

# Acts 9 Commentary

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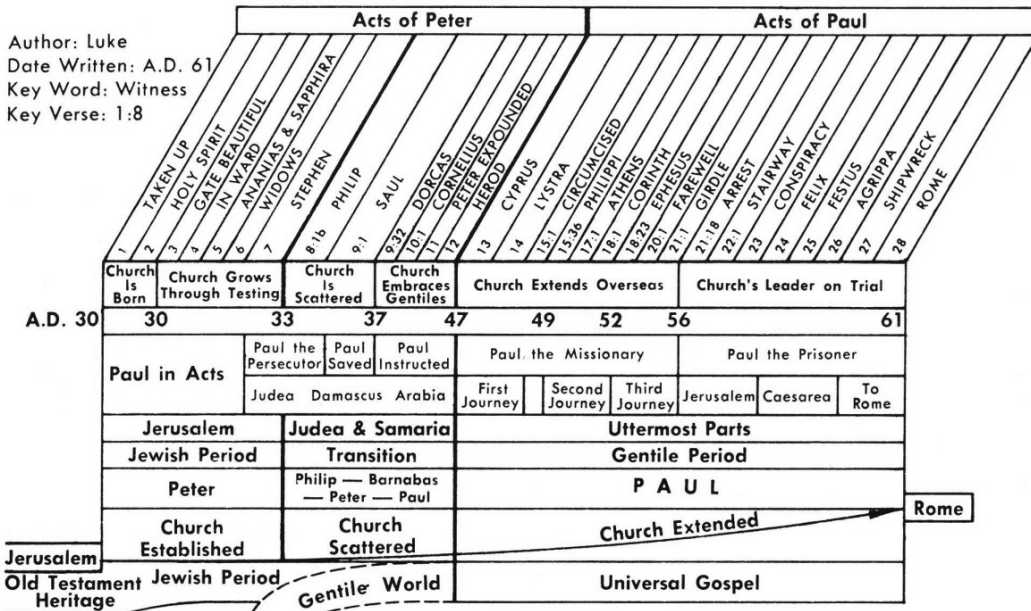
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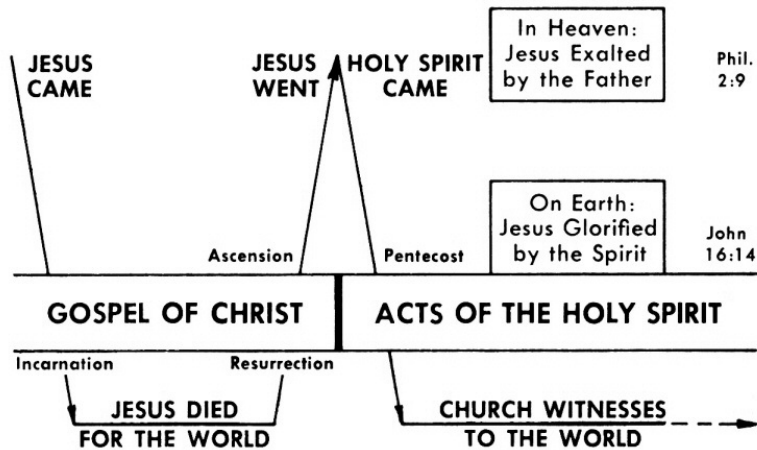
Author: Luke  
 Date Written: A.D. 61  
 Key Word: Witness  
 Key Verse: 1:8



Click chart to enlarge

Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

### THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

Acts 9:1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

- **Saul** Acts 11-13, 19-21; 7:58; 8:3; Acts 22:3,4; Acts 26:9-11; 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Php 3:6; 1 Ti 1:13
- **breathing** Ps 27:12
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL STEPS ON CENTER STAGE

**TIME APPROXIMATION** - When do the events in Acts occur in relation to the preceding events? There are a number of resources that give dates of the historical events in Acts, but the reader should understand that they are all approximations. One problem is that there is even disagreement on the date of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection, some sources saying A.D. 33 and others A.D. 30. **That said, the dates listed are simply to give you a sense of the span of time of the historical events in the Book of Acts.**

Thus Pentecost would be 30-33, Stephen's stoning 31-33, Paul converted 33-34, Paul's meeting with Peter in Jerusalem 36-37, Paul

ministers in Syria/Cilicia 37-45, Peter's witness to Cornelius 38. Thus the events in Acts 10 occur from 5-10 years after the Church is born in Acts 2.

- [ESV Timeline](#) - below is an excerpt from the larger chart.

33 (or 30) Jesus returns to Judea, is crucified, and resurrected. James the brother of Jesus becomes a believer after witnessing the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 12:17). Jesus ascends to the Father's right hand (Acts 1). Jesus' first followers receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and begin to proclaim the gospel (Acts 2).

33/34\* Paul witnesses the resurrected Lord on the way to Damascus and is commissioned as an apostle to the nations (Acts 9; Gal. 1:15–16).

34–37 Paul ministers in Damascus and Arabia (Acts 9:19–22; 26:20; Gal. 1:16–18).

36 Pilate loses his position for incompetence.

36/37\* Paul meets with Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–30; Gal. 1:18).

37–45 Paul ministers in Syria, Tarsus, and Cilicia (Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21).

38\* Peter witnesses to Cornelius (Acts 10).

\* The Asterisk indicates approximation.

/ The slash mark indicates "either/or"

- [Biblehub Timeline](#)
- [Book of Acts Story and Structure](#)
- [BlueLetterBible Timeline](#) - see excerpt below

Event	Reference	Year (AD)
Descent of the Holy Spirit	Acts 2:1-13	30
Setting Up of the Church	Acts 2:40-47	30
First Persecutions	Acts 4:1-22; 5:21-42; 7:1-60	35
Philip at Samaria	Acts 8:4-13	35
Conversion of Saul	Acts 9:1-9	36
First Gentile Converted	Acts 10:1-48	40
Founding of Church at Antioch	Acts 11:19-30	43
Writing of Matthew's Gospel	Matthew	43

**Below is a Basic Acts Timeline** (Ben Witherington - [The Acts of the Apostles : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary](#))

**A.D. 30**—Jesus is crucified under Pontius Pilate. Resurrection appearances, Pentecost, initial growth of the church in and around Jerusalem.

**A.D. 31–33**—The events of Acts 3–7 transpire with mounting concern on the part of Jews and especially the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The rising tension results in vigilante action taken against Stephen, and then an authorized effort under Saul to disrupt and even destroy this new messianic sect, involving persecution and even the death of some Christians (cf. Acts 8:1–3 to Gal. 1:13). The persecution led various Christians such as Philip to go elsewhere, such as Samaria, and bear witness (Acts 8:4–40). THE FIRST EIGHT CHAPTERS OF ACTS COVER ONLY THE PERIOD FROM ABOUT 30 TO 33.

**A.D. 33 or 34**—Saul is converted on the road to Damascus during his period of persecuting the church (Acts 9; Galatians 1).

**A.D. 34–37 or 38**—Saul is in Damascus and Arabia; he returns to Jerusalem for the first time as a Christian in 37.

**A.D. 37–46**—Saul sent off to Tarsus and home region. In the meantime, Peter has a notable ministry up and down the Mediterranean coast between Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea, involving at least one notable Gentile and his family. This, in turn, leads to a report to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11). The precise timing is unknown.

**A.D. 43**—James (brother of John) is killed, and Peter is imprisoned.

**A.D. 44**—Agabus's prophecy in Antioch; Herod Agrippa dies.

NOTE THAT LUKE'S DATA FOR THE PERIOD A.D. 37–46 ARE CLEARLY SKETCHY. HE IS BETTER

INFORMED ABOUT THE PERIOD AFTER THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (49), IN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE PAULINE PART OF THE STORY.

**A.D. 46–48**—famine in Judea.

**A.D. 48**—Second visit by Paul to Jerusalem (with Barnabas, cf. Galatians 2) for famine relief to Jerusalem (Acts 11:29–30).

**A.D. 49**—Claudius expels Jews from Rome; Priscilla and Aquila go to Corinth; Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

**A.D. 50–52**—Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:23).

**A.D. 51 or 52**—The Gallio incident in Corinth (Acts 18).

**A.D. 53–57**—Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:26).

**A.D. 57–59**—Paul in custody under Felix, and then briefly under Festus.

**A.D. 59–60**—Paul goes to Rome (for a fuller discussion of the Pauline material for the period from 48 to 50, see below).

**A.D. 60–62**—Paul under house arrest in Rome.

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**William Marty** introduces this section - Stephen's message had convinced Saul that the new faith was a threat to Judaism. From his perspective the followers of Christ were apostate Jews who threatened to corrupt Judaism. With the zeal of a fanatic, he devoted himself to stopping this new faith. The fervor of his religious fanaticism is seen in his request to the Sanhedrin to extradite and punish believers who had sought safety in Damascus. (Borrow [Moody Bible Commentary page 1692](#))

**William Larkin** writes that "the most important event in human history apart from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the conversion to Christianity of Saul of Tarsus." ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**J. Gresham Machen** -"The Christian movement ... in A.D. 35 ... would have appeared to a superficial observer to be a Jewish sect. Thirty years later it was plainly a world religion. This establishment as a world religion, to almost as great an extent as any great historical movement can be ascribed to one man, was the work of Paul." (As quoted by Derek Thomas - Reformed Expository Commentary - Acts)

**Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord - Breathing threats** is an idiomatic phrase meaning in essence to strongly threaten and coupled with murder means Saul was threatening to kill them! The present tense signifies he was continually passionately consumed with hatred for the followers of Jesus! This not a a case of just a touch of animosity! Paul himself after his conversion described this as with "zeal" he was "**a persecutor of the church**." (Php 3:6+, cf 1 Cor 15:9+, Gal 1:13+, 1 Ti 1:13). In Acts 26:11 he described himself as "furiously enraged at them" like a religious **bounty hunter!**"

**Still** is the adverb **eti** (again, still) which "expresses the continual action, indicating that Saul's fierce opposition did not abate with time." (Barrett) Gilbrant adds that **eti** "can be used to indicate constancy, permanence (2 Sa 3:35), or action that goes on continually." ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#)) Clearly still links Saul's present murderous mindset with his similar mindset in Acts 8:3. This desire to "snuff out" Christianity was not a passing paroxysm, but a persistent passion. Even witnessing the powerful testimony of Stephen being stoned did not dissuade him from his passion to persecute disciples of Jesus.

**Longenecker** describes several OT precedents which might help understand how Saul might have been able to rationalize his vicious hatred of the followers of Jesus...

In days when the rabbis viewed the keeping of the Mosaic law as the vitally important prerequisite for the coming of the Messianic Age (cf. b Sanhedrin 97b–98a; b Baba Bathra 10a; b Yoma 86b), Paul could validate his actions against the Christians by reference to such godly precedents as (1) Moses' slaying of the immoral Israelites at Baal-peor (cf. Num 25:1–5); (2) Phinehas's slaying of the Israelite man and Midianite woman in the plains of Moab (cf. Nu 25:6–15); and (3) the actions of Mattathias and the Hasidim in rooting out apostasy among the people (cf. 1 Macc 2:23–28, 42–48). Perhaps even the divine commendation of Phinehas's action in Nu 25:11–13 rang in his ears....2 Macc 6:13 counsels that "it is a mark of great kindness when the impious are not let alone for a long time, but punished at once." ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Saul** ([4569](#)) (**Saulos**) is the [Hellenized](#) form of the Hebrew name **Sauol** (which is used by Jesus in Acts 9:4 - [see below](#)) ([07586](#)) which means "desired" or "asked for" (Heb verb - [sha'al](#) = ask something of someone). Luke describes the change of names to Paul after his conversion writing "But **Saul**, who was also known as **Paul**, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, (Acts 13:9) Saul (in his heart) was guilty of murder of Stephen even though he did not literally toss a stone for Luke says "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death."

**Matthew Henry** on Saul - His name in Hebrew was **Saul-desired**, though as remarkably little in stature (NO ACTUAL RECORD IN SCRIPTURE) as his namesake king Saul was tall and stately; one of the ancients calls him, *Homo tricubitalis*-but four feet and a half in height; his Roman name which he went by among the citizens of Rome was **Paul-little**. He was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a

free city of the Romans, and himself a freeman of that city. His father and mother were both native Jews; therefore he calls himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews; he was of the tribe of Benjamin, which adhered to Judah. His education was in the schools of Tarsus first, which was a little Athens for learning; there he acquainted himself with the philosophy and poetry of the Greeks. Thence he was sent to the university at Jerusalem, to study divinity and the Jewish law. His tutor was Gamaliel, an eminent Pharisee. He had extraordinary natural parts, and improved mightily in learning....This is the young man on whom the grace of God wrought this mighty change here recorded, about a year after the ascension of Christ (APPROXIMATION), or little more.

Note that the word translated **Saul** in Acts 9:1 is **NOT** the same word translated **Saul** in Acts 9:4 - see note there for explanation.

**Saulos** - 15x in 15v - Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1; Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:22; Acts 9:24; Acts 11:25; Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1; Acts 13:2; Acts 13:7; Acts 13:9

**Steven Ger** gives an excellent background on **Saul** -

His Hebrew name, **Saul**, reflects the pride of his family in the most illustrious historical member of their [tribe of Benjamin](#), the [first king of Israel](#). He also was given a Roman, or Latin, name, **Paulus**. Although it was common custom for Romans to be granted three names, the custom among Jews of the Roman Empire seems to have been to assign only two names (from Simon Legasse, "Paul's Pre-Christian Career According to Acts," in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, vol. 4: Palestinian Setting*).

Growing up in cosmopolitan [Tarsus](#), Saul was probably conversant with Greek since childhood, but probably spoke either Hebrew or Aramaic in his home. Considering his upbringing in Tarsus and Jerusalem, his formal education, and judging from his epistles, it is clear that Saul was comfortably conversant in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and perhaps even Latin.

Saul, of course, was a fervent member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of Judaism, and it is probable that Saul's father shared that affiliation. The Mishnah provides some indication of the rigorous education Jewish children (or at least, the children of Pharisees) received. [*Mishnah*, Avot 5:21] At the age of five, Jewish boys began their formal study of the Hebrew Scripture; being educated not only in the content, but also in the prescribed rules of biblical interpretation. At the age of ten, Jewish boys added the study of Pharisaic, or rabbinic, legal traditions. It is probable that it was at this age that Saul was sent to Jerusalem to study "at the feet of" Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), where he may have lived with family members (Saul's sister lived in Jerusalem and his family was apparently politically well connected in Jerusalem, as his nephew is able to learn of the assassination plot against Saul in Acts 23:16).

At the age of thirteen, Saul would become [Bar Mitzvah](#), a "son of the commandment," which was formal recognition that he was a full-fledged, responsible participant in the Jewish community. It was in Jerusalem that Saul, like all rabbinic students, would also have been trained in a manual trade, in his particular case, that of tentmaking, although it is still debated as to whether this specifically involved working with textiles, leather or goatskin. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**A T Robertson** has a great word picture on **empneo** - Not "breathing out," but "breathing in" (inhaling) as in Aeschylus and Plato or "breathing on" (from Homer on). The partitive genitive of [apeile](#) and **phonos** 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. Jacob had said that "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf" (Gen. 49:27). This greatest son of Benjamin (cf Php 3:5) was fulfilling this prophecy (Furneaux). 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. In Acts 26:11 Luke quotes Paul as saying that he was "exceedingly mad against them." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Matthew Henry** paints quite a picture of Saul's anti-christ state of mind at this time - He even breathed in this as in his element. He breathed it out with heat and vehemence; his very breath, like that of some venomous creatures, was pestilential. He breathed death to the Christians, wherever he came; he puffed at them in his pride (Ps. 12:4, 5), spit his venom at them in his rage. Saul yet breathing thus intimates, (1.) That he still persisted in it; not satisfied with the blood of those he had slain, he still cries, *Give, give*. (2.) That he should shortly be of another mine; as yet he breathes out threatenings and slaughter, but he has not long to live such a life as this, that breath will be stopped shortly.

**Wiersbe** - In spite of his great learning (Acts 26:24), Saul was spiritually blind (2 Cor. 3:12-18) and did not understand what the Old Testament really taught about the Messiah. Like many others of his countrymen, he stumbled over the Cross (1 Cor. 1:23) because he depended on his own righteousness and not on the righteousness of God (Rom. 9:30-10:13; Phil. 3:1-10). Many self-righteous religious people today do not see their need for a Saviour and resent it if you tell them they are sinners. ([BEC](#))

**Breathing** ([1709](#)) (**empneo** from **en** = into + **pneo** = to blow, in NT used of dangerous, stormy wind, cf Mt 7:25, Jn 6:18) means

literally to blow into or upon and figuratively was used in classic Greek to mean "be alive (to breathe)" or "to inspire (inhale)." In the Septuagint it is interesting that it is used frequently of the Lord's command to Israel to "not leave anything alive that breathes" in the cities He had given them for inheritance (Dt 20:16; cf. Joshua 10:28,30,35,37,39,40 = strike every "breathing" thing). The picture of **empneo** is to be full of or ready to burst with threats. Philo uses **empneo** of breathing or snorting (especially with *megas* - great) to picture arrogance or rage, a good picture of Saul who was "**ravaging** the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison." (Acts 8:3+)

**Knowing** says of Paul that "threatening and murdering were as it were **the atmosphere which he breathed**, and in and by which he lived!"

**THOUGHT** - What a picture of Paul's perverted passion! And he does it for **alie**! Does this not convict us who possess the Gospel **truth** and yet are so often **indifferent** and **lacksidaisical** about sharing our faith with lost men and women who will spend eternity in Hell unless they hear and receive the Gospel we possess? I spoke today with a believer who is visiting an unbelieving friend on death's door and asked if he had shared the Good News with him before that soul stepped off into eternity? He answered that it had "*crossed his mind*!" Beloved, if we find ourselves in a similar "**crucis**" situation, may God's Spirit grant us grace to let what **crosses our mind** be translated into boldness which will **cross our lips** to tell them of the **Cross** before they **cross over into eternity**! In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**Threats** (547) (**apeile** from **apeileo** = to threaten or menace) means a threatening or threat, a warning that one will punish another.

**John Stott** on Saul's **threats and murder** - This, then, was the man (more wild animal than human being) who in a few days' time would be a converted and baptized Christian. But he was in no mood to consider the claims of Christ. His heart was filled with hatred and his mind was poisoned by prejudice. In his own language later, a "raging fury" obsessed him (Acts 26:11RSV). If we had met him as he left Jerusalem and (with the benefit of hindsight) had told him that before he reached Damascus he would have become a believer, he would have ridiculed the idea. Yet this was the case. He had left out of his calculations the sovereign grace of God. (Message of Acts)

**Murder** (548) (**phonos**) means is a noun describing killing, murder, slaughter, in classical Greek referring to the literal killing of someone. Depriving one of life by illegal or intentional act. Those reject the knowledge of God, He gives over to a depraved mind which includes those "filled with...**murder**" (Ro 1:29). Jesus described Saul's heart declaring "out of the heart come evil thoughts, **murders**." (Mt 15:19, Mk 7:21) **Phonos** describes Barabbas the murderer Pilate released instead of Jesus (Lk 23:19, 25+). In the future pouring out of God's wrath in the Tribulation, even after the horrible plagues the earth dwellers "did not repent of their **murders**." (Rev 9:21).

In his post-conversion testimony Paul declared "I persecuted this Way (DISCIPLES OF JESUS) **to the death**, binding and putting both men and women into prisons." (Acts 22:4)

**Phonos** - 9x in 9v - Mt. 15:19; Mk. 7:21; Mk. 15:7; Lk. 23:19; Lk. 23:25; Acts 9:1; Rom. 1:29; Heb. 11:37; Rev. 9:21

**Phonos** - 17v in the Septuagint - Exod. 5:3; Exod. 17:13; Exod. 22:2; Lev. 26:7; Num. 21:24; Deut. 13:15; Deut. 20:13; Deut. 22:8; Deut. 28:22; Job 21:22; Prov. 1:18; Prov. 28:17; Jer. 22:17; Ezek. 43:7; Ezek. 43:8; Ezek. 43:9; Hos. 4:2;

**Matthew Henry** on Saul's character - How bad he was, how very bad, before his conversion; just before he was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, did his utmost to root it out, by persecuting all that embraced it. In other respects he was well enough, as touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless (Php 3:6), a man of no ill morals, but a blasphemer of Christ, a persecutor of Christians, and injurious to both, 1 Ti 1:13. And so ill informed was his conscience that he thought he ought to do what he did against the name of Christ (Acts 6:9) and that he did God service in it, as was foretold, Jn. 16:2.

**Paul Apple** writes Saul was seeking to root out disciple adding that "Our transformed lives should be evident to the world; should not be difficult to identify those who freely claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ."

**Disciples** (3101) (**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*") describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf **inductive Bible study**) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A disciple is a "follower," someone who adheres completely to the teachings of another, making them his rule of life and conduct.

**NIDNTT** adds that **mathētēs** in John is often simply a term for "**Christian**" (Jn. 8:31; 13:35; 15:8)...**mathētēs** has the general sense of "Christian", one who believes in Jesus. **TDNT** adds that **mathetes** is regularly used in Acts for a Christian...the primary point to notice is that the relevant sections of Acts use it in the sense of those who have come to believe in Christ."

Beloved, there is a teaching out there (even in evangelical circles) which says a "**disciple**" is like a "super Christian" or a Christian who is more dedicated, more devoted, and as such has reached a higher level of spirituality than the "average" believer. This is a lie from the pit of hell (apologies for being so blunt)! A believer in Jesus Christ is a disciple of Jesus Christ. Period! Luke makes that blatantly clear in Acts where believers in Christ are called by the term **disciples** more often than any other designation. Some argue that the fact that **disciple** is not found after Acts signifies it was a unique designation and not meant to be applied to believers after that. The truth is that even the term "**believer**" is used only about 7 times after Acts. Furthermore the term Christian is used only twice in Acts (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28) and once by Peter (1 Pe 4:16) and we don't have any hesitancy in referring to a believer as a Christian! In addition, the term disciples is used over 20x compared to believers (3x - Acts 5:14, 10:45, 16:1). In summary, every true believer is a disciple of Jesus. Are you a true follower of Jesus?

**Ralph Earle** - As **followers** of Jesus we are to be, first of all, **learners**. We are to learn from Him by listening to Him, learn the truth that will set us free (John 8:32) and keep us from error. But we are also to learn from Him by looking at Him- learn how to live a life of beauty and blessing. (Word Meanings in the New Testament)

#### **Related Resource:**

- [What is the difference between a Christian and a disciple?](#)

**Went to the high priest** (cf Acts 26:10) - Perhaps Luke intends a play on words because the verb **forwent** is [proserchomai](#) which is used in other contexts of coming before God (Heb 4:16, Heb 7:25, Heb 11:6, 1 Pe 2:4). Here **Saul** comes before the man who theoretically should have been representing God in truth, but of course he was not because he refused to believe in Jesus, the Great High Priest! Presumably this was Caiaphas, the same one who presided over the illegal trial of Jesus, over trials of the apostles (Acts 4:6,7, 5:17, 21, 27) and over the trial of Stephen (Acts 7:1).

