

Acts 9**Lesson 9
Conversion of Saul****Outline****I. The Lord Appeared to Saul on the Road to Damascus** (v. 1-9)

- A. *Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians (vv. 1-2)*
- B. *The Lord appeared to Saul (vv. 3-6)*
 - 1. *A light shined around him (v. 3)*
 - 2. *A voice from heaven said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (v. 4)*
 - 3. *The Lord identified himself (v. 5)*
 - 4. *Saul was told to go into the city to hear what he must do (v. 6)*
- C. *Saul went to Damascus (vv. 7-9)*

II. Saul Converted (vv. 10-22)

- A. *The Lord sent Ananias to Saul (vv.10-18a)*
- B. *Saul was baptized and associated with disciples (vv. 18b-19)*
- C. *Saul preached Christ (vv. 20-22)*

III. Saul Went to Jerusalem (vv. 23-30)

- A. *He escaped the plot to kill him (vv. 23-25)*
- B. *He joined himself to the disciples in Jerusalem (vv. 26-28)*
- C. *His bold preaching created opposition and he departed to Tarsus (vv. 29-30)*

IV. The Churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria Did Well (v. 31)

- A. *Had peace*
- B. *Were edified*
- C. *Walked in fear and comfort*
- D. *Were multiplied*

V. Two Miracles by Peter (vv. 32-43)

- A. *The healing of Aeneas (vv. 32-35)*
- B. *The raising of Dorcas (vv. 36-43)*

Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter**Acts 9:18**

*Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales,
and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.*

This chapter is about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. We were first introduced to him in Acts 7:58 where he held the garments of those who stoned Stephen. Next we saw him making havoc of the church (Acts 8:1-3).

The Lord Appeared to Saul on the Road to Damascus (vv. 1-9)

Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians (vv. 1-2). Saul was breathing threats and murder against the church (v. 1).¹ The Living Bible translates this, “threatening with every breath and eager to destroy every Christian...” He asked the high priest for letters to the synagogues² in Damascus authorizing him to capture any who were of the Way³ and bring them to Jerusalem. To travel this distance of 130 to 140 miles (one way) and back tells us of his passion and determination.⁴

The Lord appeared to Saul (vv. 3-6). When Saul later stood before Agrippa, he called this a “heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). As Saul came near Damascus a light suddenly was shining around him (v. 3; 22:6). It was brighter than the noon sun (26:13). As Paul fell to the ground he heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (v. 4).⁵ When Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?” the answer was, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (v. 5).⁶ Saul asked what the Lord would have him to do. The Lord told him to go into the city and it would be told him what he should do (v. 6).

As he retells the story before Agrippa, he says the Lord told him that he had appeared to him for the purpose to send him to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18).⁷

Saul went to Damascus (vv. 7-9). When Saul got up, after having fallen back to the ground, he opened his eyes and couldn’t see for he was blind. He was led by the hand into the city and didn’t see, eat or drink for three days.

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- 1 “Not ‘breathing out,’ but ‘breathing in’ (inhaling) means that threatening and slaughter had come to be the very breath that Saul breathed, like a warhorse who sniffed the smell of battle. He breathed on the remaining disciples the murder that he had already breathed in from the death of the others. He exhaled what he inhaled.... The taste of blood in the death of Stephen was pleasing to young Saul (Acts 8:1) and now he revelled in the slaughter of the saints both men and women” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright (c) 1985 by Broadman Press).
 - 2 This suggests that there was a large Jewish population in Damascus.
 - 3 The Way refers to Christianity, the way of Christ (cf. Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).
 - 4 This was likely on foot since they had to lead him by the hand after he was blind (v. 8; 22:11).
 - 5 From this we learn that what is done to God’s people is done to Christ.
 - 6 “The expression ‘to kick against the prick’ is derived from the action of a stubborn and unyielding ox kicking against the goad. And as the ox would injure no one by it but himself; as he would gain nothing, it comes to denote ‘an obstinate and refractory disposition and course of conduct, resisting the authority of him who has a right to command, and opposing the leadings of Providence, to the injury of him who makes the resistance.’ It denotes ‘rebellion against lawful authority, and thus getting into greater difficulty by attempting to oppose the commands to duty.’ This is the condition of every sinner” (Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).
 - 7 The appearance of the Lord qualified Saul to become an apostle. To be an apostle one had to see the Lord (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1).

Saul Converted (vv. 10-22)

The Lord sent Ananias to Saul (vv. 10-18a). The Lord appeared in a vision to a disciple named Ananias and told him to go to Saul whom he would find praying (v. 11). He was told that Saul had also seen a vision of one coming to lay hands on him to restore his sight (v. 12). Ananias was reluctant due to the reports of Saul's persecution (vv. 13-14). The Lord explained that he had chosen him to bear his name before the Gentiles, kings, as well as the Jews (v. 15). Saul would be shown that he would suffer for the cause of Christ (v. 16). Ananias went to him and laid his hands on him, restoring his sight (vv. 17-18a).

