

But Saul increased the more in power, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

- Acts 9:22

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Sources -

All bible text, unless otherwise indicated, is the Darby Translation. ASV indicates the American Standard Version, with KJV indicating the King James Version. Quotations are often included from various classic Christian commentaries such as John Gill's Expositor, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures, and others. Greek and Hebrew word definitions are often included which are from the Strong's Concordance, unless otherwise indicated. All of these sources, both the bible texts, commentaries, and word definition's are taken from the excellent source, the e-Sword Bible computer program found at <http://www.e-sword.net/index.html> unless otherwise indicated. Clipart in this lesson is courtesy of ChristiansUnite.com site at <http://clipart.christiansunite.com>

Introduction -

In Acts 9:1-31 we see Saul of Tarsus, before he is a Christian, furious to gather up all the believers he can, and force them to renounce their faith in Jesus, or die. But he meets Jesus miraculously on the road to Damascus, and is converted. He then sets out to preach the Gospel to others. This causes great confusion with many of the Jewish believers not accepting his sincerity. Some Gentiles are converted to the faith by his teaching. But his work teaching the Gentiles stirs up anger among some Jewish unbelievers who want to kill him as a traitor. This is the beginning of Paul the Apostles ministry.



Paul on the Damascus Road

Image courtesy of <http://clipart.christiansunite.com>

The Lesson text is from Acts 9:1-31

The lesson text used here is from The Darby Translation which is in the Public Domain from the excellent website CCEL (Christian Classics Ethereal Library) at <http://www.ccel.org/>.

1 But Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, came to the high priest
2 and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the way, both men and women, he might bring [them] bound to Jerusalem.

Comments -

But Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples - Paul was fiercely opposed to the Christian way, and wanted to by force any believers back to Judaism, or have them killed.

...and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the way... - He went to the High Priest himself and asked for authority to go to Damascus and arrest any believers he could find, and bring them to Jerusalem for punishment

3 But as he was journeying, it came to pass that he drew near to Damascus; and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven,
4 and falling on the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?
5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he [said], *I* am Jesus, whom *thou* persecutest.

Comments -

...Who art thou, Lord... - The fact that Saul called Him "Lord" may indicate that he knew this was God talking to him.

6 But rise up and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.
7 But the men who were travelling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but beholding no one.

Comments -

...hearing the voice but beholding no one - These other men with Saul were speechless with surprise because they also heard the voice but couldn't see anyone.

8 And Saul rose up from the earth, and his eyes being opened he saw no one. But leading [him] by the hand they brought him into Damascus.
9 And he was three days without seeing, and neither ate nor drank.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Bible Commentary from the e-Sword Bible program

<http://www.e-sword.net/index.html> -

Act 9:9

And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink — that is, according to the *Hebrew* mode of computation: he took no food during the remainder of that day, the entire day following, and so much of the subsequent day as elapsed before the visit of Ananias. Such a period of entire abstinence from food, in that state of mental absorption and revolution into which he had been so suddenly thrown, is in perfect harmony with known laws and numerous facts. But what three days those must have been! "Only one other space of three days' duration can be mentioned of equal importance in the history of the world" [Howson]. Since Jesus had been revealed not only to his eyes but to his *soul* (see on [Gal 1:15](#), [Gal 1:16](#)), the double conviction must have

immediately flashed upon him, that his whole reading of the Old Testament hitherto had been wrong, and that the system of legal righteousness in which he had, up to that moment, rested and prided himself was false and fatal. ...

Comments -

And he was three days without seeing, and neither ate nor drank. - During those three days Paul must have thought a great deal about his understanding of the Old Testament law, and about what the prophets said of the coming Messiah, and about his growing inspiration that the law could not save him from sin, but Jesus sacrifice could.

10 And there was a certain disciple in Damascus by name Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, [here am] I, Lord.

11 And the Lord [said] to him, Rise up and go into the street which is called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas one by name Saul, [he is] of Tarsus: for, behold, he is praying,

12 and has seen [in a vision] a man by name Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he should see.

13 And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man how much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem;

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon thy name.

15 And the Lord said to him, Go, for this [man] is an elect vessel to me, to bear my name before both nations and kings and [the] sons of Israel:

16 for *I* will shew to him how much he must suffer for my name.

Comments -

...Go, for this [man] is an elect vessel to me, to bear my name before both nations and kings and [the] sons of Israel – Ananias was justified to fear Paul's reputation. The believers in Jerusalem didn't believe in Paul's conversion either (see Acts 9:26 below). Some must have feared that this could be a trap.

17 And Ananias went and entered into the house; and laying his hands upon him he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest, that thou mightest see, and be filled with [the] Holy Spirit.

18 And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he saw, and rising up was baptised;

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Bible Commentary from the e-Sword Bible program

<http://www.e-sword.net/index.html> -

Act 9:18

there fell from his eyes as it were scales — “This shows that the blindness as well as the cure was supernatural. Substances like scales would not form naturally in so short a time” [Webster and Wilkinson]. And the medical precision of Luke's language here is to be noted. ...