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**Spiritual Markers** - In his excellent course Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby has a subtopic called "A Spiritual Inventory" writing "I have found it helpful to identify "spiritual markers" in my life. Each time I encounter God's call or directions, I mentally build a spiritual marker at that point. A spiritual marker identifies a time of transition, decision, or direction when I clearly know that God has guided me. Over time I can look back at these spiritual markers and see how God has faithfully directed my life according to His divine purpose. When I review my spiritual markers, I can see more clearly the directions in which God has been moving my life and ministry." I can attest to Blackaby's words, for I look back on my life and can see God's hand ("spiritual markers") preparing me for the ministry in which I am currently involved. All that to say, Saul had a number of pre-conversion "spiritual markers" which prepared him for the ministry Jesus assigned to him.

**Stanley Toussaint** has a good summary of Saul's "spiritual markers" which prepared him for the work to which Jesus called him...

- (1) He knew the Jewish culture and language well (Acts 21:40; Phil. 3:5).
- (2) Because he was reared in Tarsus he was well acquainted with the Greek culture and its philosophies (Acts 17:22–31; Titus 1:12).
- (3) He possessed all the privileges of a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37; 22:23–29; 25:10–12).
- (4) He was trained and skilled in Jewish theology (Gal. 1:14).
- (5) Because he was capable in a secular trade he was able to support himself (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:4–18; 2 Cor. 11:7–11; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8).
- (6) God gave him zeal, leadership qualities, and theological insight. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

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**Paul Apple** - **GOD'S SURPRISING CHOICE FOR KEY MINISTRY** – THE CONVERSION AND COMMISSIONING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL - Think of God's surprising choices down through the ages:

- Abraham – Jewish nation from a family immersed in idolatry in the land of Ur
- Jacob – a conniving deceiver who schemed to snatch the birthright away from his twin brother Esau
- Rahab – a harlot of Jericho who by faith hid the spies and ended up as the mother of Boaz being included in the genealogy of the Messiah – what privileged service
- Gideon's small band of chosen warriors – who fought the enemy with trumpets and torches – showing that God chooses to display His power through weakness
- David – the runt of the litter; the youngest of the children of Jesse – all of whom were paraded past Samuel and rejected with the statement: "The Lord has not chosen these" (1 Sam. 16:10) but David was revealed to be the sovereign choice of God for

the kingship of the nation

- Each of the Apostles (fishermen, tax collector) – not the educated or the rich or the famous or the movers and shakers

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**Gotquestions on the [Damascus Road Experience](#)** - The phrase “**Damascus Road experience**” is used to describe a conversion which is dramatic and startling. Many people receive Christ in a life-changing, instantaneous experience, although many others describe their conversion as more of a gradual understanding of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (**ED**: YOURS TRULY WAS CONVERTED IN A NON-DRAMATIC WAY OVER A PERIOD OF 4-5 MONTHS). But both types of experiences have several things in common. **First**, salvation is of the Lord, by His will and according to His plan and purpose (Acts 22:14). As He does one way or another to each of us, Jesus made it clear to Saul that he had gone his own way for long enough. Now he was to become an instrument in the hands of the Master to do His will as He had foreordained it. **Second**, the response of both Saul and all those who are redeemed by Christ is the same: “What do you want me to do?” Like Saul, we do not bargain, negotiate, question, or come halfway. The response of the redeemed is obedience. When God truly touches our hearts, our only response can be, “Lord, may your will be done and may you use me to do it.” Such was the experience of Saul on the Damascus Road. Saul’s dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus was the beginning of an incredible journey. And while not all conversions are as startling as Saul’s, each of us is commissioned by Jesus to live in obedience to Him (John 14:15), love one another in His name (1 John 2:23), “know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,” (Philippians 3:10), and tell the world of the wonderful riches in Christ.

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**Charles Swindoll** - There is no one more persistent than God when He decides to save someone. And few can appreciate God’s persistent, pursuing love more than [Francis Thompson](#). By almost any measure of success, Thompson was a failure. He failed to become a Roman Catholic priest. He failed to become a medical doctor. He lasted only two weeks as a surgical instrument maker and two months as an encyclopedia salesman—during which time he read the entire work and sold nothing. He lasted a short time in the military before failing the physical exam, most likely due to his severe addiction to opium. Eventually, he left home to make his own way in London, hoping to become a successful writer. But, as one biographer put it, “It had been his habit to obey the command of the drug by the disposal of his books and medical instruments.” In a short time, he was destitute, wandering the streets of London in filthy rags and broken shoes, unable to keep work when fortunate enough to find it, and then reduced to selling matches to keep from starving. But within the shirtless vagabond beat a heart that God had claimed for Himself. After reading Thompson’s poetry, Wilfrid and Alice Meynell, editors of the magazine *Merrie England*, rescued Thompson from the streets. They gave him a place to live and brokered his first book deal, which made him an instant celebrity. He later wrote—in the words of many critics—the greatest English ode ever put in print: “[The Hound of Heaven](#),” a mystical poem about God’s relentless pursuit of His beloved.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes I sped;  
And shot, precipitated,  
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,  
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.  
But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
They beat—and a Voice beat  
More instant than the Feet—  
“All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.”  
(**ED**: Here is the long version of [Hound of Heaven](#))

Many can appreciate Francis Thompson’s story because it mirrors their own desperate flights from the grace of God. Thanks to the Lord’s persistent, pursuing love—and despite their own efforts to reject His gracious gift of freedom—they now enjoy the kind of life none could have imagined. (Swindoll’s Living Insights - NT Commentary)



## VERSIONS OF PAUL'S CONVERSION

<b>Acts 9+</b> <b>Luke's Version of Saul's Conversion</b>	<b>Acts 22+</b> <b>Paul's Defense before Jews at Temple</b>	<b>Acts 26+</b> <b>Paul Trial before King Agrippa II in Caesarea</b>
<p>As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:3-4)</p>	<p>"But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Acts 22:6-7+)</p>	<p>While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'" (Acts 26:12-14+)</p>
<p>And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." (Acts 9:5)</p>	<p>"And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'" (Acts 22:8)</p>	<p>"And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'" (Acts 26:15)</p>
<p>"But get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:6)</p>	<p>"And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'" (Acts 22:10)</p>	<p>"But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'" (Acts 26:16-18)</p>
<p>The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. (Acts 9:7)</p>	<p>"And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me." (Acts 22:9)</p>	

<p>Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. (Acts 9:8)</p>	<p>“But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.” (Acts 22:11)</p>	
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**Acts 9:2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

- **and asked for letters from him** Acts 9:14; 7:19; 22:5; 26:12; Esther 3:8-13; Ps 82:2-4
- **the synagogues** Acts 6:9; 13:14,15; 28:17-21
- **if he found any belonging to the Way.** Acts 19:9,23; 22:5; 28:22
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PERSECUTION OF THE WAY

**And asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus-** It is fascinating that Saul's action illustrates the saying "[the enemy of my enemy is my friend](#)," because here we see Saul, a Pharisee, asking for letters from a Sadducee (probably Caiaphas)! Stated another way, their common hatred of Jesus made them "[strange bedfellows](#)!"

Paul's own "commentary" on his obtaining permission from the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem is found in Acts 22:4-5

I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

In Acts 26:12 Paul adds

“While so engaged (I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities - Acts 26:11) as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

**A T Robertson** on the need for **letters** - Julius Ceasar and Augustus had granted the high priest and Sanhedrin jurisdiction over Jews in foreign cities, but this central ecclesiastical authority was not always recognized in every local community outside of Judea. Paul says that he received his authority to go to Damascus from the (chief) priests (Acts 26:10) and “**all the Council of the elders** ([presbuterion](#) - another name for the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court in Jerusalem)” (Acts 22:5). ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Toussaint** on **letters from** the high priest - Damascus (see its location on the map) was not under the control of Judea, Galilee, or the Decapolis. What jurisdiction would the high priest have over synagogues in Damascus? This is usually answered by saying Rome recognized the right of extradition when the high priest in Jerusalem demanded it. But this can also be explained in another way. At that time Damascus may have been under the [Nabatean](#) king, [Aretas IV](#) (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32,33). In order to gain favor with the anti-Roman Jews, [Aretas](#), who hated the Romans, would have conceded this favor to the high priest. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Matthew Henry** - The high priest needed not to be stirred up to persecute the Christians, he was forward enough to do it but it seems the young persecutor drove more furiously than the old one. Leaders in sin are the worst of sinners and the proselytes which the scribes and Pharisees make often prove seven times more the children of hell than themselves. ([Commentary](#))

**Steven Ger** adds that "A treaty had been established between Rome and Judea in the intertestamental period which effectively extended the high priest's authority in Jewish communities throughout the Roman Empire (1 Macc. 15:20-24), including the right of extradition....The letters from the high priest gave Saul jurisdiction over the Jews of Damascus and authority to arrest the Christian

"heretics," both men and women alike, and transfer them back to Jerusalem for interrogation and trial. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Utley** on **letters** - The Roman government had given limited authority to the Sanhedrin to conduct and control events in the synagogues or related to Jewish life in the Empire (cf. 1 Macc. 15:16–21 or Josephus, Antiq. 14:10:2). Judaism was a recognized, legal religion of the Greco-Roman world. Apparently these were letters of extradition for the Jewish Christians who had fled Jerusalem in the face of the Jewish persecution (cf. Acts 9:14, 21; 22:5; 26:10).

**Synagogues** (4864)(**sunagoge** from **sunágo** = lead together, assemble or bring together) refers to a group of people "going with one another" (**sunago**) literally describes a bringing together or congregating in one place. Eventually, **sunagoge** came to mean the place where they congregated together. At this time in the early stages of Christianity, clearly the disciples of Jesus (being almost all Jewish) were still closely affiliated with orthodox Jewish synagogues, explaining why they were targeted by Saul for "purification" of the corrupting influences of the teaching of Jesus.

**So that - Term of purpose.** What is the purpose?

**If he found any belonging to the Way** - And where would he find them? In the Jewish synagogue in Damascus, for as MacArthur explains below ([note](#)) these first Jewish Christians did not immediately separate from their association with the synagogue. This would explain why Saul needed letters from the Jewish Sanhedrin, giving him the right and the power to come into the synagogues in Damascus and in effect "[extradite](#)" the disciples of Jesus to Jerusalem.

**The Way** is another name for the **disciples of Jesus**, Christians who at this stage of the church development, had converted to Christianity out of Judaism. The Way is mentioned 4 times in Acts - Acts 19:9,23 Acts 24:14 Acts 24:22.

**Marty** notes that "The designation of believers as belonging to **the Way** referred to a distinctive moral and spiritual way of life. Significantly, this is in contrast to Jewish "[halacha](#)," a Hebrew term meaning "**the way of walking**," used of rabbinic explanations and applications of Mosaic law. Instead of following "**halacha**," these believers follow **the way** of the Messiah." (Borrow [Moody Bible Commentary page 1692](#))

The opponents of **the Way** often referred to them as members of "**the sect of the Nazarenes**" (Acts 24:5, cf Acts 24:14 "**the Way which they call a sect**"; Acts 28:22 = "**concerning this sect**"). Notice how they would generally avoid using the Name Jesus or Christ. Instead in this case they use Nazarene in a derogatory sense, for this name was repeatedly linked with Jesus in the NT - (Mt. 2:23; 26:71; Lk 18:37; Jn 18:5, 7; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; Acts 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9)

Notice that the Greek is very specific here - Luke says not "a Way" but "**the Way**." Christianity is not one of many ways to God but is "**the way**," the only way! Proverbs describes the approach of most people in the world declaring "There **isa way** which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." (Pr 14:12). Jesus made it clear that He alone was the way (cf Acts 4:12) when He declared "I am **the way**, and the truth, and the life; (absolutely) no one comes to the Father but through Me." (Jn 14:6). Even the demon possessed girl knew that Paul and Silas were proclaiming "**the way of salvation**." (Acts 16:17). In Acts 18:25 Apollos "had been instructed in the **way of the Lord**."

In Paul's third mention of his conversion on the Damascus road, he declares "I saw on**the way** a light from heaven." (Acts 26:13) In other words on **the way** to persecute Christians he encountered **the Way** of salvation, the Savior Himself! Stated another way, as Saul journeyed on his way to **arrest** members of the Way, he himself was **arrested** by the One Who alone is the Way! What divine irony! Compare parallel uses of the way - "**the way** into the holy place" (Heb 9:8), "**the way** of truth" (2 Pe 2:2), "**the way** of righteousness" (2 Pe 2:21)

Jesus warned there were two ways, one broad, the other narrow, but only one way leads to eternal life...

**Enter** (aorist imperative) through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and **the way** is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 "For the gate is small and **the way** is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Mt 7:13-14+)

**Comment:** Jesus' words are paralleled by the psalmist's description of the two ways in Psalm 1 - "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." (Ps 1:6)

**A T Robertson** adds that "It is a Jewish definition of life as in Isa. 40:3 "the way of the Lord"....The North American Indians call Christianity [the Jesus Road](#)." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Longenecker** comments that "The origin of the absolute use of **the Way**" for Christians is uncertain, though it surely had something to do with the early believers' consciousness of walking in the true path of God's salvation and moving forward to accomplish his purposes." (Expositors Bible Commentary)

**Matthew Henry** - Perhaps the Christians sometimes called themselves (THE WAY), from Christ *the Way* or, because they looked on themselves as but **on the way, and not yet at home**.

**NET Note** - The expression "**the way**" in ancient religious literature refers at times to "the whole way of life fr. a moral and spiritual viewpoint" (BDAG 692 s.v. ὁδός 3.c), and it has been so used of Christianity and its teachings in the book of Acts (see also 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). It is a variation of Judaism's idea of two ways, the true and the false, where "the Way" is the true one (1 En. 91:18 = "And now I tell you, my children, and I show you the paths of righteousness and the paths of violence"; 2 En. 30:15 = "I pointed out to him the two ways— light and darkness").

**Steven Ger on the Way** - This was a common name for the early church, probably short for "the way of Messiah" and perhaps based on Scripture passages which describe "the way of the righteous" (Ps. 1:6) and "the way of the Lord" (Isa. 40:3; Luke 3:4). ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

Did you notice the four names Luke used for **believers** in Acts 9?

- **Disciples** (Acts 9:1, 10, 19, 25, 26, 36, 38)
- **The Way** (Acts 9:2)
- **Saints** (Acts 9:13, 32, 41) - first time they are called "saints" in Acts (cf Acts 26:10).
- **Brother** (Acts 9:17)

**Both men and women** - Saul was a fanatic without compassion! Luke specifically mentions **men and women** three times (Acts 8:3, 9:2, 22:4). In Acts 22:4 Paul says "'I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both **men and women** into prisons." This demonstrates the depth of Saul's heartless cruelty, caring little if he ripped fathers and mothers away from their children! His intense hatred of Jesus and His followers so distorted his thinking that he was able to justify any suffering that might be inflicted on the disciples of Jesus and in turn on their children! This is the man Jesus choose to be His instrument to spread good news! No one is so far removed that the "long arm of the Lord" cannot reel them in! (Play great old Wayne Watson song "[The Long Arm of the Lord](#)") Keep praying for those lost friends and relatives stuck deeply in the miry pit of sin. My parents prayed for me for 20 years until the "Hound of heaven" stopped me cold at age 39 and then opened my eyes to the Gospel, using a study in the Minor Prophets to show me that Jesus was the Messiah and Redeemer.

**He might bring them bound to Jerusalem** - The letters from the Sanhedrin gave him the right to bind them and bring them back to Jerusalem. That is "bring them as prisoners," which **Robertson** characterizes as "in a state of sheer helplessness. " ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

Acts 22:4 "I persecuted this Way to the death (**ED**: ACTUAL EXECUTION!), binding and putting both men and women into prisons.

Acts 26:10 And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them (**ED**: THIS SUGGESTS THAT SAUL WAS A MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN. WHILE SAUL DID NOT PERSONALLY MURDER THE CHRISTIANS, HE CLEARLY WAS GUILTY AS AN "ACCOMPLICE.").

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## [The Long Arm of the Lord](#)

Wayne Watson

A million dark alleys you can hide in  
Dig a tunnel to the center of the earth  
Convinced you've got nobody to confide in  
Got you questioning the sum of what you're worth  
People label you the black sheep of the family  
Come collect upon your prodigal reward

**'Cause you can never outrun  
Or go beyond the reaches  
Of the long arm of the Lord**

I've been ashamed--I've been humbled and forgiven  
I've been chastened by my Father's loving hand

But still, at times, I go on with my evil  
It seems to constitute the nature of a man  
But forgiveness is as close as my confession  
And my sin amputated by His sword

**'Cause you can never outrun  
Or go beyond the reaches  
Of the long arm of the Lord**

If He gave to me all that I deserve  
This could be my final breath  
But with compassion in His eyes  
He's drawing me home  
Into His arms--Into His tender arms of rest  
There are pagans at the corners of creation  
Making light of the salvation that we know  
And with a small, narrow mind I give them over  
To the passion of the Godless seed they sow  
But, in truth, we have just as much potential  
To be Godly and perfected by the Word

My capacity for creative sin is never extended  
Past God's capacity for restoration.

**Acts 9:3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

- **As he was traveling** Acts 9:17; 22:6; 26:12,13; 1 Cor 15:8
- **a light from heaven flashed around him** Ps 104:2; 1 Ti 6:16; Rev 21:23; 22:5
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

## **REVELATION ON THE ROAD: THE RADIANT REDEEMER**

**As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus-** Jerusalem to Damascus is about 150-175 miles and at 30 miles a day they must have been on the road for 5-6 days (since at this time Saul was near Damascus). Notice also that by this time (we don't know how long after the persecution of Acts 8:1), the Gospel had spread to Syria, probably having been carried there by the believers who fled the persecution of Jerusalem. And since Damascus was a major city and on the renowned [King's Highway](#), it would have been a strategic center from which those believing Jews who had fled Jerusalem could have spread the Gospel. And somehow Saul got wind of these disciples of Jesus in Damascus and sought to eradicate what he considered to be a pernicious "[contagion](#)" which could conceivably corrupt the purity of Judaism. As an aside, assuming Saul went straight north, he would have gone through Samaria, where he would have encountered Samaritans radically transformed by the Gospel preached by the Hellenistic Jew Philip the evangelist and this would have undoubtedly stirred his rage against Christians even more!

Luke tells us about the timing of this event in Acts 26:13

**"at midday**, (Acts 22:6 "about noontime") O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me."

The interesting point is that generally unless a traveler was in a desperate hurry he would rest during the midday when the sun would be the most intense. That fact that he was traveling at midday emphasizes the zeal with which he was pursuing his task,

driving himself on his mission of persecution. It is interesting that **the sun was highest in the heavens** at the very time he encountered **the Son Who is highest in the heavens**

**As he was traveling, it happened** - God is sovereign, so in truth nothing that occurs in our life just "happens to happen!" God is in control (See Providence of God).

**Approaching** (drew near - present tense) ([1448](#)) ([eggizo](#)) means he was coming close to Damascus. How close? We cannot say, but given the fact that he was soon to be blinded one would reason that he was within less than a day's journey. Saul was near his journey's end in more ways than one!

**Damascus** - Damascus lays claim to being the oldest continually inhabited city in the world ([see history](#)), Biblical records going back to the time of Abram (Ge 14:15, 15:2) and it is mentioned 45x in 40 Old Testament verses, frequently as either an ally or enemy to either kings of Israel or Judah (cf 2 Sa 8:5-6; 1 Ki 11:24, 15:18, 19:15, 20:34; 2 Ki 5:12; 8:7, 9; 14:28, 16:9-12, etc). Damascus was on the famous [King's Highway](#) which connected to Egypt in the South ([pix](#)). At this time it was the capital of the Roman Province of Syria.

**Damascus** - 15x in NT -

Acts 9:2; Acts 9:3; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:10; Acts 9:19; Acts 9:22; Acts 9:27; Acts 22:5; Acts 22:6; Acts 22:10; Acts 22:11; Acts 26:12; Acts 26:20; 2 Co. 11:32; Gal. 1:17

**Related Resources:**

- American Tract Society [Damascus](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Damascus](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Damascus](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Damascus](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Damascus](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Damascus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Damascus](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Damascus](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Damascus](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Damascus](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Damascus](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Damascus](#)

After his Damascus road conversion Paul says he first returns to Damascus after his time in the Arabian desert

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and **returned once more to Damascus.** (Gal 1:15-17+)

**Longenecker** on **Damascus** - Damascus was a large and thriving commercial center at the foot of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. Since 64 B.C. it had been part of the Roman province of Syria and was granted certain civic rights by Rome as one of the ten cities of eastern Syria and the Transjordan called the [Decapolis](#) (cf. Mt 4:25, Mk 5:20; 7:31). It had a large Nabatean Arab population (see [Nabatean Kingdom](#)), and possibly was ruled by the Nabatean king [Aretas IV](#) (9 B.C.–A.D. 40) at some time during this period (cf. 2 Cor 11:32 = "In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king"). It also had a large Jewish population, 10,500 of whom Josephus reports were killed by the people of Damascus at the outbreak of Jewish-Roman hostilities in A.D. 66 (cf. [Josephus Wars 2.20.2](#); though in [Josephus Wars 7.8.7](#) the figure is 18,000). (EBC)

**John MacArthur** has a helpful note on why Saul would be going to **Damascus** - There were probably 150,000 minimum people in Damascus. At least 20,000 were Jews. We know that because it wasn't too long after this that Damascus was sacked and about 20,000 Jews were massacred (**ED**: Robertson says Nero killed 10,000, Longenecker above quotes Josephus at 10,000 and 18,000). So there had to be at least that many there. So there's a Jewish community in this place called Damascus. Another note that you need to understand. Christianity, in its original context, **stayed within the framework of the synagogue.** (**ED**: WHICH IS WHY THERE WERE "**letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus**" Acts 9:2) You remember that in Jerusalem, when the Jews were getting saved, they didn't necessarily leave the synagogue. You'll also remember that when Paul went to the Christians in various towns on his missionary journeys, where did he always go? To the synagogue. Because, in many cases, the Christians had not yet separated themselves from the synagogue. Christianity began in the synagogue and went from there. So in every area it began with a group of Jews who then saw the new covenant and moved away from that, but they didn't necessarily move out of the

synagogue. That was a problem and that is the problem on which the Book of Hebrews is based, the fact that you had Jews who had come to Christ but who maintained their involvement in all of the rigmarole of the Jewish synagogue. And so that was why the Book of Hebrews was written....to detach the Christians from the traditions that were so much a part of their former life.

