hard. I couldn't see how he got the start of us all. To us he seemed to have an infinite knowledge. He knew more than we did. Finally, one day, I asked him when he learned his Latin lesson. At night, he replied. I learned mine at the same time. His window was not far from mine, and I could see him from my own. I had finished my lesson the next night as well as usual, and, feeling sleepy, was about to go to bed. I happened to saunter to my window, and there I saw my classmate still bending diligently over his book. There's where he gets the margin on me, I thought. But he shall not have it for once I resolved, I will study just a little longer than he does to-night. So I took my books again, and opening to the lesson, went to work with renewed vigor. I watched for the light to go out in my classmate's room. In fifteen minutes it was all dark. There is his margin I thought. It was fifteen minutes more time. It was hunting out fifteen minutes more of rules and root-derivatives. How often, when a lesson is well prepared, just five minutes spent in perfecting it will make one best in the class. The margin in such a case as that is very small, but it is all important. The world is made up of little things.—The Standard.

Match-Light Christians.

I won't strike, said a match to the candle.

Why? said the candle. Because I give so little light, it is not worth while to strike. If I could shine like you and burn a whole night—

True, but you are so useful and necessary in a hundred little ways, you would be more missed than I. The need for your work is felt a dozen times to my once.

You light me, said the lamp. And I couldn't do that, said the candle.

You light me, said the gas-jet. And I couldn't do that, said the lamp.

You kindle me, said the fire. And me, said the furnace.

Then shouted they all in chorus—the candle, the lamp, the gas-jet,

the fire, the furnace: And what if we refused to work because we can not shine and give heat like the sun!

The great bulk of the things to be done for Christ and the church are little things, and more than a dozen big lights in a church will distract almost any preacher (he generally prays for less).

Fortunate is that preacher who has a big box of match-light Christians and not one of them refusing to strike.—Christian Standard.

A Neat Cat.

In San Francisco there is a cat that washes windows. It belongs to one of the Chinese companies of that city. It is a cat of a Chinese breed, and those who own it claim that it belongs to the same family as the cats in the temples of the Emperor of China. The cat is a mixture of Maltese and tortoiseshell, and said to be very beautiful. It has a Chinese name which, the newspapers claim, cannot be rendered into English; so those of its friends who talk English have to call it Tom, for short. Tom's Chinese friends declare that he is so clean that he will not lie down until he has dusted off the place where he is to lie. It is claimed that Tom will take a rag and dip it in a pan of water, and wash the glass of the window in front of which he is going to lie down, and then rub it dry, and that he has never been known to lie down in front of the glass without first washing it. Naturalists say that cats are the cleanest animals in the world, that they abhor dirt.—Outlook.

Education begins at the mother's knee, and every word spoken within the hearing of little children tends toward the formation of their character.

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Express for Halifax, 13.10
Express for Quebec and Montreal, 16.30
Express for Sussex, 16.40
Passengers from St. John for Quebec and Montreal take through sleeping car at Moncton at 19.30 o'clock.

TRAINS WILL ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN.

Express from Sussex, 8.30
Express from Montreal and Quebec (Monday excepted), 10.30
Express from Moncton (daily), 10.30
Express from Halifax, Campbellton and Pictou, 15.50
Accommodation from Moncton, 18.30
Accommodation from Moncton, 24.00

The trains of the Intercolonial Railway are heated by steam from the locomotive, and those between Halifax and Moncton, via Lewis, are lighted by electricity. All trains are run by Western Standard time.

D. POTTINGER, General Manager.
Railway Office, Moncton, N. B.

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