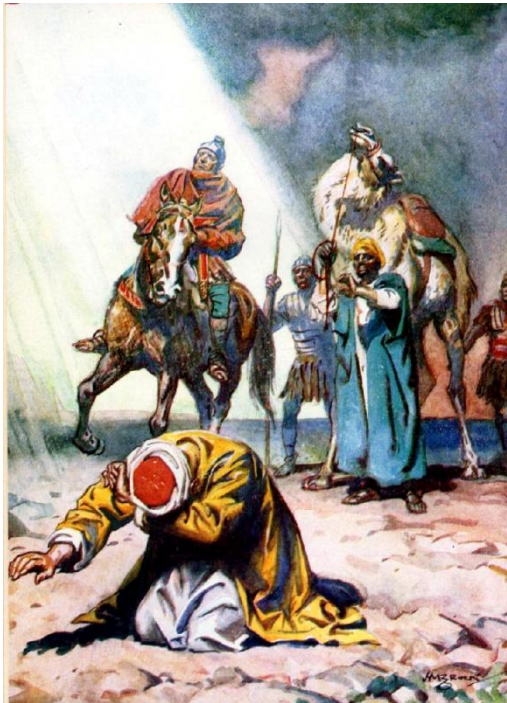


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 1



THE POWER OF HOLY GHOST CONVICTION

Scripture Text: Acts 9:1-9

Last week we studied of the salvation of one individual—the eunuch from Africa. God used a man to reach him, and it seemed such an easy task. Today we study another individual in his move to Christ. God used a miraculous vision from Heaven and physical means to reach Saul of Tarsus, or Paul. This seemed a more difficult task.

This quarter we go on with our study of the early church as told in Acts. The evidence found here of the power of God to change lives and use those lives to His glory should move us to seek that same power. God gave us this history to excite like action. He put this picture before us to show how He will use us also. No one can do this in his own strength. We must do it as these saints of Acts did it—by the power of the Holy Spirit, under His direction.

MEMORY VERSE: *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

—Acts 9:6

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Acts 26:1-20 Paul's testimony.

Tue.—Philippians 2:1-16 Giving up all for Christ.

Wed.—Galatians 1:11-17 Paul's authority of divine origin.

Thu.—1 Timothy 1:1-11 Glorious Gospel committed to Paul.

Fri.—1 Timothy 1:12-17 Appointed to service.

Devotional Reading: Acts 22:1-22 Paul's defense.

Saul's Purpose

Acts 9:1-2 Saul, yet breathing out—it came from within, and out of his very nature came words and other expressions— **threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord**. He was opposed to Jesus Christ to the fullest extent. From the **chief priest**, he received written credentials, authority to arrest, bind, and bring to Jerusalem for trial any Christians found. The letters advised synagogues of Saul's authority.

Saul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, born in Tarsus of Cilicia. He was intelligent, talented, strong in nature, and sincere in his belief. He possessed zeal, determination, and leadership. He was a thinker. An excellent education developed his natural ability to study deeply into a subject, thoroughly examining its causes and its results. The intensity of his nature required him to give entire devotion to any cause he supported. In Christ, he met his Master.

Saul's Vision

Acts 9:3-4 As he journeyed . . . near Damascus . . . a light from heaven shone. Saul fell to the earth. He had met a Power greater than his. A voice said, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?** Here was revealed to

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Saul the first of two surprises—that his persecution affected more than the people who suffered and struck Jesus Himself. He thought he was punishing men and women. It was a revelation to him to hear that some other Being had been struck by his blows. Persecution of saints is persecution of Jesus.

Saul's Response

Acts 9:5-7 Who art thou, Lord? He knew this was One far greater than he. He was beginning to yield. **I am Jesus.** Here we see the second revealed surprise to Saul—that Jesus was really God. He never got over this surprise. To the end of his days, it was the heart of the message he gave to the world—that Jesus is the Christ of God. **It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks**—to rebel against influences drawing toward God. This is in reference to driving oxen with a goad, sharp on the end, placed behind the rear feet to discourage the oxen to kick. To prevent the pain of injury from the pricks, the oxen must walk as the master chose. Saul was on a wrong course, and for him to rid himself of the pricks in his heart, he must obey his Master. A sinner's life rebelling against the Truth is a hard conflict.

Saul **trembling and astonished**—greatly surprised and touched in mind, body, and spirit—**said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do?** He was now completely yielded. He was acknowledging this Lord to be his Lord with the right to direct him. The Lord had a servant in Damascus whom He would use to lead Saul to the next step in his new life. The Lord said, **Arise, and go into the city.** He would go on to Damascus, but under different circumstances. He did not know what was next, but he was ready and obedient. Saul was not saved yet, but godly sorrow and conviction were doing their work on him. The other men of the company **stood speechless**—astonished also—**hearing a voice, but seeing no man.** They heard the voice but did not distinguish it as the voice of the Lord. We can relate to this in our worship services. When the spirit of conviction is sent in a powerful way, loud and clear, some tremble under conviction for their sins while others do not recognize it as the voice of Jesus giving invitation to a rich life in salvation.

On to Damascus

Acts 9:8-9 Saul arose . . . he saw no man: but they led him. He was blinded by the heavenly light. In Damascus, **he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink**—a real fast. A real burden of conviction will take away some desires, both natural appetites and unnatural ones. Real conviction causes some to stop smoking, drinking, and other things even before they are saved. They spend time in prayer because serious conviction is working on them.

Saul was a sinner, a murderer, a hater of Christ, and a persecutor of His people. What happened to Saul? Later, explaining the change in his life, he always pointed to this experience on the road as the beginning of a permanent change that lasted all of his life. There is but one explanation of such a change—the new birth. Saul was on his way to new birth—to be born of the Spirit, made alive in Christ. Saul was not yet saved, but he was on his way. He had a great start; now he must follow in obedience, step by step, the leading of God. In the next lesson, we learn of his conversion.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Confession is turning the heart inside out,
putting the sins out where they can be washed away.**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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