**And suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him** - In Acts 22:6 Paul describes the light from heaven as "**a very bright light suddenly** ([exaiphnes](#)) **flashed from heaven all around me.**" This light was "**brighter than the sun**" and was "**shining all around**" Saul (Acts 26:13).

Compare Stephen's experience as he was being stoned in Acts 7:55+ "being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and **saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**"

Saul was spiritual blind until the Spirit opened the eyes of his heart to see Jesus. Later he would write...

And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4+)

**Saul** met the **Savior** and went from physical light to physical darkness and from spiritual darkness to spiritual light! He went from being the hit-man from hell to being the holy man from heaven. God had opened the eyes of his heart and shut the eyes in his head! Are the temporary trinkets of this passing world blinding the eyes of your heart to see Jesus high and lifted up? Jesus said "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Mt 6:24+) Confess that you have not daily been fixing the eyes of your heart on Jesus and then pray this chorus...

#### [Open the eyes of my heart Lord.](#)

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see You, I want to see You.

To see You high and lifted up

Shining in the light of Your glory.

Pour our Your power and love

As we sing holy, holy, holy.

What was this light? In the Old Testament we see light, the [Shekinah glory](#), that guided Israel through their wilderness journey, Moses recording that "The LORD was going before them in a **pillar of cloud** by day to lead them on the way, and in a **pillar of fire** by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night." (Ex 13:21, cf Ex 40:38, Nu 9:15-23) While we cannot be absolutely certain, it is reasonable to suggest that the **light from heaven** that was about to guide Saul was similar to the [Shekinah glory cloud](#) that led Israel in the OT. Here the [Shekinah glory](#) will guide Saul lost in the "wilderness" of dead Judaism and into the way of salvation.

Ultimately this **light from heaven** was an [emanation](#) from the resurrected and glorified Christ. At the [Transfiguration](#), the face of Jesus "**shone like the sun.**" (Mt 17:2) In the Revelation, the apostle John describes the glorified Christ declaring that **His face was like the sun shining in its strength.**" (Rev 1:16+)

**Horton** has an interesting comment on the glory of this **light from heaven** - When Jesus rose from the dead, His resurrection body was transformed—it was immortal and incorruptible, as ours will be (1 Cor. 15:52-53). But the glory was not restored until after He ascended. Probably the disciples could not have stood the glory during the forty days Jesus remained on earth with them. But now He came to Saul as the risen and glorified Christ. (Acts: A Logion Press Commentary)

**Matthew Henry** on **light from heaven** - It shone round about him, not in his face only, but on every side of him let him turn which way he will, he finds himself surrounded with the discoveries of it. And this was designed not only to startle him, and awaken his attention (for well may he expect to hear when he is thus made to see something very extraordinary), but to signify the enlightening of his understanding with the knowledge of Christ. The devil comes to the soul in darkness by this he gets and keeps possession of it. But Christ comes to the soul in light, for He is Himself the light of the world (Jn 8:12), bright and glorious to us, as light. The first thing in this new creation, as in that of the world, is light, 2 Corinthians 4:6 ("*For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*"). Hence all Christians are said to be children of the light and of the day, Ephesians 5:8+, 1 Th 5:8+.

**Suddenly** (1810)([exaiphnes](#) from **e k** = of + **aiphnes** = suddenly) means happening unexpectedly, quickly without warning, unexpectedly, at once. This adverb **exaiphnes** was used earlier by Luke in the context of Jesus birth when "**suddenly** there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying." (Luke 2:13) Exaiphnes was also used to refer to

the unexpected nature of Jesus' return at His glorious Second Coming (Mk 13:36, cf "great glory" - Mt 24:30).

**John Calvin** thought that Christ appeared to Paul in a flash of lightning or a thunderbolt, but that seems very unlikely. Lightning is but for a second, and in this case there had to be enough time for words to come from the flash of light.

**Flashed** (4015)(**periastrapto** from **peri** = about, around + **astrapto** - to shine like lightning) means to shine very brightly around an object, in this case the object being the man Saul (only used here and in the conversion story in Acts 22:6). Luke uses a different verb in the third version of Paul's testimony -- "shining all around" in Acts 26:13 is the verb **perilampo** (peri = around + lampo = to shine) means literally to shine all around and is used in Lk 2:9+ when an angel of the Lord stood before the shepherds "and the glory of the Lord **shone around them.**"

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the Shekinah glory?](#)
- [What is a glory cloud? Is a glory cloud biblical?](#)
- [Glory of God](#)

**Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

- **he fell to the ground** Acts 5:10; Nu 16:45; John 18:6; Ro 11:22; 1 Cor 4:7
- **Saul** Ge 3:9; 16:8; 22:11; Exodus 3:4; Luke 10:41; John 20:16; 21:15
- **why are you persecuting Me** Acts 22:7,8; 26:14,15; Isa 63:9; Zech 2:8; Mt 25:40,45,46; 1 Cor 12:12; Eph 5:30
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

The Conversion of Saint Paul, Luca Giordano, 1690

## GOD SPOKE AND GOD WAS JESUS

Someone has quipped that this was the supernatural showdown at high noon! This was the day a foe of Christ became a follower of Christ! If Jesus could save Saul, is there anyone He could not save? The answer to this rhetorical question is of course a resounding "No!"

**And he fell to the ground** - Clearly Saul was overwhelmed by the light fell probably prostrate as was typical of Orientals did to show humility, respect and at times worship. This was more than a bolt of lightning, because that usually does not make one fall to the ground (but to run for shelter). This was supernatural light, brighter than the sun, because it reflected the glory of the Son who created the sun. In the Scriptures when men encountered similar manifestations of God, their usual response was to fall on their face. **Read the records of men's response before God** -

- Abram in Genesis 17:3, 17;
- Moses and Aaron in Nu 20:6+;
- Moses in Ex 34:6, 7, 8+
- Joshua 5:14, 15+;
- Ezekiel in Ezek 1:28+;
- apostle John (the disciple Jesus loved) in Rev 1:17+;
- 24 elders in Rev 4:10+, Rev 5:8+, Rev 7:11+.

**THOUGHT** - When you come into the presence of the Lord, have you ever fallen on your face? As someone said "There is a dangerous absence of awe and worship in our assemblies today. We are boasting about standing on our own feet, instead of being broken and falling at His feet." For years [Evan Roberts](#) prayed: '**Bend me! Bend me!**' God answered finally in the form of the 1904-05 [Welsh Revival!](#) Perhaps it would be a good experience to come into a worship service and be so overwhelmed with the glory of God, that



the entire congregation fell on its face (cf Israel's reaction in Lev 9:24+). Just a thought to ponder.

Be careful what you read in commentaries (including this one)! Some famous artistic renderings depict Saul as having been struck down from a horse by lightning, but the text does not support this presumption. Lightning at noon time borders on ridiculous. **Adam Clarke** wisely quipped "Painters are, in almost every case, wretched commentators." The lesson is, enjoy the fine art, but reject the wretched commentary! A number of commentaries explain this event in Saul's life as an epileptic seizure! **Charles Spurgeon** comments on this ludicrous comment "**O blessed epilepsy!** Would that every man in London would have epilepsy like that!"

**Matthew Henry** on Saul on **the ground** - Those whom Christ designs for the greatest honors are commonly first laid low. Those who are designed to excel in knowledge and grace are commonly laid low first, in a sense of their own ignorance and sinfulness. Those whom God will employ are first struck with a sense of their unworthiness to be employed.

Paul referred to this episode about 30 years later in his epistle to the saints at Philippi writing...

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of ([katalambano](#)) that for which also I was laid hold of [katalambano](#) - KJV = [apprehended](#) ~ "arrested" on the Damascus road) by Christ Jesus. (Php 3:12+)

**Comment** - Saul was out to arrest disciples of Jesus and in a sovereign twist was himself arrested by Jesus!

**And heard a voice saying to him** - Note it does not say he saw the light and in fact we learn in Acts 9:8 he was blinded, presumably by the light. Did those who were with him see the light or hear the voice? Luke says they did hear a voice (Acts 9:7), but Luke does not say they understood what the voice was saying. They saw the light, but not the Lord! One has to wonder if any of these Jewish men were saved as a result of what happened to Saul. The text does not tell us what happened to them, but presumably they returned to Jerusalem with an incredible story.

**Longenecker** - the fact that Saul understood the voice to be a message from God himself, for in rabbinism to hear a voice from heaven (a [bath kol](#), lit., "a daughter of the voice" of God) never meant either a lower deity in the pantheon of gods speaking, as in Greek speculations, or some psychological disturbance, as many would presume today. On the contrary, it always connoted a rebuke or a word of instruction from God. Therefore when the voice went on to ask the question "Why do you persecute me?" Saul was without doubt thoroughly confused. He was not persecuting God! Rather, he was defending God and his laws! (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Bob Utley** has an interesting comment - This heavenly voice was something Judaism was familiar with. It is known as a [bath kol](#) ("daughter of voice", cf Hastings "[Voice of Heaven](#)"; See ISBE article on [Bath Kol](#)). This provided a means for the Jews to receive information and/or confirmation from God (during the interbiblical period between the closing of Malachi and the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist). This form of revelation was necessary because there were no inspired prophets during this period.

**Steven Ger** adds "Ancient rabbinic literature is replete with **legendary tales** of particular individuals hearing what is called the "[bath kol](#)," translated literally, the "daughter of a voice"; the voice of God emanating from heaven. **However, what Saul experienced was no legend; it was stark reality.** Nor can it be entertained that Saul's experience was a psychological disturbance, an epileptic fit, or any other imaginative alternative to authentic historical incident. Saul's life was fundamentally turned upside down by this encounter. In the only post-ascension appearance of Jesus recorded in the New Testament (apart from John's Revelation), the risen Christ dramatically revealed Himself to Saul. This singular moment, when Saul's passion and zeal are divinely redirected from persecuting the church to propagating the Gospel, is arguably the most significant event since the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. It not only changed the course of Saul's life and career; it radically altered the destiny of the church ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

Luke does not record here the other words (in bold below) from Jesus to Saul...

And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, **Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads**' (Acts 26:14+)

**Comment** - To fight against God is a losing battle! [Goads](#) were sharpened sticks (etc) used to herd cattle. I was raised on a farm and used them with cattle and can remember an occasional [obstreperous](#) cow trying to kick them (or kick me as I was prodding them!). Kicking against a sharpened goad only hurts the "kickee" more! That was Saul before the miracle of the Damascus Road.

**Matthew Henry** on **kick against the goads** - "*To spurn at the spur.*" It is hard, it is in itself an absurd and evil thing, and will be of fatal consequence to him that does it. Those kick at the goad that stifle and smother the convictions of conscience, that rebel against God's truths and laws, that quarrel with his providences, and that persecute and oppose his ministers, because they reprove them, and their words

are as goads and as nails. Those that revolt more and more when they are stricken by the word or rod of God, that are enraged at reproofs and fly in the face of their reprovers, kick against the pricks and will have a great deal to answer for.

**Saul, Saul** - While Luke uses the Greek name ([Saulos](#)), here Jesus repeats his name in the **Hebrew** dialect which is **Saoul** ([07586](#)). Repetition speaks of intensity. The idea is "Listen up!" It is an "attention getter!" Repetition of one's name was often associated with a warning or other important instruction (**Abraham, Abraham** - Ge 22:11, **Jacob, Jacob** - Ge 46:2, **Moses, Moses** - Ex 3:4, **Martha, Martha** - Lk 10:41+; **Jerusalem, Jerusalem** - Lk 13:34+, **Simon, Simon** - Lk 22:31+). This repetition of Saul's name also recalls God's attempt to get the attention of young Samuel (who had not yet learned to recognize the voice of the Lord) when "the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "**Samuel! Samuel!**" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening." (1 Sa 3:10) Does the Lord have to repeat your (my) name in order to gain our attention?

**Matthew Henry** - Some think, in calling him Saul, he hints at that great persecutor of David whose name he bore. He was indeed a second Saul, and such an enemy to the Son of David as the other was to David. Calling him by his name intimates the particular regard that Christ had to him: *I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me*, Isaiah 45:4. See Exodus 33:12. His calling him by name brought the conviction home to his conscience, and put it past dispute to whom the voice spoke this. What God speaks in general is then likely to do us good when we apply it to ourselves, and insert our own names into the precepts and promises which are expressed generally, as if God spoke to us by name, and when he saith, *Ho, every one* (Isa 55:1), he had said, *Ho, such a one: Samuel, Samuel Saul, Saul*. The doubling of it, *Saul, Saul*, intimates, *First*, The deep sleep that Saul was in, he needed to be called again and again, as Jeremiah 22:29, "*O land, land, land.*" *Secondly*, The tender concern that the blessed Jesus had for him, and for his recovery. He speaks as one in earnest it is like *Martha, Martha* (Luke 10:41), or *Simon, Simon* (Luke 22:31), or *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, Matthew 23:37. He speaks to him as to one in imminent danger, at the pit's brink, and just ready to drop in: '*Saul, Saul, dost thou know whither thou art going, or what thou art doing?*'

**Saul** ([4549](#))(**Saoul**) is transliterated from the Hebrew **Sha'ul** ([07586](#)). This Hebrew name corresponds to the Greek rendering of the same name which is **Saulos** ([4569](#))(See [above](#)). It means asked, desired. This Hebrew form of **Saul** is used by Jesus in all three versions of Paul's encounter - Acts 22:7; Acts 26:14. It is used once for King Saul of the Old Testament (Acts 13:21). The use of this Hebrew version indicates that Jesus was speaking in Hebrew to Saul (cf Acts 26:14).

**Saoul** is used 6x all in Acts - Acts 9:4; Acts 9:17; Acts 13:21; Acts 22:7; Acts 22:13; Acts 26:14

**Steven Ger** helps us understand what Luke used this Hebrew version of the name Saul rather than the Greek version - That the voice spoke Hebrew (or less likely, Aramaic) is made apparent through the change of Saul's name in form from the usual Greek **Saulos**, (used Acts 9:1) to the transliteration of the Hebrew, **Saoul** (there is no way to transliterate the "sh" sound of the actual pronunciation of *Shaoul* in Greek). This particular detail of the Hebrew pronunciation of Saul's name is repeated in the two later accounts of this encounter (Acts 22:7; 26:14). (Restraint will be exercised concerning any claim that this passage furnishes proof that God's lingua franca is Hebrew!) If the light had not already gotten Saul's attention, the Lord ensures it by calling Saul's name twice, following a previous pattern of heavenly address found throughout Scripture (Gen. 22:11; Ge 46:2; Ex. 3:4; 1 Sam. 3:10). ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

## **PERSECUTING THE CHURCH IS PERSECUTING JESUS!**

**Why are you persecuting Me?** - Jesus directs his accusation directly at Saul, not at the high priests, etc. As noted in the title, to persecute the Church, the Body of Christ, is tantamount to persecuting Christ, the Head of the Body. Believers are in covenant (new covenant) with Jesus, and as such are one with Him and identified with Him. Furthermore, because of this covenant, Jesus is our "Covenant Defender." And because of the New Covenant in His blood, Jesus is obligated to defend those in covenant with Him.

**ONENESS OF COVENANT** - Two become one when they enter into covenant (cf marriage covenant - Ge 2:24). If you "touch" (eg, to harm or injure) the covenant partner (AS SAUL WAS RAVAGING AND "TOUCHING" COVENANT PARTNERS OF CHRIST), you are "touching" the other partner (JESUS) also because of the bond of covenant producing a somewhat mysterious, but very real identification! Based upon the solemn and binding nature of the New Covenant, Jesus is "obligated" to come to the defense of His covenant partners. Can you begin to understand some of the practical implications of being in the new covenant with Christ? Do you believe that He is your Protector? If you are born again, you can rest assured that Jesus is your Covenant Defender today and forever. Hallelujah! All believers are in Covenant with the living God, Who is our Protector. We are not to take our vengeance beloved but leave that to our Covenant Partner who is our Avenger. Of course, this truth does not guarantee we will never be harmed or never experience times of persecution. In fact, persecution is one of God's "**promises**"! (2Ti 3:12-[note](#), cp Mt

10:22, 23, 24, 25, Jn 15:19, 20, 21, 17:14, Acts 14:22, Php 1:29-note). But the **oneness** of covenant guarantees that God will avenge wrongs done to us either in this life or in the life to come! You can stake your life on this truth!

We see this same principle at [the judgment of the nations](#), the sheep and goats...

"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' (Mt 25:45, cf Mt 25:40, 10:40)

**Swindoll** - Collectively, we the church are the visible representation of Jesus Christ in the world! To persecute the church is to assault the Son of God.

#### Related Resource:

- [Voice of the Martyrs](#) - the church is still being persecuted

**Persecuting** (1377)(**dioko**) means literally to make haste, moving rapidly and decisively toward an objective (and in a sense this describes Saul's zealous pursuit of Christians). More to the point in the case of Saul it describes (especially in the present tense) Saul's continued efforts to harass men and women because of their belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Acts 22:4 Paul described the depth of his persecution declaring "I **persecuted** this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons." (Acts 22:4)

**Dioko** in Acts - Acts 7:52; Acts 9:4; Acts 9:5; Acts 22:4; Acts 22:7; Acts 22:8; Acts 26:11; Acts 26:14; Acts 26:15

**Toussaint on persecuting Me** - The reference to "**Me**" gave Saul his first glimpse into the great doctrine of Christians being **in Christ**.

**Marty** has an interesting thought on **persecuting Me** writing that "Though the idea was probably not in Paul's mind at the time, it is possible this revelation was the origin of Paul's favorite theological metaphor for the church, "the body of Christ" (cf. Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18)." (Borrow [Moody Bible Commentary page 1692](#))

**Matthew Henry** - *First*, Before Saul was made a saint, he was made to see himself a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner against Christ. Now he was made to see that evil in himself which he never saw before sin revived and he died. Note, **A humbling conviction of sin is the first step towards a saving conversion from sin.** (ED: SO MUCH FOR "**EASY BELIEVISM!**") *Secondly*, He is convinced of one particular sin, which he was most notoriously guilty of, and had justified himself in, and thereby way is made for his conviction of all the rest. *Thirdly*, The sin he is convinced of is persecution: *Why persecutest thou me?* It is a very affectionate **expostulation**, enough to melt a heart of stone.

**J Vernon McGee** has a **pithy personal application** of Acts 9:4 commenting that Christ "may be saying the same thing to some Christians today. Although they profess to know and to love the Lord, He asks, "**Why are you persecuting Me?**" They would protest, I'm not persecuting You, Lord; I love You!" Then the Lord would answer, "Then why do you criticize Mr. So-and-So so severely? Why are you so opposed to those who are giving out the Word of God today? Why is it that you have become a hindrance instead of a helper?" May I say to you, we must be careful about saying we love Him and then showing our hatred to other believers. It is impossible to talk about loving the Lord while you spend your time trying to destroy the ministry of someone else. That is just blatant, bald, bold hypocrisy." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** makes the interesting observation that "There is an Old Testament parallel to this truth (ONENESS OF JESUS WITH BELIEVERS). Zechariah told the nation of Israel, "He who touches you, touches the apple of [God's] eye (Zech 2:8). **The apple of His eye**" refers to the pupil. God was saying those who persecute Israel are poking their finger in His eye. That is precisely the same kind of relationship Christ has with the church. He is seriously irritated when anyone offends His chosen ones (cf Mt 18:6, 10). (Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World).

It is interesting to recall the advice of Saul's mentor **Gamaliel** (a teaching Saul seems to have ignored!). Recall that the Sanhedrin were so furious with the convicting message of Peter and the apostles (Acts 5:30-32+) that they "were intending to slay them." (Acts 5:33+). In this heated atmosphere Gamaliel "stood up in the Council" and warned them to "stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or **else you may even be found fighting against God.**" - (Acts 5:38-39+) This is in essence what Jesus declares that Saul is doing by **persecuting** His disciples!

**Kistemaker** adds that "The cautionary message not to oppose God, advocated by Paul's teacher, **Gamaliel**, now confronts Paul in stark reality. The martyred Stephen, the persecuted Christians driven from Jerusalem, the believers jailed by Paul—all these people are represented by Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Paul has been fighting against Jesus and has lost the battle." (Baker NT Commentary-

Acts) (ED: Are you fighting against Jesus in any area of your life?)

### Related Resource:

- Study of Jesus Our Covenant Defender
- [Covenant Oneness-Two Become One Flesh](#)
- [Covenant: Oneness Notes](#)

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Scientists at Oak Ridge National Laboratories in Tennessee believe spinach may help cure some forms of blindness. When they extract certain proteins from this deep green vegetable and add them to retinal nerve cells, tests indicate the cells react to light in ways that could give formerly blind people black-and-white vision. As part of photosynthesis, these spinach proteins send an electrical impulse in response to light, which is what is needed for sight as well. To heal Paul from his temporary blindness, God didn't use spinach; instead, He sent His servant Ananias not only with healing but also with a prophetic message.

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### The Difference Jesus Makes

Read: Acts 26:1-18, 27-32

I would to God that . . . all who hear me today, might become . . . as I am. —Acts 26:29

Throughout history, people have treated others with unbelievable cruelty in the name of religion. They have often done so without feelings of remorse or guilt. Muslims and Christians have fought “holy wars” against one another, which have been anything but holy. And within their own ranks, so-called Christians have persecuted other Christians. Like Saul of Tarsus before he became Christ’s apostle to the Gentiles, they think they are doing God a service when actually they are persecuting Jesus (Acts 9:4).

When I first learned about the atrocities committed in the name of religion, my boyhood confidence in the Christian faith was shaken. I didn’t dare tell my parents about my misgivings, so I talked to the Lord about it. He led me to notice what happened in Paul’s life.

As a powerful member of the Pharisees, Saul (the Hebrew name of Paul) thought he was pleasing God by persecuting Christians. Then he met Jesus (Acts 9:1-19). From then on, he peacefully sought to bring even his enemies to Christ.

It’s not Christ’s way to force His will on us. Neither should we force our will on others. As we put God’s ways into practice, we’ll find we can love those with whom we disagree. That’s the difference Jesus makes!

Thinking It Through

How did Jesus react to Peter’s attempt to defend Him with a sword? (Jn. 18:10-11). What did Jesus say should be our attitude toward our enemies? (Mt. 5:43-48).

No force is greater than the power of God’s love.

By Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### Surprise Interview

Read: Acts 26:9–15

The King will say, “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!” Matthew 25:40 nlt

On a crowded London commuter train, an early morning rider shoved and insulted a fellow passenger who got in his way. It was the kind of unfortunate and mindless moment that usually remains unresolved. But later that day, the unexpected happened. A business manager sent a quick message to his social media friends, “Guess who just showed up for a job interview.” When his explanation appeared on the Internet, people all over the world winced and smiled. Imagine walking into a job interview only to discover that the person who greets you is the one you had shoved and sworn at earlier that day.

