

Acts 9:1-31 (NLT) - The Conversion of Saul

December 6, 2020 - Outline with Scripture

I. Saul's leadership in persecuting the church (Acts 9:1-2).

1 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers.^[a] So he went to the high priest. **2** He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

9:1 Greek disciples.

II. Saul's dramatic conversation to Christ (Acts 9:3-18).

3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. **4** He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! **6** Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! **8** Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. **9** He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

10 Now there was a believer^[b] in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

11 The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. **12** I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

13 "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers^[c] in Jerusalem! **14** And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

15 But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. **16** And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

17 So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18** Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized.

19 Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

9:10 Greek disciple; also in 9:26, 36.

9:13 Greek God's holy people; also in 9:32, 41.

III. Saul's early witness (Acts 9:19-31).

19 Saul stayed with the believers[d] in Damascus for a few days. **20** And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!"

21 All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?"

22 Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. **23** After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. **24** They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. **25** So during the night, some of the other believers[e] lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

26 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! **27** Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

28 So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. **30** When the believers[f] heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

31 The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

9:19 Greek *disciples*; also in 9:26, 38.

9:25 Greek *his disciples*.

9:30 Greek *brothers*.

Questions for Application and Discussion:

- Why does Christianity in general, and Jesus Christ in particular, appear to spark such animosity from many?
- Where are Christians being persecuted for their faith today? How can we support Christians undergoing persecution?
- Presbyterians often cite the conversion of Saul as evidence for the doctrine of election. Define election. What does this doctrine claim about God? About us? How and when have you seen evidence of God's election in your life?
- We often call dramatic conversions to Christ "Damascus Road experiences." Others profess Christ in a much less dramatic fashion. Does the initial experience of following Christ as Lord need to be dramatic? Why or why not?
- What are the pros and cons of new Christians bearing witness to the gospel? How can we support and encourage them? How can we learn from them?
- Sometimes personal transformation occurs in a radical leap forward. Other times transformation occurs gradually over a long period of time. When have you experienced (or are experiencing) both types of transformation?