

Sunday School Lesson

For Sunday, April 2nd

By Dr. Paul Caudill



Topic: SAUL BECOMES A NEW MAN

Scripture Lesson: Acts 9:10, 18-19a. Beginning with the present lesson, we are to study for the next three months the life and letters of the apostle Paul. Those who are in any measure interested in biographical studies should find the series to be of compelling interest from the beginning to the

end. Without a doubt, Paul is the greatest follower Christ has ever had, from the standpoint of loyalty, ability, and achievement. Thirteen out of the 27 books of the New Testament are generally considered to have been written by him—some would say 14, on the assumption that he also wrote Hebrews. From the day that he met Christ on the Damascus Road, his life was out and out for Christ. He was ever fearless in his stand for right, and courageous unto the uttermost even when his own personal safety was involved. He died, tradition says, as a martyr, being beheaded on the Ostian Way around 67 A. D.

THREATENING AND SLAUGHTER Acts 9:1-2

We meet Paul, or rather Saul, for the first time, in the New Testament, under circumstances that are none too pleasant. Luke's words of "threatening and slaughter" against the disciples of the Lord, may be regarded as characteristic of the attitude of Paul toward Christianity up to the time of his experience on the Damascus road. We do not know a great deal about the family of Saul. We do not know the name of either of his parents. We do know that he was the son of a Pharisee (Acts

23:6), a strict Jew (Acts 22:3), that he was a descendant of Abraham (2 Cor. 11:22), and that he was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5). He was well educated, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and educated according to the strictest manner of the law (Acts 22:3), and he surpassed his fellows in his studies (Gal. 1:18). About the most one can say about him up until the time he was converted is that he was a vigorous leader in the persecution of the Christians. Act 8: 3, 26:11, 26:30, 22:4, 1 Tim. 1:13, and Gal. 1:13. The description "threatening and slaughter" certainly describes Paul's early life in appropriate manner. His zeal for persecuting the Christians knew no bounds. In the words of Dr. A. T. Robinson, "the taste of blood in the death of Stephen was pleasing to young Saul (8:1), and now he revelled in the slaughter of the saints both men and women. In 26:11 Luke quotes Paul as saying that he was 'exceedingly mad against him' ". The expression "breathing threatening and slaughter" suggests that the very breath of Saul was charged with "threatening and slaughter", "like a warhorse who sniffed the smell of battle".

A LIGHT OF HEAVEN Acts 9:8-9

As our lesson opens, we find Saul on the way to Damascus. He has in his possession letters of authority that will permit him to enter the synagogues there and bind and bring to Jerusalem any whom he might find of "this way", whether they be men or women. Luke tells us that "as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round him a light from Heaven". In Acts 22:6 Paul calls it "a great light" "about noon", while in Acts 26:13 he says that it was "above the brightness of the sun". At any rate the light had a tremendous effect upon Saul, for he fell upon the earth. Tremendous change was taking place in the life of Saul. He had met Jesus face to face. He was becoming converted.

For the full historical narrative dealing with Saul's conversion one should read not only the account in Acts 9:3-18, but also the account given in Acts 22:6-16 as well as Acts 26:12-20. In commenting on the numerous variations in these narratives Dr. A. T. Robinson has the following to say: "A great deal of capital has been made of these variations to

In Technicolor!



Maria Montez and Jon Hall again are lovers in the Universal Technicolor fantasy, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," showing Monday and Tuesday at The Allen Theatre.

Marie Montez, Latin-American "Queen of Technicolor", and a native of the Dominican Republic, was officially honored by her country and its President during the filming of Universal's "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," coming Monday to the Allen Theatre.

Awarded two decorations in recognition of her artistic success and for her "spirit of Dominicanism", she was informed of her new honors in a telegram from President Rafael L. Trujillo, of the Dominican Republic.

Surprised and obviously delighted, Marie took a few moments to wonder if it could really be true, then hastened to a phone to tell Jean Pierre Aumont, handsome French actor to whom she was recently wed.

Miss Montez' message from the Dominican Republic's President read as follows:

"To render you homage and to recognize your brilliant success as an artist, and to express to you my deep satisfaction and that of all your compatriots because of the never-ending spirit of Dominical discredit of Luke as a writer as if he should have made Paul's two speeches conform at every point with his own narrative. This objection has no weight except for those who hold that Luke composed Paul's speeches freely as some great writers used to do. In broad outline and in all essentials the three accounts agree and testify to the truthfulness of the account of the conversion of Saul. It is impossible to overestimate the work to the student of Christianity of this even from every angle because we have in Paul's Epistles his own emphasis on the actual appearance of Jesus to him as the fact that changed his whole life. (1 Cor. 15:8, Gal. 1:16). The point that interests us here chiefly is found in the fact that in this experience is seen the turning point in the career of a great man—a turning point that set his life forever from that day on on the side of Christ.

One cannot read the account of Saul's conversion without thinking on the glorious power of the Gospel in Christ Jesus. It is so powerful in its meaning for the human heart that it is able to change the whole course of a whole life in a single moment. Let those who preach and who teach the Gospel find in this grand fact encouragement and strength to carry on at their given post—until the end.

A CHOSEN VESSEL Acts: 9:13-19

It was not an easy matter for Ananias to accept the bidding of the Lord to contact Saul in the house of Judas, as instructed. He had heard of Saul's "threatening and slaughter". What assurance did he have that he would not be one of his victims. What power was there great enough to change the course of his life so quickly? How could he trust him? Nevertheless, he made his way to the house of Judas and there spoke to Saul the words given him by the Holy Spirit: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost". Luke adds "and immediately there fell from his eyes as if it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized".

In other words, Saul had now become "a chosen vessel" of the Lord. He had been designated to bear God's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. He had become a new man. He must have a new task. The old way of persecution must give over to the new way of love. He had been an enemy of Jesus. Now he was a friend of Christ, and His most ardent follower. The message of the Lord Christ had triumphed in him. Old things had passed away. All things had become new.

claim that you so proudly hail, I have recommended that the Congress bestow upon you decorations of the Order of Merit of Juan Pablo Duarte, and the Order of Trujillo in the grade of officer.

"President Trujillo". The star's response to the telegram, sent after the volatile Latin took considerable time to compose herself, read as follows:

"Your excellency: I am deeply touched and very proud of the great honor that you and my compatriots have rendered to this, your humble servant. I assure you that this gesture of appreciation will be a great and luminous incentive to my artistic career, and will assist infinitely the multiplication of my efforts and in that way help me deserve the approbation of my country, my president and my compatriots. To my thanks and gratitude, allow me to add my best regards".

LIBERTY

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