Saul also ran into someone he never expected to see. While raging against a group called the Way (Acts 9:1–2), he was stopped in his tracks by a blinding light. Then a voice said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (v. 4). Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The One speaking to him replied, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 26:15).

When we help or hurt one another, Jesus takes it personally.

Years earlier Jesus had said that how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, and the prisoner reflects our relationship to Him (Matt. 25:35–36). Who would have dreamed that when someone insults us, or when we help or hurt another, the One who loves us takes it personally?

Father, forgive us for acting as if You were not present in our moments of need, hurt, anger, or compassion.

When we help or hurt one another, Jesus takes it personally.

By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

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#### **QUESTION - [What happened on the road to Damascus? What is a road to Damascus experience? Watch Video](#)**

**ANSWER** - The events that happened on the road to [Damascus](#) relate not only to the apostle [Paul](#), whose dramatic conversion occurred there, but they also provide a clear picture of the conversion of all people. While some have an extraordinarily dramatic conversion known as a “Damascus Road experience,” the conversion of all believers follows a similar pattern of Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus, described in Paul’s own words in Acts 9:1–9; Acts 22:6–11; and Acts 26:9–20.

Putting the three accounts together, the details of this amazing experience come together. Paul, who went by the name of Saul at that time, was on his way to Damascus with a letter from the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem giving him authority to arrest any who belonged to “the Way,” meaning those who followed Christ. So intent was he on “opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9) that in “raging fury,” he breathed “threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” Here was a man who truly hated Christ and all who were associated with Him.

Suddenly a bright light shone on Saul, causing his entire party to fall to the ground. Then Jesus spoke to Saul, asking him, “Why are you persecuting me?” in a voice understood only by him. Saul recognized that this was a deity of some sort because he called Him “Lord” and asked who He was. When Jesus identified Himself as the very One Saul had been persecuting, one can only imagine the terror that filled Saul’s heart. Saul was speechless, no doubt thinking to himself, “I’m a dead man.” The Acts 22 version of the story indicates that Saul’s response was to ask what Jesus wanted him to do. The Acts 9 and Acts 22 retellings of the story have Saul saying Jesus told him to rise and go to Damascus where he would be told what to do.

In the Acts 26 story, which is longer and more detailed, Saul describes Jesus’ commission of him as His messenger to the Gentiles (which must have amazed Saul, the ultimate Gentile-hating Pharisee), to turn many from darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God. His message of forgiveness of sins and “a place among those who are sanctified by faith” must have also astonished Saul because the Jews were convinced they alone had the place of honor in God’s eyes.

There is no discrepancy or contradiction among these three accounts. Even though Saul received his commission from Jesus on the road, he still had to go into Damascus and be told what to do—meet with Ananias who laid hands on him, receive the Holy Spirit, be baptized, and be received by the disciples there (Acts 9:15–16, 19; 22:12–16). At Damascus, he also went for three days without eating or drinking, and then received his sight, which had been taken from him on the road.

The phrase “Damascus Road experience” is used to describe a conversion which is dramatic and startling. Many people receive Christ in a life-changing, instantaneous experience, although many others describe their conversion as more of a gradual understanding of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But both types of experiences have several things in common. First, salvation is of the Lord, by His will and according to His plan and purpose (Acts 22:14). As He does one way or another to each of us, Jesus made it clear to Saul that he had gone his own way for long enough. Now he was to become an instrument in the hands of the Master to do His will as He had foreordained it.

Second, the response of both Saul and all those who are redeemed by Christ is the same: “What do you want me to do?” Like Saul, we do not bargain, negotiate, question, or come halfway. The response of the redeemed is obedience. When God truly touches our hearts, our only response can be, “Lord, may your will be done and may you use me to do it.” Such was the experience of Saul on the Damascus Road.

Saul’s dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus was the beginning of an incredible journey. And while not all conversions are as startling as Saul’s, each of us is commissioned by Jesus to live in obedience to Him (John 14:15), love one another in His name (1 John 2:23), “know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,” (Philippians 3:10), and tell the world of the wonderful riches in Christ. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Acts 9:5** And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "**I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: **it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.** (NOTE - WORDS IN BOLD ARE NOT IN THE MORE MODERN MANUSCRIPTS. THIS PHRASE HOWEVER IS FOUND IN Acts 26:14).

- **Who are You, Lord!** Sa 3:4-10; 1 Ti 1:13
- **I am Jesus** Acts 26:9
- **you are persecuting** Acts 5:39; Dt 32:15; Job 9:4; 40:9,10; Ps 2:12; Isa 45:9; 1 Cor 10:22
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Dore Woodcut

## **JESUS' REVEALED HIMSELF AND REPEATS THE REBUKE**

**And he said, "Who are You, Lord?"** - Saul is obviously confused and does not know with Whom he is speaking. He was not yet a sheep, one who knows His Master's voice, but that would soon change (cf Jn 10:14, 16). Compare the questions of others who encountered God (Manoah - Jdg 13:17+, Jacob - Ge 32:29) While the Greek term for **Lord** (**kurios**) can be translated "**Sir**" (some 11x in the NAS - Mt 27:63; Jn 12:21; Acts 16:30+), the very fact that Saul is on the ground strongly suggests a holy fear or reverence of the Voice he has just heard (cf "**bath ko**"). So while some commentators render it "Who are You, **Sir**," explaining Saul did not yet know Jesus, it is highly unlikely that Luke's intent signifies anything but **Lord**.

**Lord** (2962) (**kurios** from **kuros** = power) primarily means the owner, master, lord, supreme one, one who is sovereign. **Kurios** describes Jesus as the One who possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power. **Kurios** describes Jesus as the One to Whom a person (a disciple) belonged, over which He has the power of deciding.

**Kurios** is used in 13x in 12 verses in Acts 9 far more than any other chapter in Acts and all refer to the **Lord** Jesus. Acts 9:1; Acts 9:5; Acts 9:10; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:13; Acts 9:15; Acts 9:17; Acts 9:27; Acts 9:28; Acts 9:31; Acts 9:35; Acts 9:42;

Saul had been fighting all his life against Jesus as Lord but in a moment surrendered to His Lordship. Are you fighting against the Lordship of Christ?

Because the Spirit had opened the eyes of his heart, Saul recognized the Savior as **Lord**. **R.C. Sproul** writes, "Resisting the lordship of Christ is not only sinful, but it is stupid, because God has raised Him from the grave, placed him at His right hand, and given Him all authority in heaven and on earth and has called every person to bow the knee before Him. To resist Him is foolish."

Notice Saul initially skirts the charge of persecution! **Matthew Henry** comments "Convictions of sin, when they are set home with power upon the conscience, will silence all excuses and self-justifications....Christ brings souls into fellowship with Himself by manifesting Himself to them."

**And He said, "I am (ego eimi) Jesus whom you are persecuting** - For just a moment put yourself in Saul's sandals and imagine you thoughts as you hear that the One you have been persecuting is the risen God! Yes, Saul had been struck by a bright light, but this revelation coming from Jesus in that light would have been like a "lightning bolt" or like a "dagger" cutting into Saul's heart! In a moment, you discover that all you have devoted your life to accomplish has been a total waste! Beloved, there are many successful, wealthy people who will one day have a similar experience, but sadly it will be too late for most because their discovery will come after they take their last breath! However, this principle applies to believers also -- Stop and ask yourself - What am I working for? For time or for eternity? For the earthly or the heavenly? For the material or the spiritual? For the profane or the profound? For what passes *away* or what lasts *always*? Perhaps you need a "*Damascus Road Revival*," so that you might realign your life priorities while you still have time! Don't be a "Saul," instead be "Paul!"

Notice that Christ uses His earthly name **Jesus** which the angelic messenger had given to Joseph, Matthew recording "She (MARY) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name **Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins (NOTICE HOW THIS LAST CLAUSE EXPLAINS THE MEANING OF HIS NAME!)." (Mt 1:21) **Jesus** was the Name that spoke of Christ's willing humiliation in emptying Himself to become a Man (Php 2:5-10+). "*He would show that now that He is in His glory He is not ashamed of His humiliation.*" (Matthew Henry)

In Acts 22:8 Jesus declares **'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'** Notice this Name is used as a Name of scorn and derision and one which Saul was undoubtedly familiar and likely himself had used to blaspheme God! "*There is nothing more effectual to awaken and humble the soul than to see sin to be against Christ, an affront to Him, and a contradiction to His designs.*" (Henry) Do you really comprehend that your sins are against God the Father, His Son and His Spirit (cp Eph 4:30+)? (cf Joseph's

sensitive conscience in Ge 39:9)

**Longenecker** - Saul could not escape the fact that the Jesus whose followers he had been persecuting was alive, exalted, and in some manner to be associated with God the Father, whom Israel worshiped. He, therefore, had to revise his whole estimate of the life, teaching, and death of the Nazarene because God had beyond any question vindicated him. Thus he came to agree with the Christians that Jesus' death on the cross, rather than discrediting him as an impostor, fulfilled prophecy and was really God's provision for man's sin and that Jesus' resurrection confirmed him as being the nation's Messiah and mankind's Lord. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Jesus** (2424) (**lesous**) is [transliteration](#) of the Greek **lesous**, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew **Jehoshua** (**Yehoshua**) or **Jeshua** (**Yeshua**) both of which mean *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. Stated another way the Greek **lesous** corresponds to the OT **Jehoshua** (**Yehoshua**) which is contracted as **Jeshua** (**Yeshua**). In the Gospels the single Name **Jesus** (**lesous**) is used as His personal Name some 538 times.

Imagine Saul's thoughts upon hearing those words "**I am Jesus!**" While we have no record that Saul ever saw or met Jesus during Jesus' earthly ministry, there is not doubt that he was well aware of the claim by His disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. Now the fact that He is speaking to Saul indicates that Jesus was indeed alive and by implication had risen from the dead. Saul's systematic theology was turned upside down in a moment! However, one aspect of his theology was affirmed and that was his belief (which all Pharisees held) that there would be a resurrection! Jesus was alive!

**Jesus** had alluded to the oneness between Jesus and His followers in Luke declaring

"The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." (Luke 10:16+)

Paul clearly understood this concept of oneness between Jesus and His followers as indicated by his numerous allusions to unity with Christ in his epistles. Read Ro. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-16; 5:23-30; Col. 1:18-24; 2:19).

**You can mark it down** that those who speak against Christians speak against Christ. Those who strike Christians strike Christ. Those who malign Christians malign Christ. Those who take advantage of Christians take advantage of Christ. This begs the question, even if you are a believer, have you ever done any of those things to another believer?

**Persecuting** (cf use in Acts 22:4, 7, 26:11-15, 1 Cor 15:9+)(1377)(see **dioko**) in the present tense describes Saul's continued ravaging of the disciples of Jesus. What a change the Gospel and the indwelling Spirit brought about on Saul who later used **dioko** writing "So then we **pursue** (**dioko**) the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." (Ro 14:19+). This was the **antithesis** of Saul's pursuit prior to conversion (cf Paul's pursuit in Php 3:12, 14+)! The righteous God pursued the unrighteous pursuer and won him with the Gospel. O, thank God for the transforming power of the glorious Gospel!

**A T Robertson** - Saul surrendered instantly as Thomas did (John 20:28) and as little Samuel (1 Sam. 3:9). This surrender of the will to Christ was the conversion of Saul. He saw a real Person, the Risen Christ, to whom he surrendered his life. On this point he never wavered for a moment to the end. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

Remember that to be **converted** means to be "turned around," so that Saul (and all believers) are "turned around by Christ" and face the opposite direction (a very similar picture is seen with repentance). Saul the persecutor will become Paul the preacher. And just as the world was amazed at Saul's conversion, the lost world is always amazed (and often very disturbed) when someone they knew in the darkness, turns to the light and begins to walk in the light. Did your conversion have that impact on those who knew you when you were still in Adam before the Spirit place you forever in Christ?

**Steven Cole** writes that "In 1Ti 1:16, Paul says, "And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." Paul's conversion is an example for us all. It is an example of the fact that none are too far gone for God's mighty power to save. It is an example of what God can do when He takes hold of a life. It is an example to encourage us to pray for and share with every sinner, no matter how wicked. It is an example for us to commit ourselves afresh to whatever purpose God has given us to do for His kingdom. As Paul later wrote, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2Co 5:14-15). ([Acts 9:1-19 An Unlikely Conversion](#))

**Jack Andrews** - Saul's encounter with Christ changed him forever. ([Sermon](#))

- He went from persecuting Christ to praising Christ.
- He went from plotting against Christians to preaching Christ.
- On the Damascus road he went from death to life;

- from bondage to liberty;
- from blindness to sight;
- from futility to forgiveness.

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## Oswald Chambers - The mystery of believing (Borrow [My Utmost for His Highest page 200](#))

And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? Acts 9:5.

By the miracle of Redemption Saul of Tarsus was turned in one second from a strong-willed, intense Pharisee into a humble, devoted slave of the Lord Jesus.

There is nothing miraculous about the things we can explain. We command what we are able to explain, consequently it is natural to seek to explain. It is not natural to obey; nor is it necessarily sinful to disobey. There is no moral virtue in obedience unless there is a recognition of a higher authority in the one who dictates. It is possibly an emancipation to the other person if he does not obey. If one man says to another—'You must,' and 'You shall,' he breaks the human spirit and unfits it for God. A man is a slave for obeying unless behind his obedience there is a recognition of a holy God. Many a soul begins to come to God when he flings off being religious, because there is only one Master of the human heart, and that is not religion but Jesus Christ. But woe be to me if when I see Him I say—'I will not.' He will never insist that I do, but I have begun to sign the death-warrant of the Son of God in my soul. When I stand face to face with Jesus Christ and say—'I will not,' He will never insist; but I am backing away from the re-creating power of His Redemption. It is a matter of indifference to God's grace how abominable I am if I come to the light; but woe be to me if I refuse the light (see John 3:19–21 ).

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## He Feels Your Pain

Read: Acts 9:1-5

I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. —Acts 9:5

The 20th century could well be labeled "the century of martyrs." Thousands of Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world have been imprisoned, tortured, and murdered on account of their faith. In fact, more Christians have been killed for their faith during our century than in all the previous centuries combined.

Does God care? Does the blood, pain, and death of Christ's witnesses mean anything to Him?

The first Christian martyr was Stephen. He was stoned to death for his allegiance to Jesus Christ, and a young man named Saul consented to his brutal murder (Acts 8:1).

Shortly after Stephen's death, Saul was traveling to Damascus when he was knocked to the ground. He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). Saul might have wondered, "You? I didn't persecute You. His name was Stephen." Yet the voice declared, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).

Every stone hurled at Stephen was hurled at Christ. Every stone that hit him hit Christ. Every pain he felt, Christ felt.

The Lord Jesus knows when we are hurt for His sake. He experiences our pain. No attack comes to us that Christ does not feel. He is a sympathetic Savior.

Never a weakness that He does not feel,  
Never a sickness that He cannot heal,  
Never a sorrow that He does not share,  
Moment by moment I'm under His care. —Whittle

When You take a stand for Christ, He stands with you.

By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## Two Crucial Questions

Read: Acts 9:1-9

Who are You, Lord? . . . Lord, what do You want me to do? —Acts 9:5-6

Receiving Jesus as our Savior from sin brings us into a life-changing relationship with the Son of God. Although we may not know at



the time all the far-reaching implications of our commitment to Him, we cannot escape the fact that as God, He has a right to be Lord of every area of our lives. Sooner or later we must come to that point where we confess, in the words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

In Saul's conversion experience, he recognized Jesus as both Savior and Lord. When Saul heard Jesus' voice on the Damascus highway, he asked this crucial question: "Who are You, Lord?" From the answer, "I am Jesus," Paul instantly realized that the One he had been persecuting truly was the Savior. In that moment he cast himself on His mercy. Trembling in the divine presence, he asked a second crucial question, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" He was, as Oswald Chambers puts it, "**giving up his right to himself.**"

Believer, you've trusted Jesus as your Savior. You've settled the issue of who He is. But have you asked that second crucial question, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Say to Him today, "Lord, I'll do whatever You ask!"

Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.  
—Havergal

Christ who purchased us has the right to possess us.

By Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do" (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:6 **And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him,** Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. (BOLD TEXT NOT IN MORE MODERN MANUSCRIPTS - ONLY TEXTUS RECEPTUS - Utley explains "These verses are not found in any early Greek manuscripts. They are found in only one Latin family of manuscripts. Erasmus, translating from the Vulgate, put them in his first edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. These words are found in Acts 26:14. Their inclusion here shows a tendency of scribes to make parallels uniform and full of all details.").

- **trembling (KJV)** Acts 16:29; 24:25,26; 1 Sa 28:5; Isa 66:2; Habakkuk 3:16; Php 2:12
- **Lord, what (KJV)** Acts 2:37; 16:30; 22:10; Luke 3:10; Ro 7:9; 10:3; James 4:6
- **get up and enter the city,** Acts 9:15; 26:16; Ezekiel 16:6-8; Mt 19:30; Ro 5:20; 9:15-24; 10:20; Gal 1:15,16; 1 Ti 1:14-16
- **and it will be told you what you must do** Acts 10:6,22,32; Acts 11:13,14; Ps 25:8,9,12; 94:12; Isa 57:18
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JESUS COMMISSIONS

### SAUL

**And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?**- This sentence is found only in the KJV (Textus Receptus).

While Ananias lays on hands later it is symbolizing Jesus commissioning of Saul on the Damascus Road, where Saul receives a new allegiance, a new attitude, a new affection and a new assignment (Andrews [Sermon](#)).

**Matthew Henry** on the miracle of conversion of so great a sinner (commenting on the preceding KJV passage) - Let not us then despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin for Paul himself obtained mercy, that he might be a monument, 1 Timothy 1:13. How suddenly and strangely a blessed change was wrought in him, not in the use of any ordinary means, but by miracles. The conversion of Paul is one of the wonders of the church....Note, Strong convictions, set home by the blessed Spirit, will make an awakened soul to tremble (cf Isa 66:2, 5). How can those choose but tremble that are made to see the eternal God provoked against them, the whole creation at war with them, and their own souls upon the brink of ruin! He was astonished, was filled with amazement, as one brought into a new world, that knew not where he was. Note, the convincing, converting, work of Christ is astonishing to the awakened soul, and fills it with admiration. "What is this that God has done with me, and what will he do?" ([Commentary](#))

**Ray Stedman** makes some important observations on what Jesus says to Saul - "**Arise** and **enter** the city, and there you will be told what to do." That indicates a tremendous reversal of this man's whole approach to life. He is now experiencing the lifestyle which belongs to a Christian. "*You are not your own; you are bought with a price. You will be told what to do.*" **That is what conversion is: It is a change from thinking that you can run your own life, to an acknowledgment that God holds the program in his hands, and he has the right to tell you what to do.** This was the first thing Paul experienced when he became a Christian, this right of Jesus Christ to be **Lord**, and to tell him what he was to do. **Conversion is a revolutionary change of government resulting in a radical change in behavior.** That is what happened to Paul. He was put on a wholly different lifestyle. He was told to go into the city. Now he would no longer be giving the orders. He would no longer be directing men and sending them where he wanted them to go and doing what he wanted to do, but he would be told what he was to do." ([Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy](#)) (Bold added)

**But get up** ([anistemi](#) in aorist imperative) **and enter** (aorist imperative - don't delay to go into) **the city** - **But** is **alla** an adversative which indicates a strong contrast. Jesus instructs Saul to continue on to Damascus. While this seems to be a small point, for Saul to be used by Jesus, he must begin by obeying these commands. Only by obeying these commands would he learn what he was to do. Many of us want to be used by the Lord, to be told what to do, but we are hesitating on some basic commands. The principle is that God will not reveal His will and way to us unless or until we are willing to submit to what He has already told us to do. As **Pastor Jack Andrews** said "Saul would only learn what to do only when he got up and went into the city." ([Sermon](#))

**Brian Harbour** said, "Paul discovered Christ not only wanted to save him from something, but He also wanted to save him for something... We need to realize that as a Christian there are gifts that God has given us, and He expects us to use those gifts in performing a ministry for Him."

**And it will be told you what you must** ([dei](#)) **do** ([poieo](#) - accomplish) - Not Jesus does not say what you might do or do what you want to do but **what you must** ([dei](#)) **do** ([poieo](#) - accomplish)! Jesus gives Saul commands with the promise of more instruction to come. Step by step Jesus was preparing the way for Saul to preach the way. (Play Rich Mullins' [Step by Step](#)). To reiterate, Jesus is not giving Saul a suggestion but in using the verb **must** ([dei](#)) Jesus is expressing an obligation, a compulsion, one which Saul/Paul clearly understood and accepted, later writing...

For if I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for **I am under compulsion** ([anagke](#) = necessity; [constraint](#)); for woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel. (1 Co 9:16+, cf OT prophet Jeremiah - Jer 20:9 - May our hearts burn with a similar fervor and flame!)

**Robertson** - Human agents like Ananias can finish what Jesus by supernatural manifestation has here begun in Saul. (Has God called you to act as an "Ananias" to anyone in your life?) ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Must** (present tense = continual obligation)([1163](#))([dei](#) - English [deontology](#) = science of moral duty) describes that which is necessary or under necessity of happening. What Jesus tells Saul/Paul is not arbitrary but is to be a compulsion. This same verb is used again by Jesus speaking to Paul telling him "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you **must** witness at Rome also." (Acts 23:11) And in (Acts 27:24) an angel was sent "saying, 'Do not be afraid (THE STORM AND COMING SHIPWRECK), Paul; you **must** stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you." Jesus uses this verb of obligation again when He says "**I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.**" (Acts 9:16). In Acts 14:22 [dei](#) describes the journey all believers traverse on their way to the Kingdom of God - ""Through many tribulations we **must** enter the kingdom of God." The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas "Sirs, what **must** I do to be saved?" May favorite use is the last which describes "the things which must soon take place," at the end of this age (Rev 22:6+).

All Luke's uses of [dei](#) in Acts - Acts 1:16; Acts 1:21; Acts 3:21; Acts 4:12; Acts 5:29; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:16; Acts 14:22; Acts 15:5; Acts 16:30; Acts 17:3; Acts 19:21; Acts 20:35; Acts 23:11; Acts 24:19; Acts 25:10; Acts 25:24; Acts 26:9; Acts 27:21; Acts 27:24; Acts 27:26

**Do** ([4160](#))([poieo](#)) in this context means to undertake to do something, to accomplish the task. Jesus will explain more fully to Ananias Saul's mission would be "to bear (Jesus') name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

In Luke's third version of the Saul's Damascus Road conversion Jesus adds some detail about what Saul/Paul **must do**...

