

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

PAUL MAKES A NEW START

International Sunday School Lesson for October 13, 1946

GOLDEN TEXT: "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—I Timothy 1: 15.

Lesson Text: Acts 26: 9-18; I Corinthians 15: 8-10

The Christian faith developed quickly in Jerusalem following the Resurrection, the Forty Days, and the Ascension of Christ. Fifty days after His resurrection, Peter's arousing sermon at Pentecost was followed by the faith of 3,000 people, and from then on the number of adherents to the new faith multiplied rapidly, stimulated by the incessant testimony of the new converts.

This growth was so rapid that

the apostles were too busy preaching to attend to the proper administration of charity, whereupon seven deacons were appointed to look after this branch of the work. Stephen was the outstanding leader of this group, being full of energy in missionary activity and by reason of his intelligent presentation of the new cause confounded the Jewish leaders, who sought to argue with him. As a result of the enmity thus created, Stephen was stoned to death and became the first Christian martyr.

While the martyrdom of Stephen was the tragic end of a brilliant career, it had far greater significance in that it turned out to be the initial step in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a man of great intelligence, ceaseless energy, and far seeing wisdom. At this time Saul was one of the ring leaders in suppressing the new religion.

As a member of the Sanhed-

rin, Saul was influential in harassing the new converts, confessing later to his seal in dragging men and women to prison. Saul was a witness to the death of Stephen and was seriously disturbed inwardly by the dying man's prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies and his heroic attitude.

However, Saul's first reaction to the campaign of persecution was greater activity. Probably seeking to still the questions which had been raised in his own soul, Saul requested authority of the high priest that he might go to Damascus and bring back all members of the new faith found there as prisoners. Damascus was a magnificent city at that time, about 136 miles from Jerusalem, on a six-day journey. It dated back to antiquity for Josephus says it was founded by Uz, the grandson of Shem.

Before Saul arrived in Damascus, however, his life was turned into different channels. On the road he was visited by the Christ he persecuted, and appearing so near that Saul himself in later years listed it among the first appearances of Jesus on earth after His resurrection. Saul was struck blind and had to be led by hand into Damascus. There for three days he fasted and prayed until Ananias, a disciple of Christ, had been commanded and in response thereto came to Saul and restored his sight, confirming the divine nature of the experience he had undergone en route.

Saul had never been an immoral or irreligious man. He had been raised as a strict Pharisee, zealous for the Law, and had been unlimited in his fidelity to the truth as it had appeared to him.

What happened in the life of Saul? We call it conversion. Such a transformation is possible in the life of all who really come into contact with Jesus Christ. Charles Reynolds Brown, in "Five Young Men," has this to say:

"It is possible for the inner life of a man to be so wrought upon by the action of the Spirit of God that the corrupt nature is cleansed, the weak nature is made strong, the selfish disposition is transformed into benign

love. "It matters little how you go about it, if you go with sincere faith. You may seek for that renewal through the regenerating influence of the Sacraments. If you find it there, it will be because Christ is within the Sacrament. You may seek for it in those profound emotional reactions which come at the mourners' bench. If you find it there, it will be because the spirit of Christ was operating through those feelings. You may find it as you make an about face, turning away from that which is evil and making Christian duty your supreme choice in the quiet of your own room. If you find it there, it will be because Christ was present in those movements of your inner life.

"If any man will seek for moral renewal at the hands of God he will find it. He will knock at any one of the doors it will open.

"Here is the gospel as it stands recorded on the pages of the Old Testament—"The spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee and thou shalt be turned into another man." Here is the same gospel as it stands recorded on the pages of the New Testament—"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

EXECUTRIX'S NOTICE

NORTH CAROLINA, - DUPLIN COUNTY
Having qualified as executrix of the last will of J. D. Carr, deceased, late of Duplin County, N. C., this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said J. D. Carr, deceased, to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before September 11, 1947, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment to me.

This 11th day of September, 1946.

MRS. MARY WILLIAMS CARR
Executrix of the Will of
J. D. Carr, Deceased

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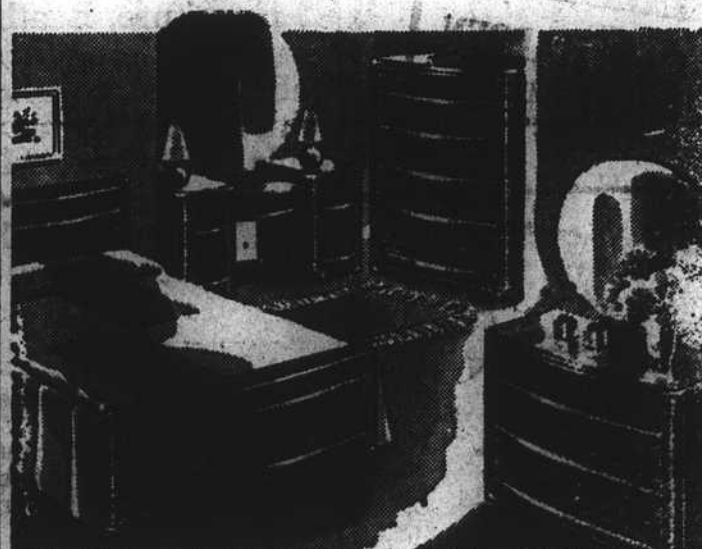
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