Comments -

And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he saw... - God healed Paul's eyes here and caused what felt or seemed like scales to fall away so that he could see. There isn't any indication here that his sight wasn't perfect at that point. Some believe that Paul's later sickness was due to his eyes still being sickly. They also think that poor eye sight was why Paul possibly wrote with large letters in one epistle (See Galatians 4:15 and 6:11). But there are scholars who think Paul's reference to eye's in Galatians 4:15, and large letter(s) in Galatians 6:11 is not

referring to bad eyesight. See Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, and John Gill on these verses.

19 and, having received food, got strength. And he was with the disciples who [were] in Damascus certain days.

20 And straightway in the synagogues he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God.

21 And all who heard were astonished and said, Is not this *he* who destroyed in Jerusalem those who called on this name, and here was come for this purpose, that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in power, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

Comments -

I would think that Paul increased in power to address the crowds, and to out-argue his critics, as he further studied the Old Testament passages with his new Christian understanding. He received new inspiration from God to better understand the meaning of many Old Testament passages, and prophecies. He would gain strength, and experience, as he continued to out argue the Jewish leaders who came against him.

23 Now when many days were fulfilled, the Jews consulted together to kill him.

Comments -

The Companion Bible, and the Pulpit Commentary both think it's possible that these "many days" are the three years that Paul talked about in Galatians 1:18. That is the three years that Paul spent often alone, being taught by Christ Himself. Both commentaries refer to 1 Kings 2:33, 38-39 where a more or less equal phrase is used for a space of three years. In Galatians 1 Paul tells us about these early days of his ministry and where he got the authority to teach what he did.

Gal 1:11 But I let you know, brethren, as to the glad tidings which were announced by me, that they are not according to man.

Gal 1:12 For neither did I receive them from man, neither was I taught them, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.

Gal 1:16 was pleased to reveal his Son in me, that I may announce him as glad tidings among the nations, immediately I took not counsel with flesh and blood,

Gal 1:17 nor went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and again returned to Damascus.

Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to make acquaintance with Peter, and I remained with him fifteen days;

So in Galatians 1:11-18 Paul says that he did not go to the other Apostles to get teaching about the Gospel. He also didn't get authority from them to teach what he did. He says he received the teaching, and the authority directly from Christ.

24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched also the gates both day and night, that they might kill him;

25 but the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Comments -

...a basket... - The Pulpit Commentary notes that 2 Corinthians 11:33 tells us, in the Greek wording, that it was a rope basket.

26 And having arrived at Jerusalem he essayed to join himself to the disciples, and all were afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

Comments -

...and all were afraid of him... - He went to Jerusalem, but the believers there were understandably very afraid of him, and did not believe that he was really a believer now. They thought it was a trap to get them.

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and related to them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem,

Comments -

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles... - It was Barnabas who believed Paul's conversion and took him to the others to convince them he was really a believer now. The Companion Bible says the "coming in and going out" is an expression meaning that Paul lived a normal life here in Jerusalem.

29 and speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and discussed with the Hellenists; but they sought to kill him.

30 And the brethren knowing it, brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

Comments -

...but they sought to kill him - These Hellenists were Jews who spoke Greek. But they were obviously still Orthodox in their Judaism. They apparently couldn't out argue Paul, and were so furious that they made a secret plan to assassinate him.

And the brethren knowing it... - But the believers found out somehow and got Paul out of the city. Then they got him passage, probably on a ship, to go back to his home in Tarsus (in modern southeast Turkey). The Pulpit Commentary notes Paul saying (in Acts 22: 17- 21) that God warned him in a dream to leave because they would not accept his message.

31 The assemblies then throughout the whole of Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Comments -

The churches then had peace now. That wouldn't have been because of Paul's departure. The Pulpit Commentary says this was because the Jews were occupied with a greater threat than from the Roman Emperor Caligula who planned to put an idol of himself as god in the Jerusalem temple in the holy of holies. The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary adds that the Jews sent a delegation to try and change the emperor's mind. But they failed. Herod Agrippa was able to convince Caligula to wait a little while. Caligula then died and that ended the plan.

On a different point, the Pulpit Commentary says the shipwreck Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 12:24 may have happened at this time when he sailed here from Caesaria to Seleucia on his way home to Tarsus.

Conclusion -

In this lesson on Acts 9:1-31 we have seen that Saul of Tarsus did not believe in Jesus at the first. He was furiously opposed to the believers and went toward Damascus to gather them up and force them to renounce their faith in Jesus, or die. But he miraculously meet Jesus Christ in a vision on the road to Damascus, and was converted. He then set out to preach the Gospel to others. Few believed

him at the start. His teaching caused real confusion. Many of the Jewish believers did not believe his sincerity. Some Gentiles did believe Saul's teaching and became believers. But his work among the Gentiles made some Jewish unbelievers furious and they wanted to kill him as a traitor. This is the beginning

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