**'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,** (Acts 26:16-17+)

**A T Robertson** adds "It is hardly likely that Luke records all that Jesus said to Saul, but more was to come on his arrival in Damascus. Saul had received all that he could bear just now (John 16:12)." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - The Lord has a special work for Saul to do. The Hebrew of Hebrews would become the apostle to the Gentiles; the persecutor would become the preacher; and the legalistic Pharisee would become the great proclaimer of the grace of God." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Maclaren** - Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? - Bring your plans, your purposes to God's throne. Test them by praying about them. Do nothing large or new—nothing small or old either, for that matter—till you have asked there, in the silence of the secret place, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

**J R Miller** - Duty's path always opens for us as we go on—not before we start, but as we obey and move forward. Yet we must not expect there will never be any difficulties to meet or obstacles to surmount. God never has promised that. Too easy a path is often a bane in life, not a blessing. The difficulties and obstacles that remain may be made stepping-stones by which we shall rise to higher things.

**ILLUSTRATION - D L Moody** - A MAN at sea was once very seasick. If there is a time when a man feels that he cannot do any work it is then. But he heard that a man had fallen overboard. He couldn't do much, but he laid hold of a light and held it up to the porthole. The light fell on the drowning man's hand, and a man caught him, and pulled him into the lifeboat. It seemed a small thing to do to hold up the light; yet it saved the man's life. We can do as much as that. If we cannot do some great thing we can hold the light for some poor, perishing soul, who is out in the dark waters of sin.

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**Bruce Barton - RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP** - Paul referred to his encounter on the road to Damascus as the start of his new life in Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8; Galatians 1:15-16). At the center of this wonderful experience was Jesus Christ. Paul did not see a vision; he saw the risen Christ himself (9:17). Paul did not "get religion" (he was already a very religious man!); he found a relationship with Jesus. Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord, confessed his own sin, surrendered his life to Christ, and resolved to obey him. True conversion comes from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and leads to a new life in relationship with him. (Borrow Life Application Bible Commentary page )

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**Steven Cole** - There is a lot of confusion these days about what it means to be born again. A recent book by researcher Wade Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, argues that today's "born-again" Christians are united by emotions and experiences, not by shared doctrines or moral beliefs. One-third of America's 77 million baby boomers identify themselves as born-again Christians, but only 5 percent of those have any link to a conservative Protestant denomination. Half say that religions other than Christianity are "equally good and true." One-third believe in reincarnation and astrology. Nearly half support abortion (from *The Watchman Expositor*, vol. 18, number 1, 2001, p. 22). We all need to be clear about what constitutes true conversion. We need to know it for ourselves, so that we are sure about our own conversion. We need to know it for when we talk with others about spiritual matters, since clearly not all who profess to be born again are truly saved...Humanly speaking, Saul was not a likely candidate for salvation. It would be comparable to hearing that Saddam Hussein had gotten converted and had become an evangelist to the Arabs! There was no human explanation for Saul's conversion! But there is no human explanation for any true conversion, because salvation is from the Lord, not from man. God is able to do what we cannot imagine. ([Acts 9:1-19 An Unlikely Conversion](#))

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In his autobiographical work, *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis describes how the Lord persistently "closed in on" him. "You must picture me alone. . . night after night, feeling . . . the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me . . . I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed; perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." As influential as C. S. Lewis's conversion has been, John Stott rightly notes that "Saul's . . . is the most famous conversion in church history."

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When Cambridge University student Thomas Bilney bought a Greek New Testament, his interest was purely academic. But when Bilney opened God's Word, he encountered the gospel and was transformed.

The Protestant Reformation was underway, so Bilney joined the Cambridge Protestants. He began preaching, but was arrested in 1527 and threatened into silence. But Bilney could not keep quiet. He was arrested, released, and in 1531 arrested one last time. Condemned as a heretic, Bilney died at the stake for the gospel of Christ.

Like Bilney, Saul (later to be known as Paul) wasn't interested in the truth of the gospel when he first encountered Christ. But even though Saul was a brilliant theologian and scholar, his interest wasn't simply academic. He had murder in his heart toward the followers of Jesus.

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**WHAT'S NEXT?"**

Having just received the Lord Jesus as his Savior from sin, an enthusiastic young boy blurted out, "Now what do I do? What's next?" He had the right idea! Although nothing further had to be done to receive salvation, there was much more to do to serve God.

The Bible, in Ephesians 2:8-9, makes it crystal-clear that we are saved by grace through faith. We could never do anything to deserve salvation. The best we have to offer is not good enough to meet the Lord's holy standards. We experience forgiveness of sin, find peace with God, have the promise of heaven and become possessors of everlasting life by trusting the Lord Jesus and Him alone. It is impossible for anyone to earn these favors!

Following conversion, however, we should respond as that young boy and the apostle Paul did, "Now what do I do? What's next?" Immediately after stating that we are not saved by works, Ephesians 2 tells us, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (v.10).

Find there's faith, then comes service. We believe to become Christians. We serve because we have been saved. That's what's next! - R W De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Oh, what can I give to the Master,  
The One who from sin set me free?  
I'll give Him a lifetime of service  
To thank Him for dying for me.- K. De Haan

We cannot work for salvation, but salvation is followed by works.

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### **'I Found Jesus'**

Read: Acts 9:1-6

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. —Matthew 1:21

Sundar Singh was an angry young man. After his mother died when he was 14 years old, he became a fierce opponent of Christianity in his northern India community. But then, in a dramatic conversion, he turned in faith to Jesus Christ. For the next 25 years he exerted a far-reaching, international influence.

Once he was visited by a professor of comparative religions from Europe. When that agnostic scholar asked Singh with curiosity, "What have you found in Christianity that you did not find in your traditional religion?" Singh replied, "I found Jesus." "Yes, I know," the professor said impatiently. "But what particular teaching or doctrine did you find?" Singh simply repeated his answer, "I found Jesus."

Singh later wrote, "When people ask me, 'What made you a Christian?' I can only say, 'Christ Himself made me a Christian.' When He revealed Himself to me, I saw His glory and was convinced that He was the living Christ."

Have you, like Saul in today's Bible reading, had a life-changing experience with the Lord Jesus? (Acts 9:1-6). Have you been convinced that He is the only way to God?

Jesus Christ is the difference between all religions and Christianity. —VCG (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!  
He loved me ere I knew Him;  
He drew me with the cords of love,  
And thus He bound me to Him.  
--Small

Many religious leaders have risen to greatness; only Jesus has risen from the grave.

---

### **Start from Here!**

Read: Acts 9:1-9

**Lord, what do You want me to do?—Acts 9:6**

On June 6, 1944, three American officers huddled in a bombshell crater on Utah Beach in Normandy, France. Realizing the tide had carried them to the wrong place on the beach, the trio made an impromptu decision: "We'll start the battle from right here." They

needed to move forward from a difficult starting point.

Saul found himself in a difficult place, needing to make a decision after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-20). Suddenly, the location and direction of his life was revealed to him as a mistake, his prior life perhaps even feeling like a waste. Moving forward would be difficult and would require hard and uncomfortable work, perhaps even facing the Christian families whose lives he had torn apart. But he responded, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

We often find ourselves in unexpected places, places we never planned nor wanted to be. We may be drowning in debt, inhibited by physical barriers, or suffering under the weight of sin's consequences. Whether Christ finds us this day in a prison cell or a palace, whether He finds us broken and broke or absorbed by our own selfish desires, Scripture tells us to heed Paul's advice to forget what lies behind and to press forward toward Christ (Phil. 3:13-14). The past is no barrier to moving forward with Him.

Are you paralyzed by your past? Have you drifted away from Christ? Or perhaps never even met Him? Today is the day to begin anew with Christ, even if you've tried and failed before.

It's not too late for a fresh start.

By Randy Kilgore ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **A Noble Request**

Read: Acts 9:1-9

So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" —Acts 9:6

As a seminary student I was often impressed by sto

ries of Christians who made a great impact for God. So I asked the Lord to give me the same spiritual insight and power they had. On the surface that looks like a noble request. But one day I realized that it was actually a self-centered prayer. So instead of asking God to make me like someone else, I began asking Him to show me what He wanted me to do.

When Saul of Tarsus was converted on the road to Damascus, he asked two questions. The first was, "Who are You, Lord?" Realizing he was in the presence of the living God, only one other question mattered: "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:5-6). He recognized that obedience to God's will for him was to be the central focus of the rest of his life.

Requests for health, healing, success, and even spiritual power are not wrong, but they can become selfish prayers if they do not flow from a heart determined to obey God. Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father" (John 14:21). Obedience expresses our love for God and enables us to experience His love for us.

Have you made that noble request: "**Lord, what do You want me to do?**"

Master, speak, and make me ready,  
When Thy voice is truly heard,  
With obedience glad and steady,  
Still to follow every word.  
—Havergal

**The best way to know God's will is to say "I will" to God.**

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### **A Tale Of Two Slaves**

Read: Acts 9:1-9,17-18

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. —Romans 1:1

Spartacus is not just a film legend but a historical figure. Historians say that he was likely a Roman soldier who deserted, was recaptured, and then sold into slavery as a gladiator.

While at the gladiatorial school at Capua, Spartacus led a rebellion. This act of defiance attracted massive numbers of slaves, growing to an estimated 70,000. Initially, Spartacus' slave army enjoyed spectacular victories. But they were eventually defeated,

and the captured rebels were crucified along the road to Rome.

What a contrast to Spartacus is the apostle Paul. Saul of Tarsus (as Paul was also known) was born a free man and yet was destined to become a slave. Acts 9 records the fateful day when Saul came face to face with the Savior he sought to oppose. From that time on, he served Jesus wholeheartedly.

Spartacus was forced to serve a Roman taskmaster. But Paul, in response to God's grace, voluntarily became a slave to Jesus Christ.

In the believer's heart rages a spiritual war between sin and righteousness. We can obey the slave-master of sin, or we can say yes to the God of grace who has made us free (Romans 6:16; John 8:34). Our greatest liberty lies in serving the One who created and redeemed us.

Christ broke the bonds of sin, that I  
Might know His strong eternal tie;  
This blood-bought liberty I bring  
To be Your bond-slave, Master-King.  
-F. Hess

True freedom is found in serving Christ.

By Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **Dynamited Into Change**

Read: Acts 9:1-9

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. —Colossians 1:13

When a newspaper editor learned that a man named Alfred Nobel had died, he assumed that the deceased must be the same man who had invented dynamite. So he published an obituary calling Nobel the merchant of death.

When Nobel read the account of his own death, he reacted like a blind man suddenly gaining sight. From that day on, Nobel devoted himself to philanthropic causes—especially peace.

Saul of Tarsus experienced a transformation far more dramatic than Nobel's. While on the road to Damascus to take captive those who followed Jesus, Saul met the Lord Himself. Temporarily blinded by his encounter, Saul devoted the rest of his life to serving the One he had formerly persecuted. The enemy of Jesus became His dedicated apostle (Acts 9:15-16).

Our own experience will not likely be so earthshaking. Yet we must ask ourselves if we have had an encounter with the Savior—one that has changed the direction of our lives.

If that is not your experience, turn to John 3 and read what Jesus said about being born again. Then, with a simple prayer of repentance, you may open your heart to Him. An honest commitment to the Lord will put you into a new relationship with Him—one that will last for eternity.

Salvation is more than breaking bad habits, it's creating good character.

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## **A New Purpose**

Read: Acts 9:1-9

I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. —Jeremiah 29:11

A 60-year-old hotel in Kansas is being renovated into apartments. A rusty ship that is docked in Philadelphia is being restored and may become a hotel or a museum. Hangar 61, an admired piece of architecture at the old Stapleton Airport in Colorado, is being transformed into a church. Each structure had a specific use that is no longer viable. Yet someone was able to see promise and a new purpose in each one.

If structures can find new life and purpose, why not people? Think about these men in the Bible whose lives took an unexpected

direction. There was Jacob, who wrestled with the angel of the Lord (Gen. 32); Moses, who talked to a burning bush (Ex. 3); Paul, who was temporarily blinded (Acts 9). Their stories were different, but all had a change of purpose when their encounter with God sent them down a new path.

We too may experience circumstances that change the course of our lives. But God reminds us of this: I loved you before you loved Me. I want to give you hope and a future. Give all your worries to Me because I care about you (1 John 4:19; Jer. 29:11; 1 Peter 5:7; John 10:10).

As you cling to God's promises, ask Him to reveal new direction and purpose for your life.

God has a purpose for your life, So what you have to do is follow Him, believing that He'll keep directing you. —Sper

Keep your eyes on the Lord and you won't lose sight of life's purpose.

By Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## Behind The Scenes

Read: Acts 9:1-16

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! —Romans 11:33

While learning to use a new computer, I was troubled by a faint clicking sound that indicated it was working even though nothing was happening on the screen. The manufacturer's representative on the help hotline said, "No problem. The computer is probably running an application you can't see and is working in the background."

As I thought about the phrase "working in the background," I began to realize how visually oriented I am in my relationship with God. If I can't see something, I assume it's not happening. But that's not the way God operates.

I see a striking example of God's "behind the scenes" work in the conversion of Saul. While Christians were suffering under his ruthless persecution (Acts 8:1-3), God was preparing to transform him into a dynamic representative of Christ (9:15).

Is there a situation in your life today where you cannot see God working? It may be that your circumstances are resisting every attempt at change. Perhaps someone you love is obstinately refusing to respond to God. Even though it may appear that nothing is happening, God is at work—behind the scenes, in the background, accomplishing His purpose.

Behind my life the Weaver stands  
And works His wondrous will;  
I leave it in His all-wise hands  
And trust His perfect skill.  
—Anon.

In the drama of life, God is the director behind the scenes.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## Surprised by Grace

Read: Acts 9:1-19

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace. Ephesians 3:7

A woman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, fell asleep on the couch after her husband had gone to bed. An intruder sneaked in through the sliding door, which the couple had forgotten to lock, and crept through the house. He entered the bedroom where the husband was sleeping and picked up the television set. The sleeping man woke up, saw a figure standing there, and whispered, "Honey, come to bed." The burglar panicked, put down the TV, grabbed a stack of money from the dresser, and ran out.

The thief was in for a big surprise! The money turned out to be a stack of Christian pamphlets with a likeness of a \$20 bill on one side and an explanation of the love and forgiveness God offers to people on the other side. Instead of the cash he expected, the intruder got the story of God's love for him.

God's gift of grace shows us His love and forgiveness.

I wonder what Saul expected when he realized it was Jesus appearing to him on the road to Damascus, since he had been persecuting and even killing Jesus' followers? (Acts 9:1-9). Saul, later called Paul, must have been surprised by God's grace toward him, which he called "a gift": "I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power" (Eph. 3:7).

Have you been surprised by God's gift of grace in your life as He shows you His love and forgiveness?

Lord, Your grace is amazing to me. I'm grateful that in spite of my sinfulness, You offer Your love to me.

Never measure God's unlimited power by your limited expectations.

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## **You Can't Say That!**

Read: Genesis 3:9-19

"Lord, what do You want me to do?" —Acts 9:6

According to a career-building Web site, certain words should be avoided on the job. When someone in authority asks you to do a project, you shouldn't say, "Sure, no problem," if you don't mean it and aren't going to follow through. Otherwise, you'll become known as someone who doesn't keep his word. And don't say, "That's not my job," because you may need that person's help in the future.

And if your boss comes to you with a problem, careerbuilder.com suggests it's best not to blame someone else and say, "It's not my fault!"

That's the excuse Adam and Eve gave to God. They were told not to eat from the fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). When they disobeyed and were confronted by God, Adam blamed God and Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent (3:9-19). They basically said, "It's not my fault!"

Perhaps there are things we should avoid saying to God about what He's told us to do or not to do. For example, He gives us specific instructions for Christlike behavior in

1 Corinthians 13, yet we may be tempted to say, "I just don't feel convicted about that," or "That's not really my gift."

What is the Lord asking of you today? How will you respond? How about, "Yes, Lord!"

God wants complete obedience, Excuses will not do; His Word and Spirit show His will— Then we must follow through. —Sper

The highest motive for obeying God is the desire to please Him.

By Anne Cetas([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

- Acts 22:9; 26:13,14; Da 10:7; Mt 24:40,41
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE AFFECT ON SAUL'S TRAVELING COMPANIONS**

**The men who traveled with him** - Luke does not give specific details but clearly there were sufficient numbers accompanying Saul to allow him to bind people and bring them back to Jerusalem. Some of these men with Saul may have been Jewish "Temple police." In any event they too fell prostrate (Acts 26:14) when the heaven flashed forth light. Saul's traveling companions saw the light but only Saul saw Jesus. Imagine their shock and confusion -- Saul is lying on the ground and they hear him conversing with some unseen entity! One wonders if any of these men later received the Gospel after such a close encounter of the supernatural kind!



These men were in a state as depicted by our modern idiom "[scared to death](#)" and who would blame them!

**Stood speechless** (mute) - Acts 26:14 says they "had all fallen to the ground," but there is no conflict as they could have already risen from the ground. All except Saul as the next verse shows, though he too arose from the ground in obedience to the command of his Lord. So at the outset of Saul's conversion we see **immediate** obedience. This is a good model for all disciples of Jesus. And remember that **delayed** "obedience" is really disobedience! It is notable that Luke does not say Saul's traveling companions were blinded, but only made speechless. It was as if this supernatural event was intended only for Saul's eyes! And it follows that obviously his companions did not see the resurrected Jesus Who appeared solely to Saul's eyes.

**Speechless** does not mean they were simply withholding their speech but that they actually were unable to speak or effectively [mute](#). **BDAG** says that **eneos**, the verb for **speechless**, has the primary meaning "lacking the ability to speak; mute, then by extension speechless....the men stood speechless from fright." **Eneos** is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word for **mute** ([illem](#) cf use in Ex 4:11) in the phrase "**mute dogs**."

**Matthew Henry** comments "Thus those who came to this place to be the instruments of Paul's rage against the Church (will in effect now) serve as witnesses of the power of God over him." One can just imagine the story these men would give the high priest and Sanhedrin when they returned to Jerusalem! You would think these religious leaders had seen sufficient supernatural signs clearly pointing to the hand of God and that this would shake them to their senses. But when men are hardened to the Gospel, only the Spirit can break through their calloused hearts, not supernatural signs and wonders.

**Everett Harrison** relates to story of [Polycarp's martyrdom](#) - Now when Polycarp entered into the arena there came a voice from heaven: "Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man." And no one saw the speaker, but our friends who were there heard the voice.

**Hearing the voice but seeing no one** - This is a parallel with their *seeing* the light but *seeing* nothing of Jesus in all His glory. While they were *hearing* the voice, they did not *understand* what the voice was saying.

**Toussaint** explains what some have described as a discrepancy between Acts 9:7 (**hearing the voice** = Greek phone) and Acts 22:9 (**did not understand the voice** = Greek phone) -- Literally, that clause in Acts 22:9 may be translated, "They did not hear the sound." The NIV correctly translates the verse, because the verb "to hear" with the genitive case may mean "*to hear a sound*" and with the accusative case "*to hear with understanding*." The genitive case is employed in Acts 9:7, and the accusative is used in Acts 22:9. So the travelers with Saul heard the sound (Acts 9:7) but did not understand what Christ said (Acts 22:9). (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

The description of reaction of Saul's companions reminds us of John's description in John 12:29

So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it (Read Jn 12:28) were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

The point is clear that only Saul was able to see Jesus and hear His words clearly articulated.

In this story of Saul, it is clear that Christ laid hold of him, before he laid hold of Christ. Saul was not seeking Jesus (cf Paul's own teaching in Ro 3:11), but Jesus was seeking him. Paul was seeking to arrest followers of Jesus, but was himself arrested to become a follower of Jesus! As Paul would later so eloquently phrase it

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Ro 11:33+)

**C S Lewis** had a number of metaphors that describe God seeking after those who are not seeking after Him "**the great Angler**" playing a fish, a cat chasing a mouse, a pack of hounds closing in on a fox, a chess player moving in to the ultimate 'checkmate.' "[\(Surprised by Joy\)](#)

As the poet so aptly put it...

'Tis not that I did'st choose Thee,  
O Lord, that could not be!  
This heart had still refused Thee  
Had Thou not chosen me.

'Twas the same Love that spread the feast  
That sweetly forced me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste  
And perished in my sin.

**Acts 9:8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

- **he could see nothing** Acts 9:18; 13:11; 22:11; Ge 19:11; Exodus 4:11; 2 Ki 6:17-20
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

## **BLINDED BY THE LIGHT OF JESUS**

**Saul got up from the ground** - In obedience to Jesus' command to **get up** (Acts 9:6+). Saul's state was probably much like that of Daniel when he saw a supernatural vision in Daniel 10:16-17+.

You might be asking when was Saul converted? Since the Bible does not state the year, any number is an approximation, but that said, his conversion occurred around 33 A.D. He would have been about 32 years old in the flesh, when he was born again from above. Jesus stated in John 3:3 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Saul was sovereignly granted spiritual eyesight to see and understand the Kingdom of God. Saul became "a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Cor 5:17) God's Spirit took Saul out of Adam and placed him in Christ (cf 1 Cor 15:22). He even received (as shown in later chapters) the new name of Paul which means little.

**A T Robertson** - The blindness was proof that something had happened to him and that it was no hallucination that he had seen the Risen Christ. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**And though his eyes were open** ([anoigo](#)), **he could see nothing** - The irony is inescapable. As a rabid persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, his eyes were wide open and able to see his innocent victims physically, at the same time being spiritually blinded to the truth that Jesus was their Messiah. Now at conversion the irony is that he cannot see with his physical eyes, but his spiritual eyes have now been opened wide!

Note that it was not the dazzling effect of the supernatural light that had blinded him, because if that were the etiology, his traveling companions would also have been struck blind and clearly they were not as shown by the fact that they will lead him into Damascus.

**Matthew Henry** suggests "it was a sight of Christ, Whom the rest saw not, that had this effect upon him. Thus a believing sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ dazzles the eyes to all things here below." As the hymn writer said "The things of this earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace!" Are you still finding temporal trinkets and babbles irresistible dear disciple of Jesus? If so, the [antidote](#) is a fresh encounter with the risen Christ, through His righteous Word, illuminated by His Holy Spirit! In a word, get into the Word daily (cf Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4+), so the Word gets in you and transformed by the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18+) you begin have clearer and clearer [Vertical Vision](#).

Imagine what was likely Saul's last actual visual image before the scales fell over his eyes? The Risen Christ! O, to have such a vision in our morning times (cf [Quiet Time](#)), that He might be on our heart and mind the rest of our busy day! Amen.

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now I'm found,  
**Was blind, but now I see!**" "

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!"

