

Acts 9:1-31: Conversion of Saul (Part 1)

From Persecutor of Christ to Proclaimer of Christ

I. Why is this passage here?

A. Provides a “bridge” between Acts 8:1 and Acts 13

B. Provides context and background for Paul’s apostleship and ministry

C. Demonstrates God’s Power to Save

Acts 9:15-16: “But the Lord said to [Ananias], “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

D. Demonstrates God’s Faithfulness to Build His Church

Acts 9:31: “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”

II. Saul’s Mission: Persecute Christ and Destroy “the Way” (v. 1-2)

A. Who was Saul? (Acts 22:3-5, 26:4-5, Gal 1:13-14, Phil 3:4-6)

1. Heritage: Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, born in Tarsus
2. Upbringing: Pharisee, raised in Jerusalem, educated at the feet of Gamaliel, quickly advancing in Judaism
3. Spiritual Condition: zealous for God and the traditions of men, self-righteous, opposed to Jesus of Nazareth, blind in unbelief

B. What was his mission?

1. Acts 22:4 - “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivery to prison both men and women.”
2. Acts 26:9-11 - “I locked up many of the saints in prison...when they were put to death I cast my vote against them...tried to make them blaspheme...in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”
3. Gal 1:13 - “I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.”

“He was a callous, self-righteous, bigoted murderer set on a full-scale inquisition...The story of Saul’s spiritual transformation ought to remind us never to write anyone off as being beyond the love of Christ.”¹

III. God’s Mission: Proclaim Christ and Strengthen “the Way” (v.3-31)

A. Saul Encounters the Risen Christ (v. 3-7)

1. Personal interaction with the risen Christ - not a vision or dream
2. General Pattern of Salvation:
 - a) God sought him out
 - b) God confronted his sin
 - c) God called him to obey
3. Christ’s Union with Believers

B. Saul is Humbled (v. 8-9)

1. Saul is physically and spiritually brought low - Loss of sight and appetite, having to be led by the hand to Damascus

¹ Hughes, R. Kent. Acts: The Church Afire. pg. 126,127

- a) Time for reflection and consideration of all that had taken place
 - b) Deut 28:28-29 - connects disobedience with blindness in the middle of the day
 - c) Deut 9:18 - Moses is laid low before the Lord because of Israel's rebellion
2. Being humbled is a foundational part of our conversion experience

*"God crushed Saul, bringing him to the point of total consecration...God led him through the process of reconstructing everything he was and did. Although salvation is an instantaneous transformation from death to life, darkness to light, it takes time to plumb the depths of its meaning and richness. Saul began that process."*²

C. God's Chosen Instruments (v. 10-16)

- 1. God Chose Ananias to be a part of Saul's conversion
 - a) Ananias knew Jesus
 - b) Jesus asked Ananias to exercise faith, trust and obedience in spite of his fear and hesitation
 - (1) We can express our concern to God with a humble heart and ask him to help us trust and obey him.
 - (2) God delights in using the redeemed in His redemptive work. In what way might God be calling you to exercise faith in connection with His redemptive work?
- 2. Saul as God's Chosen Instrument
 - a) Rom 1:1 - "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.
 - b) Chosen to Proclaim Christ to Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel
 - c) Chosen Suffer for the sake of Christ
 - d) Chosen to depend on God in prayer – May we wait on the Lord's provision and deliverance with humble hearts oriented toward communion with God in prayer.

D. The Blind Receive Sight (v. 17-19)

- 1. Ananias walked by faith and not by sight
- 2. Ananias forgave his brother
- 3. Saul was blind, but now he can see!!
- 4. Saul rose, was baptized, and strengthened
 - a) Inward transformation leads to an outward profession

IV. Key Take Aways

- A. God has the power to save the "Unsaveable" (1 Tim 1:12-16).
- B. God makes his enemies his friend.
- C. We are all "Instruments in the Redeemers Hands"
- D. God's purposes will prevail. Christ will build His Church

² MacArthur, John. New Testament Commentary: Acts 1-12. pg. 270,271