Saul was baptized and associated with the disciples (vv. 18b-19). There is more to the story than is recorded in this chapter. Ananias preached the gospel to him, else how would he have known anything about being baptized (v. 18)? The message included, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Saul was not converted (saved) on the road to Damascus as many of our religious friends claim. If he was saved on the road, he was the most miserable new convert (v. 9). If he was saved on the road, Ananias didn't know it (Acts 22:16). If he was saved on the road, he was saved without calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). If he was saved on the road, he was still in his sins (Acts 22:16).

Ananias told Saul what he must do (v. 6; 22:10). He did not tell him to pray the sinner's prayer as many preachers today would teach.⁸ When he found him praying (v. 11), he told him to no longer wait, but arise and be baptized, and then he would be calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). As long as he continued to pray, he was delaying calling on the name of the Lord. The instruction had to include faith (John 8:24) and repentance (Acts 17:30-31) as well as baptism (v. 18). Here again we have a progress report. The gospel had now reached one of the worst enemies of the cross (1 Tim. 1:15).

Saul preached Christ (vv. 20-22). Immediately following his conversion, he went into the very synagogues that were authorized to help him arrest Christians (v. 2) and preached that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 20). Those who listened were amazed knowing that this was the same man who came there on the mission to bind disciples and take them to Jerusalem (v. 21). He confounded⁹ the Jews with his teaching that Jesus is the Christ¹⁰ (v. 22; cf. 26:22-23).

Saul Went to Jerusalem (vv. 23-30)

He escaped the plot to kill him (vv. 23-25). Saul now faces the very kind of persecution he had dished out so long. After some time had passed (possibly three years, Gal. 1:17-18), there was a plot to kill him. When it became known, the brethren helped him escape through a window and down the wall in a large basket (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32-33).

8 The sinner's prayer usually goes something like this, "I am a sinner. I repent of my sins. Please forgive me and save me by your blood and come into my heart. I want to receive you as my personal Lord and savior. Amen."

9 "His proofs that Jesus is the Christ were so strong that his own people in Damascus could not argue with him" (NCV).

10 The Anointed One who was foretold in the Old Testament.

He joined himself to the disciples (vv. 26-28). When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to “join” himself to the disciples. That is, he wanted to identify with or place membership with the church at Jerusalem (v. 26). They wouldn’t accept him since they were not sure whether he had been converted (v. 26b).¹¹ However, Barnabas (one in whom the brethren in Jerusalem had confidence) vouched for him (v. 27).¹² So, he was accepted and was active in the church at Jerusalem (v. 28).

His bold preaching created opposition and he departed to Tarsus (vv. 29-30). Again, Saul’s bold preaching stirred up the Jews to the point they wanted to kill him. The brethren brought him to Caesarea and then on to Tarsus (his hometown).

The Churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria Did Well (v. 31)

There was a period of relief from the persecution that had been leveled against the church. Churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace. They were built up in the faith and walked in the fear of God. They had the comfort (encouragement) that came from the Holy Spirit. They were multiplied (more were added by conversion). Here we have another progress report.

Two Miracles by Peter (vv. 32-43)

The rest of the chapter is devoted to two miracles of Peter.

The healing of Aeneas (vv. 32-35). Peter went to Lydda (about 25 miles NW of Jerusalem). There he found a man named Aeneas who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. He healed him, giving credit to Jesus the Christ (v. 34). The healing was immediate. The reaction to the miracle was that those who dwelt in Lydda and Sharon¹³ turned to the Lord. Here again, we have a progress report.

The raising of Dorcas (vv. 36-43). At Joppa, a Mediterranean seaport 10-12 miles NW of Lydda, there was a disciple named Tabitha (Aramaic) which is translated Dorcas (Greek). Dorcas was full of good works and went about helping others (v. 36). She became sick and died (v. 37). Since Joppa was so close to Lydda, the disciples sent for Peter (v. 38). When he came, he found widows who had gathered with the garments that Dorcas had made for them (v. 39).

Peter put them all out of the room, knelt down and prayed. He then turned to the dead body, which had been dead long enough for men to make a journey to Lydda and back, then said, “Tabitha, arise.” She opened her eyes and sat up (v. 40)¹⁴. Peter took her and presented her alive to the brethren (v. 41). When this became known in the region, many

11 Churches today should follow this principle. They cannot accept just anyone who claims to be a faithful Christian without asking some questions.

12 Churches have every right (and responsibility) to ask questions not only of the one desiring to place membership, but of any who may know something about them.

13 Sharon “was situated south of Mount Carmel, along the coast of the Mediterranean, extending to Caesarea and Joppa. Lydda was situated in this region” (Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

14 This miracle is totally unlike any claim of miracles today. No person who makes claims of miracles today can work such a miracle.

turned to the Lord (v. 42). Here again, we have a progress report. Peter then stayed awhile in Joppa with Simon who was a tanner (v. 43).

Questions

1. What does it mean to breathe out threats and murder (v. 1)? _____

2. Why did the Lord appear to Saul? _____

3. How can you show that Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus? _____

4. Why was Ananias sent to Saul? _____

5. What did Saul have to do to be saved? How do you know? _____

6. What progress reports are given in this chapter? _____

7. What did Paul do after he was converted? _____

8. What does Acts 9:26-28 teach us about placing membership? _____

9. What does Acts 9:26-28 teach about the practice of accepting people within a local church? _____

10. How do the miracles recorded in this chapter differ from the claim of modern day miracles? _____