**Open** (455) ([anoigo](#) from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open, to open up, to open again, to give access to. Luke uses this same verb to describe Jesus' instruction to Paul describing his mission to the Gentiles "to **open their eyes** so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18+). Here in Acts 9:8 [anoigo](#) is in the perfect tense which describes Saul's eyes as having been opened (physically) and remaining open but unable to see anything (cf his previous state of his eyes physically open but as a persecutor of the Church effectively unable to see spiritually!). Of course this time most importantly the "eyes of the

heart" of Saul had also been opened and would remain open for the remainder of his life and throughout eternity. Dear reader, have the eyes of your heart been opened to see and receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ? The glory of His Gospel (cf 2 Cor 4:4 = "*the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*") is still able to open blind eyes!

Here are all of Luke's uses of **anoigo** in Acts -Acts 5:19; Acts 5:23; Acts 8:32; Acts 8:35; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:40; Acts 10:11; Acts 10:34; Acts 12:10; Acts 12:14; Acts 12:16; Acts 14:27; Acts 16:26; Acts 16:27; Acts 18:14; Acts 26:18

The question arises is this - Did Saul actually see Jesus because the text does not definitely make that statement? The answer is "yes," when we compare the following Scriptures. And remember that even if these Scriptures were not available for support, since Paul is called an apostle, by definition he had to have seen the resurrected Jesus ("these [must] become a witness...of His resurrection" - Acts 1:22+).

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Corinthians 15:8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, **He appeared to me also.**

Galatians 1:16-17 **to reveal His Son in me** so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, **the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming** has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them **how he had seen the Lord on the road**, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

**Comment** - So here in Acts 9 two witnesses (Ananias and Barnabas) testify that Saul had actually seen the resurrected Jesus.

Acts 22:14 And he (Ananias) said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and **to see the Righteous One** and to hear an utterance from His mouth.

The fact that Saul testifies to having actually literally seen Jesus, indicates that his blindness could not have been immediate or otherwise how could he have seen the resurrected Jesus?

How **ironic** is this entire experience when compared with the experience of Stephen when he was being stoned. Jesus appears here in Acts 9 to one who witnessed the stoning and heard Stephen describe his vision of Jesus, but who himself could not see the vision. Now this same man is struck down by the glory of the Lord (rather than by stones) and he sees a vision of the glory of Jesus. How **inscrutable** is Your understanding (Isa 40:28, cf Isa 55:8) and how "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty." (Rev 15:3+) Amen.

But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, "**Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.**" 57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse (THERE IS NO RECORD THEY SAW ANY EVIDENCE OF GOD'S GLORY). 58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named **Saul**. 59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:55-60+)

**Comment** - Saul's conversion by Jesus is in essence an answer to Stephen's prayer! The Lord did in fact not hold it against Saul that he was an approving witness to Stephen's illegal stoning! We need to always pray without ceasing, for we know not in what incredible ways God might answer our prayers (even short ones like Stephen's!) Does this not motivate you to pray more frequently in your busy day, using your experiences as fodder for your prayers. You can always pray for the salvation of that one who just bad-mouthed you, etc. Lord, make us praying people like Stephen, able to pray even when being stoned. In Jesus' Name and for His glory. Amen

**And leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus** - A raging bull became a docile lamb! Saul had an agenda in Damascus, but Jesus had another appointment for Saul in that city. Have you ever had that experience where you planned to do one

thing, but through providential circumstances the Lord steps in to alter your plans? That is rhetorical because all of us have had these experiences. The question is did we respond like Saul, obediently and without murmuring?

**Robertson** - It was a pathetic picture to see the masterful Saul, victorious persecutor and conqueror of the disciples, now helpless as a child. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Lenski** comments - It was found that he was not blinded by the great glare of light only for a time but that "he continued to see nothing," the durative imperfect. His men had to lead him by the hand, and it was thus that the great persecutor and destroyer of the Christian Church entered into the city that he had selected for his new triumphs. (Borrow [The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles](#))

**Steven Cole** - Paul began the trip physically seeing, but spiritually blind. He ended it physically blind, but spiritually seeing. What he formerly thought that he saw, he no longer saw. What he formerly did not see, he now did see. What was formerly gain to him now was loss. What he formerly despised, he now cherished. Just as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, so Saul was three days and nights in the dark. When the scales fell from his eyes, he saw everything in a new light, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ. Every truly converted person can say, "I once thought that I saw, but I was blind. Now, by God's grace, I see." (Play [Amazing Grace](#)). ([An Unlikely Conversion Acts 9:1-19](#))

**Acts 9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

- Acts 9:11,12; 2 Chr 33:12,13,18,19; Esther 4:16; Jonah 3:6-8
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

### THREE DAYS WITHOUT SIGHT, FOOD OR DRINK

**And he was three days without sight** - Does this not remind us of God's hand of discipline on another man greatly used by God, the reluctant prophet Jonah "And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish **three days and three nights**." (Jonah 1:17) Jesus of course used Jonah's experience as a type of His death, burial and resurrection (Mt 12:39-40). God was preparing Saul for what He had prepared for Saul.

**Swindoll** suggests that "According to Saul's recollection of this entire episode before Agrippa, he spent those three days in communication with the Lord. Saul summarized what he heard during those three days in Acts 26:16-18 (see chart on the facing page). During that time, he also received a vision reassuring him that he would regain his sight through the ministry of a Christian in Damascus (Acts 9:12)." (See [Insights on Acts](#))

**And neither ate nor drank** - Presumably this is an intentional fast. Acts 9:11 says he was praying, which is frequently associated with fasting in the Bible (Neh 1:4, Ps 35:13, Da 9:3, Lk 2:37, Lk 5:33, Acts 13:3, Acts 14:23).

**Lenski** is perhaps a bit too interpretative but offers an interesting comment - Shut off from the world, blind, abstaining from food, with no one to help his soul's distress, his proud self-righteousness was conquered, and there remained only a sinner in the dust who ever after felt himself chief of all sinners. 1 Tim. 1:15. (Borrow [The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles](#))

**Kistemaker** comments "What a reversal of events! Paul, who desired to dash the believers to the ground, is lying face down on the ground. He, who wished to bring prisoners bound from Damascus to Jerusalem, now is led as a prisoner of blindness into Damascus. He, who acted with the authority of the high priest, now breaks his ties with the Jerusalem hierarchy. He, who came to triumph over the Christian faith, now submits to the Captain of this faith (Heb. 12:2)....Note the symbolism of the three days Paul spent in solitary confinement. "He is crucified with Christ, and the three days of darkness are like the three days in the tomb." And notice the contrast of light and darkness in the account of Paul's conversion. In spiritual blindness Paul sees Jesus in brilliant glory light. Physically blinded, Paul prays and begins to see spiritually." (Baker NT Commentary - Acts)

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**Bruce Barton - LIFE APPLICATION - A CHANGED LIFE - Saul's conversion was undeniable:**

1. He went storming out of Jerusalem in a huff; he came stumbling into Damascus in humility (Acts 9:8-9).
2. He went to arrest Christians; he ended up being arrested by Christ (Acts 9:1-5).

3. He began the trip determined to wipe out the message of Christ; he ended the trip devoted to the cause of taking that message to the ends of the earth (Acts 9:19-22).
4. He went from being a persecutor to being a persecuted one (Acts 9:23-25).

In short, Saul's whole mind-set and belief system were turned upside down. He realized that Christ was not dead, but alive. Christ was not merely a Nazarene rabble-rouser; he was the Messiah, the Son of God. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Acts 9:10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

- **Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias** Acts 22:12
- **and the Lord said to him in a vision** Acts 2:17; 10:3,17-20; Nu 12:6; Da 2:19
- **Ananias Behold** Ge 22:1; 31:11; Exodus 3:4; 1 Sa 3:4,8-10; 2 Sa 15:26; Isa 6:8
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

## THE LORD PREPARES ANANIAS FOR A MISSION

**Jack Arnold** has an interesting note in his introduction - Acts 9:10-31 is filled with things which mark a new creature in Christ. This section of Scripture is a fascinating study of the experiences and activities of a new Christian. It is also a sobering study on some of the pitfalls and lessons a new Christian must learn before he can be effective for Christ. As a new Christian, Paul still had to grow in grace and wrestle with ignorance, prejudice and sin in his own life. We shall find that it took years for him to come to the place where he could be an effective instrument for Jesus Christ...(focusing on Saul as a new creature in Christ Arnold divides this chapter accordingly)...New Acquaintances (9:10-11a) New Communications (9:11b-12) New Purpose for Living (9:13-15) New Burden (9:16), New Power (9:17) New Commitment (9:18) New Communion (9:19a) NEW LESSONS FROM CHRIST (Acts 9:19b-31) Need for Fellowship (9:19b) Need for Right Knowledge (9:20-21) Need for Humility (9: 22-25) Need for Patience (9:26-27) Need for Dependence (9:28-29) Need for God's Will (9:30-31) ([Paul, The New Creature](#))

**Now there was a disciple** (see [mathetes](#)) **at Damascus named Ananias** - This is one of 3 persons in Acts named Ananias (Acts 5:1, Acts 23:2). This name means "Jehovah is gracious." Jesus would enable this man to live out the truth of his name and demonstrate amazing grace to Saul! Since this Ananias is a **disciple**, it signifies he is a "learner," and in this context is a follower of Jesus, a believer, a Christian.

Acts 22:12-16 describes the character and reputation of Ananias who had the respect of believers and unbelieving Jews...

"A certain **Ananias**, a man who was **devout** ([eulabes](#)) **by the standard of the Law**, and **well spoken of** ([martureo](#)) **by all the Jews** who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. 14 "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

**And the Lord said to him in a vision**([horama](#)), "**Ananias**" - Not necessary a night vision, but a condition in which the person's consciousness is opened for a heavenly message (Haenchen).

**Jack Andrews on a vision** - The Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision. Many are skeptical of "visions" from the Lord and rightly so. Many cults and false religions have been started by false visions (**ED**: [Jim Jones' visions of a nuclear holocaust](#), [Joseph Smith founder of Mormonism](#) had visions of God the Father appearing to him). God's primary way of speaking today is through His Spirit and through His Word! God can and does give visions but His visions will not contradict His word or blaspheme His Son, or mock His Spirit. ([Sermon](#)) (**ED**: I recall a woman with whom I shared the Gospel and she begin to tell me about her vision in which Jesus appeared at the foot of her bed and told her to divorce her husband! And so she did! This was not Jesus for it counters the Word of God! And sadly she never received the true Gospel.)([Expository Sermons](#))

## Related Resources:

- [Does God still give visions to people today?](#)
- [Is God giving people in closed countries dreams and visions to bring them to faith in Christ?](#)

**Vision** (3705) (**horama** from **horáō** = to see, behold; English - [panorama](#)) describes literally that which is seen, as opposed to a figment of one's imagination (Mt 17:9; Ac 7:31; 10:3, 17, 19; 18:9). It is something that is viewed with one's eye. It describes a supernatural vision used to give divine communication and is distinct from a dream. In Matthew's use Jesus refers to His transfiguration commanding Peter, John and James "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." (Mt 17:9) Uses of Jesus appearing to Ananias in a vision and told to go to Saul who had seen Ananias in a vision (Acts 9:10, 12). Used of the vision of Cornelius as God begins to open the eyes of the Gentiles to the Gospel (Acts 10:3) by showing Peter a vision (Acts 10:17, 11:5). **Horama** is the word used by Luke to describe the Gospel going from Asia to the European continent in Acts 16:9-10<sup>±</sup>.

**Horama** - 11 of 12 uses are in Acts -

Matt. 17:9; Acts 7:31; Acts 9:10; Acts 9:12; Acts 10:3; Acts 10:17; Acts 10:19; Acts 11:5; Acts 12:9; Acts 16:9; Acts 16:10; Acts 18:9

**And he said, "Here I am, Lord** - Modern versions omit the word **Behold** ([idou](#)) before **I am here** a phrase which "is a Jewish idiom of availability." ([Bob Utley](#)) Note that Ananias does not equivocate over the Lordship of Jesus, but readily recognizes Him as **Lord** ([kurios](#)). His Master has spoken and gained his attention which reminds me of the old depiction of the dog listening cocking up his ear at the [victrola](#) in the RCA commercial (pix). We should all be so attentive to the voice of our Master speaking to us through His Word (you are in His Word daily so you can hear from Him, aren't you?) illuminated by His Spirit. Ananias' response also reminds us of young Samuel in 1 Sa 3:10 "Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "**Speak, for Your servant is listening.**"

God sought Ananias not because of his **ability** but because of his **availability**. Which word describes you best?

Notice also that Ananias does not debate Jesus "Lordship", but immediately acknowledges Jesus as his **Lord** ([kurios](#)). He did not make Jesus "Lord" of his life. Jesus was the Lord of his life. (See related discussion of [lordship salvation](#) versus [easy-believism](#)).

As a corollary application if we fail to say "**Here I am, Lord**" when He speaks through His Word, prayer, and providence, we will be unlikely to receive any instructions. God, enable us to maintain a "Here I am, Lord," mindset when You speak. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

When "God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" his response was "**Here I am.**" (Ge 22:1) In a sense this call to Ananias would test his faith as the subsequent instructions attest. Men (and women) who are used by God, are those who are attentive for and responsive to His voice.

Finally, Ananias response reminds me of Isaiah who wrote "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "**Here am I. Send me!**" (Isa. 6:8+) Ananias was about to be sent on a mission that would be an integral cog in God's wheel of changing the world by using Saul to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles.

**Spurgeon** on Ananias' response of "Here I am, Lord." - He was ready. He did not ask, "What for?" but "Here am I," ready for anything. Are we free from reservations? Whatsoever the Lord saith to us, are we prepared to do it? What drawbacks there often are! But blessed is that man who says "Ready, aye ready!" **He was all there.** "Ananias." "Here am I." In prayer, in singing, how often it happens that the mind is wandering — we are not there. There is such a thing as preaching, and doing service for God with a portion of yourself. I often see upon a sunny wall a chrysalis, and when I go to take it down, I find that the summer's sun has shone upon it and the insect has developed, and left nothing but an empty case behind. How often in the pew we find the chrysalis of a man, but where is the man? Wait till tomorrow morning, and see him in his shop; there is the man; or, to follow up the figure, there is the butterfly. But if ever a man ought to be all there, it is when he is called to the service of God. He should marshal all his faculties, and every faculty should reply, "Here am I." The whole of a living man is something worth having, but a fragment is only fit to be buried. ([The Good Man Ananias - A Lesson for Believers](#))

**NET Note** - The Lord is directing all the events leading to the expansion of the Gospel as he works on both sides of the meeting between Paul and Ananias. "The Lord" here refers to Jesus (Acts 9:17).

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**Bruce Barton - LIFE APPLICATION - GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE** - Given Saul's selection as a key person in the vast program of God, we might think that Peter or one of the other apostles should have been chosen to minister to this important new convert. Not so. God called an unknown disciple named Ananias for this task. This has been true throughout church history. Consider this list of

"nobodies":

1. John Staupitz: The man who helped lead Martin Luther to Christ.
2. John Egglon: Instrumental in the conversion of C. H. Spurgeon.
3. Edward Kimball: Just a shoe salesman . . . who happened to be D. L. Moody's spiritual mentor.
4. Mordecai Ham: A little-known evangelist who preached the night that Billy Graham yielded his life to Christ.

We never know how God might use us to touch a life that will, in turn, touch millions. Yield yourself to the purposes of God, and be faithful when he calls. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

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#### **QUESTION - [Who was Ananias in the Bible?](#)**

**ANSWER - Three men by the name of Ananias appear in the Bible, and each plays a role in the New Testament book of Acts.** A common name among Jews, *Ananias* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Hananiah* and means “Yahweh has been gracious.”

**The first Ananias is featured in a dramatic episode that took place in the early Jerusalem church.** At that time, the newly forming community was experiencing a time of great unity. All the believers came together to sell their excess land and share their money and possessions: “There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need” (Acts 4:34–35, NLT).

Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, were wealthy members of the church during this season of united purpose. When they sold a parcel of their own property, the two secretly conspired to withhold a portion of the profit for themselves and lie about the total. Ananias, who arrived first, laid the money at the apostles' feet, claiming he had given all to the church. By divine revelation, Peter called out Ananias for lying to the Holy Spirit and to God. Upon hearing Peter's words, [Ananias fell to the ground and died](#). About three hours later, Sapphira arrived. Not knowing what had happened, she, too, lied about the offering and was also struck dead (Acts 5:1–11).

The sin of Ananias was not that he kept back a portion of the sale of his property for himself but that he lied about it in an attempt to make himself appear more generous to people (Acts 5:4). This incident of lying to God was the first recorded public sin in the newly organized church, and it carried a severe punishment for Ananias and Sapphira. Their story serves as a warning to all believers that God does not tolerate dishonesty and hypocrisy.

**A second Ananias in the Bible played a part in the conversion story of the apostle Paul.** After Saul of Tarsus was struck blind on the [road to Damascus](#), he was led to the home of Judas on Straight Street. Three days later, Jesus spoke in a vision to a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord told him to go to Saul, but Ananias was afraid. He was keenly aware of Saul's unyielding persecution of the believers in Jerusalem and his intended persecution in Damascus. God reassured Ananias, saying, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name” (Acts 9:15–16).

Ananias obeyed God and found the recently converted Saul. He laid hands on him and prayed, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17). Immediately, Saul was healed of his blindness and was baptized.

Right away, Saul went to the synagogue in Damascus and preached about Jesus to the Jews there. Later, Saul began his ministry of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles under his Roman name, Paul. Later, Paul mentioned Ananias when he shared his testimony in Acts 22:12: “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.”

**A third Ananias in the Bible was high priest in Jerusalem during much of Paul's early ministry.** According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Ananias was appointed by [Herod Agrippa II](#) in approximately AD 48. Known for his harshness and cruelty, Ananias appears in Acts 23 during Paul's trial in Jerusalem before the [Sanhedrin council](#). Enraged by Paul's defense, Ananias ordered him to be struck on the mouth (Acts 23:1–2). Paul objected, saying, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!” (verse 3).

When Paul realized that he was addressing the high priest, he apologized. As Paul continued his defense, a near riot broke out in the Sanhedrin over the issue of the resurrection of the dead—a point of theology that the [Pharisees and Sadducees](#) disagreed upon (Acts 23:6–9). The Roman guard took Paul into protective custody (verse 10). Ananias was probably involved in the plot to murder Paul on his way back to court (verses 12–15), but the plot was foiled when the Roman commander found out about it and transported Paul under heavy guard to Caesarea (verses 16–35). Five days later, Ananias traveled to Caesarea and continued to pursue his case against Paul before Governor Felix (Acts 24:1). Ananias and other Jewish leaders considered Paul to be the

ringleader of a troublemaking Nazarene sect that was stirring up riots among the Jews.

Many of the Jews hated Ananias because of his ruthlessness and corruption, but he was protected by Rome even after he was deposed as high priest. In AD 66, at the start of the first great Jewish Revolt, Ananias was assassinated by an angry mob of anti-Roman revolutionaries.[GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Acts 9:11** And the Lord said to him, "**Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

- **Get up and go** Acts 8:26; 10:5,6; 11:13
- **man from Tarsus named Saul** Acts 9:30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3
- **For he is praying** Acts 2:21; 8:22; Dt 4:29; 2 Chr 33:12,13,18,19; Job 33:18-28; Ps 32:3-6; Ps 40:1,2; 50:15; 130:1-3; Pr 15:8; Isa 55:6,7; Jer 29:12,13; Jer 31:18-20; Jonah 2:1-4; Zech 12:10; Mt 7:7,8; Luke 11:9,10; 18:7-14; Luke 23:42,43; Jn 4:10
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

Straight Street, circa 1900

## A SAINT'S SHOCKING INSTRUCTIONS

**And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight - Go** is not a suggest but a command (aorist imperative). See article in Wikipedia on [Straight Street](#), also known as [Via Recta](#). Most streets in ancient cities were not straight but this was one of two streets in Damascus which was straight and which ran in a direct line from the eastern to the western gate of the city. **Straight street** would have been what was referred to in the Roman world as a [decumanus maximus](#). **Straight Street** is still in existence and is known as the ["Darb al-Mustaqim."](#)

**Spurgeon** on Jesus' instructions to Ananias - When he had thus said, "**Here am I!**" the Lord gave him his orders in detail. I do not say that the Lord will give us orders verbally, and I would have you not mistake your own whims for God's voice; but I do say believe that God's voice is calling you to that service which providence places in your way. God still guides His servants when they are willing to be guided. Ananias had his orders as to —**1. Where he should go.** The Lord knows the street and house where the sinner lives who is to be blessed by you. Only **wait upon Him**, and if you go in His name He will take care that you are not sent to the wrong person. **2. To whom he was to go.** The Lord knows the individual whom you are to bless, and all about him. Though you have no verbal directions, yet the person who falls in your way, if you will but seek to do God's work to him, will turn out to be the person whom God intends you to bless. **3. When to go.** Perhaps he had not yet left his bed, for it was a vision of the night; but he was to "Arise and go." **God's errands are so important that we must not delay their performance** **4. Why he was to go.** Because the Master was there already. God had inspired the prayer of the blinded persecutor, and now he was about to answer it by Ananias. Where God has ploughed we are to sow. Of that preparation you know but little, but your own duty is clear enough. **5. What he was to do when he found Saul;** he was to lay his hand on him. There is a great deal in the touch of an earnest man. If you stand half a mile off from a man, and throw the gospel at him, you will miss him; but if you go close to him, and lay hold upon him, and show that you have an affection for him, you will, by God's blessing, lead him in the right way.[\(The Good Man Ananias - A Lesson for Believers\)](#)

**NET Note** on **Straight** - The noting of the detail of the locale, ironically called 'Straight' Street, shows how directive and specific the Lord was. (**Ed comment:** The corollary message is that when the Lord instructs His servants to go somewhere or to do something, He does not stutter and we should not have to guess to where or what He is referring.)

**Larkin** on the **street** named **Straight** in ancient times - With great porches and gates at each end and [colonnades](#) for commerce running along each side, this fashionable address would be as well known in its day as [Regent Street in London](#) or [Fifth Avenue in New York](#) is today. ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**Street** ([4505](#)) (**rhume** from **rheo** = to run, flow) means a narrow "runway," a narrow street, lane alley, a city thoroughfare which is relatively narrow. Four times - Mt 6:2, Lk 14:21, Acts 9:11, Acts 12:10. In Lxx only in Isa 15:3. **Vine** - in earlier Greek meant "the force or rush or swing of a moving body;" in later times, "a narrow road, lane or street." **Gilbrant** - This term can be found as early as



the Fifth Century B.C. meaning "force, rush." It is used of the "rush" of birds' wings or the "flow" of blood through veins (cf. *Liddell-Scott*). However, in later Greek it was commonly used for the "street" through which soldiers might rush or charge (ibid).

