



Acts 9

An OCF Bible Study

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How would you describe Saul at this point (v. 1-2)? Fanatical, radical, passionate, a self-appointed man on a mission to stamp out this “revolution.” An angry, violent man unquestionably convinced of his own self-righteousness, knowing with absolute certainty that he was doing God’s work. But he was spiritually blind.

Why would Saul choose Damascus? Located over 100 miles from Jerusalem, Damascus was of strategic importance; a hub of commerce from which trade caravans reached into Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia and Arabia. Christianity could quickly spread from Damascus if not contained.

Observations about Saul’s encounter with Jesus (v. 3-6): What did Saul learn? What did God reveal to him?

- Saul realized the error of his ways—his whole way of dealing with God was wrong. His entire concept of God was wrong. He had been zealously wasting his life. This was a real wake up call for Saul.
- Saul sincerely thought that he was serving God in viciously attacking Christians, but now he discovered that he had been fighting against God. He had been deceived. Religious people today are often convinced that their way is the only way. They are passionate but wrong!
- Note that Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting Him—not His followers.
- Jesus did not condemn/rebuke/judge Saul but he instructed him to go to Damascus and await further guidance.

What was ironic about the way Saul entered Damascus (v. 8)? He was led like a child by the hand—the very antithesis of the way he anticipated he would take Damascus by storm. He had been spiritually blind but now he was physically blind.

On the road to Damascus, the light went on for Paul—and he was never the same. Have you ever had an encounter with the living God? Are you able to say, “The Lord met me on the road I was traveling?” Each of us has our own story to tell, a unique story designed specifically for us. But the basic story doesn’t change—all of us at one time were walking down the wrong path, away from God. God chose Saul and chased him down like the lost sheep and grabbed ahold of Saul’s heart in His time. Saul was blind but the scales were removed and he was able to see. Each of us has a “before and after” story to tell and it is probably our most powerful witnessing tool.

What do we know about Ananias (v. 10)? Ananias was an ordinary man, a follower of Jesus but not an apostle, nor a prophet, a pastor, an evangelist, nor an elder. God used him because he was an ordinary man. If an apostle or a prominent person had ministered to Saul, people might say Saul received his gospel from a man instead of Jesus.

How did Ananias react to the vision from God (v. 13-14)? He was fearful, a skeptic.

What was the Lord’s great plan for Paul that He revealed to Ananias (v. 15-16)? Paul would become God’s primary instrument in taking the gospel to the Gentile world. He was designated to be the apostle to the Gentiles (v. 15). What else would the mission include? Intense suffering. **Who was designated as the apostle to the Jews?** Peter (Galatians 2:7-8).

Application: God has a mission for each one of us which is no different than Paul’s—taking the Gospel to our world. We are nothing more than missionaries cleverly disguised as military members, spouses, businessmen, etc.

However, Paul did not neglect or divorce himself from his Jewish roots. What was Paul’s pattern whenever he entered a city? He went to the synagogue first to preach to the local Jews and try to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah: I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel (Romans 9:2-4, New International Version). Paul had a great heart for his Jewish brethren.

What did Saul do as soon as the scales fell from his eyes (vv. 18-19)? The first thing he did was to identify with Christ and the disciples of Christ by water baptism. He did this even before breaking his fast of three days.

Acts 9

What happened once Saul's sight was restored and he gained some strength (v. 20)? He began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God (vv. 22, 29). It is easy to see the genuineness of Saul's conversion by witnessing the radical change it made in him. He was a totally different person.

How did the Jewish community in Damascus react to Saul and his preaching (vv. 20-23)? They were baffled by his preaching—preaching which proved that Jesus was the Christ. They conspired to kill him just like Stephen.

How did the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem react to Saul (v. 26)? Why were they afraid? His pre-conversion reputation had preceded him. Saul needed time to establish credibility with the Christians he had persecuted so vigorously. **Who served as a peacemaker when Saul went to Jerusalem (v. 27)?** Barnabas

What did Saul do in Jerusalem (vv. 28-29)? While Saul was in Jerusalem, he resumed Stephen's work of debating the Hellenistic Jews. He was himself a Hellenist, as Stephen was, having been born and reared in Tarsus.

Why did the church enjoy a time of peace (v. 30-31)? Saul was no longer persecuting the Christians. He left Jerusalem and was no longer a source of conflict. The effect of scattering (8:1) was to dilute the concentrated presence of Christians in Jerusalem. Peace was a function of the Holy Spirit.

As Peter continued his ministry in Judea, what happened in Lydda (vv. 32-35)? Peter found a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years and healed him. Note that Peter took the initiative in this miracle. Many of the residents were saved as a result of witnessing the miracle.

Peter then went to Joppa where Tabitha (Dorcas) had just died (v. 36). **What was Dorcas' spiritual gift (v. 39)?** She had the gift of service that was expressed in sewing—a gift that was practical and ministered to the hearts of many. She left a legacy of kindness and generosity. If you have a talent or passion, consider it to be a God-given gift and ask God how He would have you use it.

What was the significance of Peter's willingness to stay with a tanner (v. 42)? Many Jews thought tanners practiced an unclean trade since they worked with the skins of dead animals, and they would have nothing to do with them. According to the laws of that time, a tanner had to live at least twenty-five feet outside a village because of his constant ritual uncleanness.

What does this show us about Peter? He was more open-minded when it came to fellowshiping with Gentiles than many of his peers. He was starting to get past the rules; past the legalism of the Pharisees. He was starting to grasp the concept of grace. He didn't really get past them until after the vision of chapter 10.

How did the people respond to Peter's healing (v. 42)? They became Christians—many believed in the Lord as opposed to believing in Peter. Which is exactly the way miracles are designed to work—to draw people to faith and to bring glory to God.

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