**And inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul** - "The Lord is directing all the events leading to the expansion of the Gospel as he works on both sides of the meeting between Paul and Ananias." (**NET Note**) Nothing else is known of this **Judas** who had a house on Straight street, but undoubtedly he was relatively wealthy to own a home on the major thoroughfare. While he obviously Jewish, it is not certain whether he was a believer, for a believer who knew about Saul would hardly have let him in the door! In fact, one commentator suggests a reasonable consideration that the home of Judas may have been Saul's original destination.

Note that Luke switches back to the Greek version of **Saul** (**Saulos**) and if he was from Tarsus, then clearly Saul was a Hellenistic Jew.

**Ray Stedman** comments - Paul is converted. Now he is a Christian. And what is the first thing he experienced as a Christian? The life of the body of Christ. That is wonderful, is it not? Two unknown, obscure Christians are sent to him. He meets them and is immediately helped by the strengthening that can come from the body, from other Christians. First there is a man named **Judas**. That is all we know about him. Saul is led to his house whom he has never met before. While he is there a man named **Ananias** is sent to minister to him. **Is there not a joyful, poetic irony about this, that the Holy Spirit has chosen two names which are tainted names elsewhere in the New Testament, Judas and Ananias.** These names belong to two other people: Judas the betrayer of our Lord; and Ananias, the first Christian to manifest the deceit and hypocrisy of an unreal life. Yet, here are two people, bearing the same names, that are honored and used of God. It is just a little touch, but it seems so much like the Holy Spirit to use names like this. These men come and minister to Paul. (**Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy**) (Bold added)

**Tarsus** (5018)(tarseus) was "chief city of Cilicia (**MAP** - southern Turkey on coast), the southeastern portion of Asia Minor. It lay on both banks of the river Cydnus, in the midst of a fertile alluvial plain, some 10 miles from the seacoast. About 6 miles below the city the river broadened out into a considerable lake called Rhegma (Strabo xiv. 672), which afforded a safe anchorage and was in great part fringed with quays and dockyards. The river itself, which flowed southward from the Taurus Mountains with a clear and swift stream, was navigable to light craft, and Cleopatra, when she visited Antony at Tarsus in 38 BC, was able to sail in her richly decorated barge into the very heart of the city (Plut. *Ant.* 26)...Such was **Tarsus**, in which Paul was born (Acts 22:3) and of which he was a citizen (Acts 9:11; Acts 21:39). Its ancient traditions and its present greatness explain and justify the pride with which he claimed to be "a citizen of no mean city" (Acts 21:39)...it is certain that the character of his native city, its strong oriental element, its Greek constitution and speech, its position in the Roman Empire, its devotion to learning, must have made an impression upon one who, uniting Jewish nationality with membership of a Greek state and Roman citizenship, was to be the great interpreter to the Greco-Roman world of a religion which sprang from the soil of Judaism. How long Paul remained at Tarsus before beginning his studies in Jerusalem we cannot say. His own declaration that he was "born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city" (Acts 22:3) seems to show that his training at Jerusalem began at an early age....During his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, plots were formed against his life, and he was induced to return to Tarsus (Acts 9:30), where, according to Ramsay's chronology, he remained for some 8 years (SOME COMMENTARIES SAY AS LONG AS 10 YEARS). Thither Barnabas went to seek him when he felt the need of a helper in dealing with the new problems involved in the growth of the Antiochene church and the admission into it of Gentiles in considerable numbers (Acts 11:25). **Tarsus** is not again mentioned in the New Testament, but Paul doubtless revisited it on his second missionary journey, when he "went through Syria and Cilicia" (Acts 15:41), and traveled thence by way of the **Cilician Gates** into **Lycaonia**, and again at the beginning of his third journey when, after some time spent at Antioch, "he departed, and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order" (Acts 18:23 )." (Excerpt from lengthy article in ISBE on **Tarsus**) **Tarsus** was one of three cities in the Roman Empire with a major university, Athens and Alexandria being the other two cities.

**Tarsus** is used 5x only in Acts - Acts 9:11, 30, Acts 11:25, Acts 21:39, Acts 22:3.

**For he is praying** - **Behold** is unfortunately omitted by the modern translations, but is in the text. Luke is arresting our attention, saying in essence "Check this out." Here is a man who as a zealous Pharisee would have spent hours each day in prayer, all of which were based on ritual and tradition. The prayers of unsaved men never rise higher than the ceiling (cf Ps 66:18, Isa 1:15). The verb used for praying (**proseuchomai**) "gives it the idea of definiteness and directness in prayer, with the consciousness on the part of the one praying that he is talking face to face with God." (Wuest) This was something Saul had never experienced in his praying as a Pharisee. One is reminded of the unregenerate Jews today who stand in front of "Wailing Wall" rocking back and forth, but their prayers have the same effectiveness as did those of the unregenerate Saul.

**Warren Wiersbe** quips "Ananias was available to do God's will, but he certainly was not anxious to obey! The fact that Saul was "**praying**" instead of "**preying**" should have encouraged Ananias." (**Bible Exposition Commentary**)

**Jack Thompson** on **he is praying** - Having been a Pharisee, he was used to praying long repetitious prayers. But for the first time in his life, he is actually reverently praying and communicating with God. This is the first thing he does after meeting Jesus Christ.

He does not sing, he does not speak, he does not play an instrument, he privately prays. He is no longer breathing threats against Christians, but he is praying to God as a Christian

**Steven Cole - Behold** is left out of some modern translations, but it is in the original. A modern English version would be, "Whoa, check it out, dude!" Before this, as a Pharisee, Saul prayed often every day. But now, "Whoa! he is praying!" For the first time, Saul is really praying. He isn't just reciting the ritualistic prayers of religion. He is praying from the heart, really seeking God....Truly converted people begin to pray in the true sense of the word for the first time. ([An Unlikely Conversion Acts 9:1-19](#))

**MacArthur** comments on Saul's continual **praying** - "Prayer is the spontaneous response of the believing heart to God. Those truly transformed by Jesus Christ find themselves lost in the wonder and joy of communion with Him. Prayer is as natural for the Christian as breathing. Paul became a man of unceasing prayer." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Praying** (present tense)([4336](#))([proseuchomai](#) from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim (See study of noun [proseuche](#)). **Proseuchomai** encompasses all the aspects of prayer -- submission, confession, petition, supplication (may concern one's own need), intercession (concerned with the needs of others), praise, and thanksgiving.

**Spurgeon** rightly said that "Prayer is the autograph of the Holy Ghost upon the renewed heart."

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### **Spurgeon - Morning Thought - Behold, he prayeth.**

Prayers are instantly noticed in heaven. The moment Saul began to pray the Lord heard him. Here is comfort for the distressed but praying soul. Oftentimes a poor broken-hearted one bends his knee, but can only utter his wailing in the language of sighs and tears; yet that groan has made all the harps of heaven thrill with music; that tear has been caught by God and treasured in the [lachrymatory](#) of heaven. "Thou puttest my tears into thy bottle," implies that they are caught as they flow. The suppliant, whose fears prevent his words, will be well understood by the Most High. He may only look up with misty eye; but "prayer is the falling of a tear." Tears are the diamonds of heaven; sighs are a part of the music of Jehovah's court, and are numbered with "the sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high." Think not that your prayer, however weak or trembling, will be unregarded. Jacob's ladder is lofty, but our prayers shall lean upon the **Angel of the Covenant** (Mal 3:1+) and so climb its starry rounds. Our God not only hears prayer but also loves to hear it. "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." (Ps 9:12KJV) True, He regards not high looks and lofty words; He cares not for the pomp and pageantry of kings; He listens not to the swell of martial music; He regards not the triumph and pride of man; **but wherever there is a heart big with sorrow, or a lip quivering with agony, or a deep groan, or a penitential sigh, the heart of Jehovah is open; He marks it down in the registry of his memory; He puts our prayers, like rose leaves, between the pages of His book of remembrance, and when the volume is opened at last, there shall be a precious fragrance springing up therefrom.**

**ADDENDUM COMMENT - YOUR PRAYERS ARE SAFELY STORED IN A BOWL** - Revelation 5:8+ which describes "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Now observe carefully that the next verse (Rev 5:9+) describes "men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Can you not see the relationship between **supplications** in verse 8 and **saved souls** in verse 9? Clearly and mysteriously, our prayers for hidden people groups (see [Ralph Winter in 1980](#) when there were 16000 hidden people groups) today will be effective in bringing souls to eternal salvation. Would you not consider storing up for yourself treasure in heaven daily for the rest of your life (Mt 6:20+)? Can I encourage you to take a step of faith and believe that God will hear your prayers for hidden people groups and that one day in eternity you will meet those for whom you have been praying day after day, year after year? And here is an easy way to pray for the hidden people groups daily - bookmark [Joshua Project](#) or download the APP from Joshua Project and select **daily notifications** and you will receive a daily text reminder with the name of the hidden people group for that day. Now even if I forget to read the full entry for the people group of the day, the APP allows me to never miss a day praying for lost souls who have never heard the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:12+) and His saving Gospel (Ro 1:16+). This is your "[once in a lifetime opportunity!](#)" Praying for souls is something we can only do now on earth and is an exciting, rewarding way to redeem the time on earth for heaven! Indeed, if you (energized by the Spirit) pray now, your time in time eternal will be marvelously impacted by the presence of those you took time to pray for in time temporal! Don't procrastinate! Don't delay! [Bookmark the site](#) and/or download the Joshua Project APP today. If Paul were speaking to us today he might say something like this "So then, **while we have opportunity**, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." (Gal 6:10+) Today is your "opportunity of a lifetime!" May our Father in Heaven grant you amazing grace by His Spirit to be energized and motivated to intercede for peoples you have never seen

but will one day see in the presence of the Lamb Who Alone is Worthy (1 Th 2:19-20+). Amen.

Faith asks no signal from the skies,  
To show that prayers accepted rise,  
Our Priest is in his holy place,  
And answers from the throne of grace.

**Acts 9:12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

- Acts 9:10,17,18
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD GIVES SAUL A VISION OF ANANIAS

**And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him** - Ananias is part of a "double vision," one to Saul and one to Ananias, but they are interrelated as to what the next step would be in Saul's life. This is not Saul's vision of Jesus on the Damascus Road but a second vision by Saul. Jesus alluded to this in His first communication with Saul when He told him that "it will be told you what you must do."

**Larkin** comments that "To be converted means to move from self-centered independence to dependence on the Lord and interdependence with fellow disciples. Saul the convert needs the support and encouragement of the church." ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**Lay...hands on** - Laying of hands on someone is seen several times in Acts - Acts 6:6 where it was symbolic and used as a formal sign of appointment to service. The rite indicates a link or association between the parties involved.

**Ryrie** on laying on hands - The laying on of hands was a formal sign of appointment to this service. The rite indicates a link or association between the parties involved. Sometimes it was related to healing (Mark 5:23, 6:5) or to the impartation of the Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6) or, as in Acts 6:6, was a sign of ordination for special service (Acts 13:3; 1 Ti 4:14).

**Scotfield** - The laying on of hands sometimes accompanied prayer (Mat 19:13,15) and was also used as a sign of healing (Mark 5:23; 6:5, etc.), a symbol for the impartation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17,19; 9:17; 19:6), and a token of ordination for special service (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14, etc.).

**Holman NT Commentary** - "The act of laying on hands appeared in the Old Testament to commission someone for public office (Num. 27:18, 23) or as part of a sacrificial ritual (Lev. 1:4). Jewish rabbis used the term to describe the **ordination** of someone to office. Among Christians the practice referred to the **laying on of hands** to **symbolize** the giving of the Holy Spirit and the bestowal of gifts for ministry (Acts 8:17; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14). (Holman NT Commentary - Hebrews)

### Related Resource:

- [Laying on of Hands](#) - David Mathis Desiringgod.org

**Vision** (3705) See above on **horama** "Compare other visions that guide the church's advance: Acts 10:3, 17; 16:9-10; 18:9-10)." (Larkin [Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**So that** - Term of purpose. The purpose of laying hands on Saul is to regain sight.

**He might regain his sight** - Here Jesus shows His compassion by promising that Saul's blindness would not be permanent.

**Regain his sight** (308) (**anablepo** from **ana** = up, again + **blepo** = to look, to perceive and so discern) means to look up and then to regain one's sight (Mt 11:5; Mk 10:51; Acts 9:12, 17, 18, Acts 22:13) To regain one's sight or recover from blindness and thus see again ("the **BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT**" = Mt 11:5; "Rabboni, I want to **regain** my **sight!**" = Mk 10:51; "so that he might regain his sight" = Acts 9:12, 17,18). Of one born blind **anablepo** means to gain sight, become able to see, receive sight ("I went away and washed,

and I received sight.” = Jn 9:11, 15, 18).

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**Laying On of Hands** - IN ANCIENT ISRAEL the practice called “laying on of hands” was used for a variety of purposes. It was a symbol of blessing, demonstrated when Jacob laid his hands on the heads of his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, and blessed them (Gen. 48:14-20). It was also a symbol of identification for consecrating Aaron and his sons as priests when they placed their hands on a bull and a ram that were then slain (Exod. 29:10-21; Lev. 8:14, 18).

On the Day of Atonement, after slaying both a bull and a goat as sin offerings for the priests and the people, the high priest was “to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head” (Lev 16:21). The goat was then released into the desert as a scapegoat.

Individual Israelites similarly identified themselves with their fellowship offerings (Lev 3:1-2, 6-8, 12-13) and sin offerings (Lev 4:27-29, 32-33) by laying their hands on the heads of sacrificial animals. The elders of Israel placed their hands on the sin offering for the community (Lev 4:13-15), as the priest or other leader did for his sin (Lev 4:3-4, 22-24).

Laying on of hands was also a symbol of consecration to ministry, as with the Levites (Nu 8:10, 12-14), and commissioning, as with Joshua (27:18-20, 22-23; Deut. 34:9). The rite also was used at the execution of a blasphemer. All the Israelites who heard the blasphemy were “to lay their hands on his head” and then “the entire assembly [was] to stone him” (Lev. 24:13-14).

The Lord Jesus Christ used laying on of hands as a sign of His blessing, something He did for the little children who were brought to Him to be blessed and prayed for (Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17). Jesus also laid His hands on people when He healed them (Matt. 9:18-19, 25; Mark 5:22-24; 6:5; Luke 4:40). At His ascension, although Jesus apparently did not lay His hands on the apostles’ heads, He “lifted up his hands and blessed them” (Lk 24:50).

Laying on of hands continued in the apostolic church as a symbol of consecration to an office and a ministry. After seven men were chosen to care for the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1-5), the seven were presented to the apostles, “who prayed and laid their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:3).

In the apostolic church the laying on of hands was involved in [ordination](#) to ministry. Paul ordained Timothy to the ministry “through the laying on of my hands” (2 Ti 1:6; see also 1 Ti 4:14) and warned him against being “hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Ti 5:22) in ordaining others. In the apostolic church the laying on of hands symbolized the fact that those who received the Holy Spirit were united with other believers (Acts 8:12-13, 14-17; 19:1-7). This bestowal of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands was a power wrongly sought by Simon the sorcerer (8:18-21). Paul and undoubtedly others in the apostolic church used laying on of hands in performing miracles of healing (28:8; Mark 16:18). It may or may not have been involved in the anointing with oil, coupled with prayer, to heal the sick (James 5:14-15).

Through the centuries, churches have continued the practice of laying on of hands as part of the ritual of ordination (John A Witmer - [The Theological WordBook](#))

**Acts 9:13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

- **Lord** Exodus 4:13-19; 1 Sa 16:2; 1 Ki 18:9-14; Jer 20:9,10; Ezekiel 3:14; Jonah 1:2,3; Mt 10:16
- **how** Acts 9:1; 8:3; Acts 22:4,19,20; Acts 26:10,11; 1 Ti 1:13-15
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **ANANIAS HESITATES! JESUS INSISTS!**

**But** - Term of contrast. The Lord allows Ananias in a sense to "change direction" and to express his reservations and hesitation about going to see Saul whose reputation had preceded him.

**Spurgeon** on Ananias' reservations. They were "1. **Very natural**. There is a promise that the leopard shall lie down with the kid, but it is not surprising that the kid should at first shrink from the monster; and so this simple-minded man was startled at the idea that he was to visit the malicious man who had sought the lives, of Christians. 2. **Were such that he could tell the Lord about them**, and

whenever you feel any difficulty, if you can lay it before the Lord in prayer, there may be *unbelief* in it, but there will be *no willful sin* in it. **3. Unfounded.** If he had thought for a minute he would have concluded that if Saul prayed he must have ceased to persecute. Do we not lose opportunities of doing good by dwelling too much upon the past characters of those to whom we are sent? Utterly *hopeless* people are often the most *hopeful* when we have faith enough to approach them. **Be hopeful that He who placed this sinner in your way and you in the sinner's way has designs of love which are about to be accomplished.** ([The Good Man Ananias - A Lesson for Believers](#))

**Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem** - Ananias had received words of warning concerning Saul prior to his arrival. Note that it was not just one or two people who had spread some gossip, but this was **many** who warned about Saul. Ananias had a bad reputation. **Jack Andrews** asks "What kind of reputation do you have as a Christian?" ([Sermon](#)) I would add even more important "What kind of **character** do you have?" **Reputation** is what others think about us. **Character** is what knows to be true about us! Saul's **character** was intrinsically bad, while Ananias' **character** was intrinsically good and was also of good **reputation** (cf Acts 22:12).

Ananias, a Jewish believer, considered Saul the most dangerous man in the Middle East! "*Ananias said in effect, "Lord, do You know what You are asking?"* (MacArthur) Or what if once he could see would in essence "[Bite the hand that fed him](#)" to use a common idiom? Humanly speaking the logic of Ananias was correct, but it was wrong because God had performed a miracle and had given Saul a "heart transplant." (Ezek 36:26+) However, up to this point in the conversation with Jesus, Ananias had no idea that a miracle had occurred in Saul's heart and his hesitation was understandable. This would certainly have been a test of Ananias' faith.

**Larkin** - By negative example, at this point, Ananias teaches us that reluctant Gospel messengers must not only love their enemies but also trust that the Gospel has such redemptive power that a praying converted persecutor is a persecutor no more. ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**Harm** (2556) ([kakos](#) related word = [kakia](#)) is a word which basically denotes a lack of something so that it is "bad" or "not as it ought to be." **Kakos** then speaks of lack of goodness, of a bad nature. In this context **kakos** means harmful, evil, injurious, pernicious. Read a description of the **harm** he did to the church - Acts 22:4,19,20; Acts 26:10,11.

**Your saints** - Ananias sees believers as belonging to Jesus! Indeed, we are no longer our own because He has bought us with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20+), redeeming us with His blood. Paul later wrote that Jesus "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession ([periousios](#)), zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:14+)

**Kistemaker** on **saints** - They are the holy ones of God, who share in his holiness because God's Spirit dwells in them. (Baker NT Commentary-Acts)

**Saints** (40) ([hagios](#)) in this context describes men and women set apart for God for God's purpose. Note that in the Bible a saint is not a person who is singled out by a denomination for special recognition **Friberg** adds that **hagios** is "the quality of persons or things that can be brought near or into God's presence." **Hagios** is the opposite of **koinos** which means common, profane, not consecrated. Saints is first used of those who were raised after Jesus' resurrection, Matthew recording "The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the **saints** who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many." (Mt 27:52-53) Note the word "many" not "all" so there was a select group of saints raised after Jesus' resurrection and most commentators agree that these were individuals who had believed in Christ for salvation. So technically they would be the first believers designated as "saints" in the NT. Luke's use in this passage marks the first time after the birth of the Church that believers are called "saints" and this becomes the most common designation of believers in the remainder of the NT. Saint is used 61 times in the NT but is used only 3 more times by Luke in Acts (Acts 9:32, 41, 26:10) where "disciple" is his most common designation of believers (30x in 28v). In Acts 11:26 Luke writes "the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." Christian is used only two other times in the NT - Acts 28:28 and 1 Pe 4:16.

**EXCURSUS ON SAINTS** - As an aside many people feel that a "saint" is a person who has died and has been declared a saint by canonization or glorification, one who has been recognized for having an exceptional degree of holiness, sanctity, and virtue. This idea is NOT Biblical, but is an invention of men. Every genuine believer is a true saint. **Saints** are made holy by grace through faith and receipt of Christ's imputed righteousness (Eph 2:8-9, Ro 4:5), and then are called to live holy, set apart lives fed by the Word and empowered by the Spirit (Gal 3:3). Every believer is on the same level at the foot of the Cross! And [all saints are still sinners](#) until we are glorified.

"**There is no hierarchy of saints.** All who belong to Christ by faith are saints, and none of us are more "saintly" than our Christian brothers and sisters. The apostle Paul, who is no more of a saint than the most obscure Christian, begins his first letter to the Corinthian church by declaring that they were "sanctified ([hagiazō](#) - set apart) in Christ Jesus and called to be saints, together with **all those who in every place** call

upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:2, **emphasis** added). In this verse, *hagios* is translated "saints," "holy," and "sanctified" in different Bible versions, leading to the unmistakable conclusion that all who have ever called upon Christ for salvation are saints, made holy by the Lord. We are all "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19+). We are not saints because we have been declared to be saints by a church, nor can we work our way to sainthood. Once we are saved by faith, however, we are called to certain actions befitting our calling as saints of God. "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16+). Saints are not sinless, but the lives of saints do reflect the reality of the presence of Christ in our hearts, in Whom we "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28+). ([Saints and Sinners](#)).

The passage in 1 Cor 1:2 is especially edifying because there Paul refers to all believers as saints and then he spends the next 15 chapters in effect "scolding" them for their poor performance in the Christian life. Nevertheless, the Corinthians are "still called saints, not because they had halos over their head" but because they have been set apart by the Spirit from the world and unto Christ. This begs the question - "Are you living like a *saint* or an "*ain't*" (so to speak)?"

**ILLUSTRATION** - H.A. Ironside witnessed one time to a nun and told her that he was a living saint. She thought he was some arrogant religious nut walking around telling people he was a saint. She believed to be a saint you had to be dead. The nun asked him how he dared call himself a saint and Dr. Ironside proceeded to tell her about the theology of true Biblical sainthood that starts right here. If you are in the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, you are a saint.

**Bob Utley** on **saints** - The OT background ([qodesh](#)) relates to some thing, some person, or some place set apart by God for a special task. The term "saints" is always plural, except one time in Phil. 4:21, but even there it is in a plural context. To be a Christian is to be a part of a family, a community. There are no loners in the faith...The NT always refers to saints as PLURAL (except one time in Phil. 4:12, but even then the context makes it PLURAL). To be saved is to be part of a family, a body, a building! Biblical faith starts with a personal reception, but issues into a corporate fellowship. We are each gifted (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11) for the health, growth, and well-being of the body of Christ—the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). We are saved to serve! Holiness is a family characteristic!

**Steven Cole** on **saints** - It is interesting how believers are referred to in this story. They are members of **the Way**" (a description of Christians found only in Ac 9:2; Ac 19:9, Ac 19:23; Ac 22:4; Ac 24:14, Ac 24:22), showing the fact that Christ is the only way to God. They are called **disciples** (Ac 9:1, Ac 9:10), which means followers or learners of Jesus. They are **saints** (Ac 9:13), or holy ones, which refers to our being set apart from the world to God. They are "**those who call upon Your name**" (Ac 9:14), showing our dependence on God in prayer. And, they are **brothers** (Ac 9:17). But best of all, Jesus tells Saul, "You have been persecuting Me!" By persecuting the church, Saul was persecuting Jesus Himself, the Head of His body, the church. An organic and indissoluble union exists between Christ and His people. When someone harms us, he is harming our Lord. Truly converted people love the fellowship of the saints, because we are members of one another and of our exalted Head. ([An Unlikely Conversion Acts 9:1-19](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [What are Christian saints according to the Bible?](#)
- [Are Christians sinners, saints, or both?](#)
- [Do we sin daily? Is it possible to go an entire day without sinning?](#)
- [What is a carnal Christian?](#)
- [How can I overcome sin in my Christian life?](#)
- [Why do so many Christians fail the "practice what you preach" standard?](#)

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**Today in the Word** - Ulysses S. Grant's first command in the Civil War was over a regiment of Illinois volunteers. As he led his troops into battle against the Confederates in northern Missouri, Grant reflected later: "My heart kept getting higher and higher until it felt to me as though it was in my throat. I would have given anything then to have been back in Illinois." But then the thought occurred to him that the enemy had as much reason to fear him as he had to fear the enemy. Buoyed by his new insight, Grant laid aside his fears and went forward into the battle.

Ananias of Damascus wished he could have stayed home the day he heard God's voice calling him into "battle." This otherwise unknown disciple is usually remembered for his hesitation to obey God's instructions concerning Saul. Ananias didn't have advance knowledge that Saul was no longer an enemy to be feared, but a brother to be embraced (v.17).

This is not an excuse for Ananias' reluctance to obey, but his objections show him to be thoroughly human. Saul's reputation as a persecutor of the saints had preceded him. Evidently Ananias had heard that Saul was coming to Damascus, and he wanted nothing to do with this Jewish zealot.

God's answer to His reluctant hero included more information about Saul, who came to be known as Paul (Acts 13:9). But God also repeated His command, and Ananias didn't need to be told again. His obedience is admirable, and God rewarded Ananias by using him to perform a notable miracle.

As he walked to the house of Judas on Straight Street, perhaps Ananias rehearsed what he would say. He may even have realized the importance of what had happened to Saul and become excited about his new brother.

We don't know if he greeted Saul with firm or with trembling voice, but Ananias delivered his message faithfully before he disappeared into history. Most of us can identify with Ananias because we don't consider ourselves particularly brave or heroic by the world's standards. But God measures heroism by a different standard: obedience. That's encouraging! Why? Because while we may not have the strength or the skill to perform heroic feats, all of us can obey God.

**Acts 9:14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

- **here** Acts 9:2,3
- **call** Acts 9:21; 7:59; 22:16; Ro 10:12-14; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Ti 2:22
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THOSE WHO CALL ON THE NAME OF JESUS**

**And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind** - To Ananias it appeared as if the Lord was asking him to walk into the "lion's mouth," and be bound and taken to Jerusalem. To **bind** includes the ideas of be arrested and imprisoned. As Kent Hughes said this would be the equivalent of asking [Golda Meir](#) to go and nurse to health Adolf Eichmann (Acts, p. 130).

**The chief priests** - Why is it plural here? While there was only one official high priest (at this time probably Caiaphas), the priesthood was for life (like our Supreme Court justices) and also could be purchased from Roman officials during this time. Annas although not officially a high priest, continued to exercise authority. The more important point is that the decision to persecute saints was a unanimous opinion. It shows how much the religious leaders hated Christianity.

**Authority** (1849)(**exousia**) means the right and the might (cf **authority** in Acts 26:10, 12). What is fascinating is that the chief priest had given Saul letters giving him **authority** to imprison believers, this same word (**exousia**) is used in Acts 26:18+ in the description of the "**letters**" (the Gospel) Saul received from the Great High Priest, Jesus, not to bind men but to free men from the **dominion** (**exousia** - power) of Satan" (cf Eph 2:2+ - "power" = **exousia**) and turn them to God!

Paul says before his conversion

"While so engaged (persecuting believers) as I was journeying to Damascus with the **authority** (**exousia**) and commission of the chief priests." (Acts 26:12)

Then after his conversion Paul says

For even if I boast somewhat further about our **authority** (**exousia**), which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame (2 Cor 10:8)

So before conversion Saul had **authority** from Jewish priests to destroy believers and after conversion he had **authority** from the true High Priest (Heb 3:1+) to build up believers. Oh, what a difference the glorious Gospel makes in a man's motives and goals! What differences has the Gospel made in your motives and goals? Are they still primarily temporally oriented, primarily on the visible? Or has the Gospel gripped you and given you a proper eternal perspective and the invisible (cf 2 Cor 4:18+)?

**R C Sproul** adds that Saul "met the eternal High Priest, who will never retire or abdicate His office by dying as all the lines of high priests in Israel had, one after another. Their term was limited, but *the* High Priest changed the orders, gave a new commission, overruled the high priest in Jerusalem, and gave Paul a whole new mission, which he began to carry out immediately." (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary – Acts)

**All who call on Your Name** - "All who call on your Name" is another phrase that describes believers in Jesus, recalling that **Name** stands for the person and all that is true about that person. (Acts 2:21, 9:14, 21, 1 Cor 1:2 = "all who in every place call on the **Name** of our Lord Jesus Christ", cf Amos 9:12, Acts 15:17, 22:16). This phrase is also part of Paul's plea to Israel from Joel 2:32 in

Ro 10:9-12,13+. Peter uses Joel 2:32+ in his sermon in Acts 2:21+ promising "that everyone who calls on the **Name** of the Lord shall be saved." Notice the mysterious balance -- on one hand God calling men and on the other men calling on God. Acts 2:39 speaks of "**as many as the Lord...shall call to Himself**" and Acts 2:21 which promises that "**everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.**" God's ways are **incomprehensible**.

**All** means that no Jew who believed in Jesus was immune to Saul's ire (cf Acts 9:21+). Of course one of those who called upon the Name of Jesus was Ananias. Dear reader have you called on the Name of the Lord and been saved by grace through faith?

**Rich Cathers** on Ananias' reluctance - Ananias has some VERY GOOD reasons why not to obey the Lord's call. He might be thinking, "But Lord, I'm somebody that calls on Your name. He might have ME arrested!" Lesson: Excuses are just excuses

**Illustration** To make it possible for everyone to attend church next Sunday, we are going to have a special "No Excuse Sunday." Cots will be placed in the lobby for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in." Murine will be available for those with tired eyes... from watching television too late on Saturday night. We will have steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever came to church." Blankets will be provided for those who think the church is too cold, and fans for those who think the church is too hot. We will have hearing aids for those who say, "The Pastor speaks too softly," and cotton for those who say he preaches too loudly. Score cards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present. Some relatives will be in attendance for those who like to go visiting on Sunday. There will be 100 TV dinners for those who cannot go to church and cook dinner also. One section will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to seek God in nature. Finally, the gym will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who have never seen the church without them. The problem with excuses, whether they're good ones like Ananias' or bad ones, they're still excuses. And they keep us from the wonderful plans that God has for our lives. If God has been the one leading you to do something, what ever could you be fearful of?

**Acts 9:15** But the Lord said to him, "**Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and Ki, and the children of Israel:

- **Go** Exodus 4:12-14; Jer 1:7; Jonah 3:1,2
- **a chosen** Acts 13:2; Jer 1:5; John 15:16; Ro 1:1; 9:21-24; Gal 1:1,15,16; 2 Ti 1:11; 2 Ti 2:4,20,21; Rev 17:14
- **to bear** Acts 21:19; 22:21; 26:17-20; Ro 1:5,13-15; 11:13; 15:15-21; 1 Cor 15:10; Gal 2:7,8; Eph 3:7,8; Col 1:25-29; 1 Ti 2:7
- **and Kings** Acts 25:22-27; 26:1-11; 27:24; Mt 10:18; 2 Ti 4:16,17
- **the sons of Israel** Acts 28:17-31
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ANANIAS CHARGE TO GO

**But** - Term of contrast. In essence the Lord "cut off" Ananias in mid-sentence and changed direction. In other words the Lord changes the direction back to Saul and in this context the contrast actually functions somewhat like a term of explanation. Note that Jesus shows great patience with Ananias and does not rebuke him, but instead presents additional truth that precedes His command to "Go." As **Robertson** says "Ananias in his ignorance saw in Saul only the man with an evil reputation while Jesus saw in Saul the man transformed by grace to be a messenger of mercy." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Jack Andrews** - We can expect God to use others to minister to us and expect Him to use us to minister to others. How is God using you in ministry? Are you obedient to Him even when His commands are hard? How has God used other saints to minister to you? ([Sermon](#))

**Spurgeon** on Jesus' response to Ananias' reservations. "The Lord reassured His servant by reminding him — **1. Of the doctrine of election.** "He is a chosen vessel unto Me." Here was one whom God had chosen to bless, though Ananias knew it not **2. That He had chosen this man to a great purpose.** "To bear My name among the Gentiles." A great sinner is to be made a great saint. A great opposer is to become a great labourer. Who knows how largely God may use the sinner whom we seek to save? You teachers may be teaching Luthers or Melancthons, holy men and women who shall serve the Lord abundantly. **3. That He would go with him** — "For I will show him," etc. You are bidden to teach an individual and you fear that you have no strength, and, therefore, you cry, "Lord, I cannot show this man the truth." The Lord replies, "I will show him." ([The Good Man Ananias - A Lesson for Believers](#))



**The Lord said to him, "Go** (present imperative) - Jesus is demonstrating great patience with his **demurring** disciple for this is the second time He says "Go!" (actually "Get up and go" in Acts 9:11) So here Jesus gives Ananias a second command (the first "go" was aorist imperative) to Ananias who clearly is recoiling with reluctance. Ananias is to understand that Jesus is sovereign over the situation, and because He is in control, when He say "Go" His disciple should go. This same principle applies to all Jesus' disciples and is all the **rationale** we need to obey His voice. Is there some "Go" (some command or instruction in His Word) on which you are **balking**?

It is interesting how we all love Jesus' words "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Mt 11:28) But once we arrive at His rest and He says "Now go..." this is where the Christian life becomes difficult! Ananias had said "Here I am Lord," but then he heard the charge to "Go" which initially caused him to hesitate. Is there not a bit of "Ananias" in all of us?

**For** is the coordinating conjunction **hoti** and in this context means because, since, for this reason. What reason? Why is Ananias to **go**?

**Kistemaker** summarizes five reasons Saul was Jesus' **chosen instrument** - (1) Paul is a Jew who has been thoroughly trained in the Old Testament Scriptures by Gamaliel in Jerusalem; (2) he grew up in a Greek-speaking environment; (3) he is familiar with Hellenistic culture; (4) he knows how to interpret the Gospel in terms the Hellenistic world can understand; (5) and he is a Roman citizen who realizes that the vast network of roads in the Roman empire facilitates travel, so that the Gospel can reach the ends of the world. Writes E. M. Blaiklock, "No other man known to history from that time combined these qualities as did Paul of Tarsus. It is difficult to imagine any other place [than Tarsus - see **tarseus**] whose whole atmosphere and history could have so effectively produced them in one person." (Ibid)

**He is a chosen instrument of Mine** - Notice "**of Mine**" signifies that Saul now belongs to Jesus.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul acknowledges the fact that he was **chosen** writing that God "had set me apart (cf Ro 1:1+) even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace." (Gal 1:15+) Paul's choosing recalls the words of Jeremiah "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jer 1:5) As an aside, do these passages have an relevance to the "legal" practice of abortion in America? Just something to think about!

**Fruchtenbaum** says "he is a **chosen vessel** unto me" is "a Hebraism which means that he is "a vessel of choice."

**John Piper** - God wants us to see in this conversion...that the most unlikely people can be converted and are converted.

**Bob Utley** exclaims "Oh, the greatness of the grace and election of God! Paul does not fit the evangelical model of voluntary, volitional conversion. He was dramatically drafted!"

**Chosen** (1589) (**ekloge** from **eklegomai** [**word study**] in turn from **ek** = out + **lego** = select, choose, **eklegomai** meaning to choose or select for oneself, **but not necessarily implying rejection of what is not chosen** See **eklektos** = elect) means literally a choosing out, a picking out, a selection. For example 2 Pe 1:10 = "His calling and choosing you" and 1Th 1:4 = God's "choice of you" both refer to God's selection of believers. In the passive sense **ekloge** refers to God's selection for a purpose or task. In other words it represents a special choice as in this passage when God refers to Paul as "My chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15). Jesus chose Saul before Saul chose Jesus.

**Jesus** described the mission in general terms (to bear fruit that would remain) to His original disciples

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:16)

**ILLUSTRATION** - There is an old story about a little boy in a Sunday School class who was asked what part he played in his salvation. The boy said that his conversion was partly God's work and partly his work. The teacher was shocked by the strange answer and asked what part he played in his salvation. He said "I opposed God all I could, and God did the rest." That is the same doctrine of election that saved Saul.

In 1996, retiree and widower Reese Hurley from Cambridge, Maryland, got up from his rocking chair and headed for Africa. He'd been pondering how best to spend his remaining years, but at first had resisted God's call to missions. When he answered the call, he went all-out! He has been on short-term trips to Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Guatemala, Albania, and other destinations, working to help orphans and others in need. He has also used his skills as an electrician on missions building projects. Reese is obeying the Great Commission, doing what Jesus Himself commanded us to do (Acts 1:8). To take the gospel to the world is to confront others with Christ's reality, grace, and glory, a lesson shown in unforgettable fashion in today's reading. Sometimes we omit the fact that imitating Christ means we can also imitate His one recorded appearance after His Ascension—to Paul on the road to Damascus.

**Instrument** (vessel) ([4632](#))([skeuos](#)) literally refers to a container of any material used for a specific purpose (2 Ti 2:20+). Figuratively **skeuos** is used of the human body as formed of clay, depicting it as frail and feeble. **BDAG** says **skeuos** can refer to "a human being exercising a function." In this context the function of the frail human vessel named Saul was to "pour out" the Gospel on the Gentiles. Paul uses this same noun **skeuos** later in a figurative description of believers who now "have this **treasure** (2 Cor 4:6 - "the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ") in earthen **vessels** ([skeuos](#)), so that the surpassing greatness of the power ([dunamis](#)) ("the extraordinary power" = NET) will be of God and not from ourselves; (2 Cor 4:7+)

**To bear** ([bastazo](#)) **My Name before the Gentiles** - Again His **Name** is [tantamount](#) to His Person. The **NLT** is a paraphrase and thus is more interpretative than the NAS, ESV, KJV and in this verse paraphrases "**bear My Name**" as "**to take My message**" (Act 9:15NLT) This is not a bad paraphrase because the **Name "Jesus"** means "*Jehovah saves*" which is what He does! This statement that the Gospel would go to the Gentiles must have shocked Ananias a Jewish believer!

So basically what Jesus is telling Ananias is that Saul/Paul would take the good news of salvation in Jesus to the Gentiles. As the apostle Peter clearly taught "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other **Name** under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12+). The apostle John also links Jesus' **Name** with salvation writing "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God (REGENERATED, BORN AGAIN), **even to those who believe in His Name**". (John 1:12+, contrast Jn 3:18). In fact the purpose statement of the Gospel of John states "these have been written so that (Term of purpose) you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (THE MESSIAH), the Son of God; and that believing you may have (SPIRITUAL LIFE, ETERNAL) life **in His Name**." (Jn 20:31)

As the passages below demonstrate Saul/Paul accepted and fulfilled the ministry Jesus had assigned to him. What ministry has Jesus assigned to you beloved? Rest assured, He has some role for you to play in His grand plan of redemption. Have you discovered your role? I know a man who was called to be a preacher of the Word in his 20's or 30's and even though he felt this was God's call, he ignored it and entered into his aerospace career. When I met him in his 60's, both he and his wife expressed deep regret that he had not surrendered to the call of Jesus. Only one life, twill soon pass, only what's done for Jesus will last!

Here Jesus tells Ananias what His task is for Saul/Paul, but later in Acts as Paul recalls his conversion experience and Jesus' commissioning him as the apostle to the Gentiles...

"And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the **Gentiles**.'" (Acts 22:21)

Paul's **bearing of Jesus' Name to the Gentiles** is repeatedly expressed in his epistles.

Romans 1:5+ (Jesus Christ our Lord) through Whom we have received grace and apostleship **to bring about the obedience of faith** (See [Obedience of faith](#)) **among all the Gentiles** for His name's sake,

Romans 11:13+ But I am speaking to you who are **Gentiles**. Inasmuch then as **I am an apostle of Gentiles**, I magnify my ministry,

Galatians 2:7+ But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the Gospel (GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE NAME OF JESUS) to the **uncircumcised** (GENTILES), just as Peter had been to the circumcised (JEWS)

Ephesians 3:6-7+ to be specific, that the **Gentiles** are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel, of which (Eph 3:6 = "the Gentiles") I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace (cf PAUL'S "POWER SOURCE" IN 1 Cor 15:10+) which was given to me according to the working of His power.

2 Timothy 4:17+ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and **that all the Gentiles might hear**; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

**Comment** - This is a great testimony by Paul which should encourage all of us who have been called into a particular ministry (and in some way we have **ALL** been called), because here we see that what the Lord commands, the Lord enables. God had given Paul a large charge to reach the Gentiles but here we see that the same One Who charged him, now strengthens him to finish the course (2 Ti 4:7+) and fulfill his ministry (2 Ti 4:5+). Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and He will stand by you through "thick and thin" and He will enable you to accomplish the work to which He has called you. You can count on it, because in Him the word is "Yes and Amen!"

**Stedman on bearing of Jesus' Name to the Gentiles** - Is it not true that you and I are here this morning because of the conversion of the Apostle Paul? We have all been blessed through the conversion of this man. His life has made great impact upon every one of us. Not one of us would even be here if it were not for this mighty apostle to the Gentiles. ([Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy](#))

**Thompson** - One Bible expositor said that when a person has been called by God to bear the name of Jesus Christ to the world, there is no higher calling. He said that if someone asked him to be President of the United States he would say "no"; because it is a demotion, because there is no higher calling than to preach God's Word to the world. That is Saul's assignment.

**And kings** - [King Agrippa](#) and **Caesar** ([kaisar](#)) are mentioned in Acts.

Acts 26:1-2 Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense: "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, **King Agrippa**, that I am about to make my defense before you today;

Acts 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before **Caesar**; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

**Steven Ger** comments on Jesus' mention of these three groups (Gentiles, Kings, Jews), is intended to convey to Saul that he was "to possess a flexible, "go anywhere" type of ministry." (Ibid) Paul himself expressed the same through when he wrote "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." (1 Cor 9:22) Do you have a "**go anywhere**" "**by all means**" mentality toward souls who are standing on the edge of eternity, destined and doomed to eternal punishment unless they hear and receive the Gospel? ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Ray Stedman on the sons of Israel** -- That was last on the list. Paul always wanted to put it first. We shall see, as we trace the further story of Acts, that there was a struggle in this young man's life. He longed to be the instrument by which Israel would be redeemed. He wanted to minister primarily to the Jews and he felt he was equipped to do so. But he was not running the program anymore; God was. God had a struggle with him to teach him this, but this was the order he followed. Although he had great impact upon his own nation, the sons of Israel, he was primarily the minister to the Gentiles. ([Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy](#))

**And the sons of Israel** - This refers to the Jews. So while Paul's primary assignment would be to be an apostle to the Gentiles, this did not preclude that he would also be a minister to his own nation of Israel. As he later wrote "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Ro 1:16+). In fact in the concluding passages of Acts we see Paul proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews in Rome

"But we (JEWS) desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect (REFERRING TO CHRISTIANITY, AKA "SECT OF THE NAZARENES" - Acts 24:5), it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere." 23 When they (THE JEWS) had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets (MESSIANIC PROPHECIES), from morning until evening (ALL DAY, NON-STOP, REDEEMING THE TIME!). 24 Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. 25 And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, 26 saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, "YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 27 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'" 28 "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen." 29[When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.] 30 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, 31 **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ** with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:22-31, see also Paul's speech to the Jews from the steps of the Roman barracks in Jerusalem Acts 22:1-21.)

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### **G Campbell Morgan - A chosen vessel unto Me.—Acts 9.15**

How unexpected, and how surpassingly wise are the elections of God. "Saul breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord": "A chosen vessel unto Me." Saul was a man of Tarsus, a Hebrew of Hebrews, and withal a free-born citizen of Rome. All his earliest years had been spent in the atmosphere of Tarsus, a city which was Greek in its out-look. He had been educated religiously, in the strictest of sects, that of the Pharisees. Through all his life, whether in Cilicia or Judaea, he had moved in the liberty of Roman citizenship. His youth had been clean: as touching the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless. He was free from all hypocrisy, and intense in his devotion to what he believed. This man was the chosen vessel of the Lord, to bear His name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. This is perhaps the supreme instance in the New Testament of how natural gifts and capacities are possessed by the Spirit, and made the media through which witness is borne to Christ. All those

elements which made him the most powerful antagonist of Christianity became the forces which created the power of his protagonism. It was a critical hour for the Church. In the affairs of men critical hours are hours of uncertainty and therefore of peril. In the economy of God they are hours of victory for He finds the man; and His gifts and callings are without repentance, for His wisdom is final and unclouded.

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**C H Spurgeon on The Completeness of Paul's Conversion** - Is it not beautiful to see how Paul forgot all his old Pharisaism? All the hard words and bitter blasphemies that he had spoken against Christ, they have all gone in a moment. What strange changes will come over some beings in an instant! One of my students who has been a sailor has preached the gospel for some long time, but his English was far from grammatical. Having been in college some little time he began to speak correctly, but suddenly the old habit returned upon him. He was in the Princess Alice ([sunk in 1878 with loss of over 650 lives](#)) at the time of the lamentable catastrophe, and he escaped in an almost miraculous manner. I saw him some time after, and congratulated him on his escape, and he replied that he had saved his life but had lost all his grammar. He found himself for awhile using the language of two or three years ago; and even now he declares that he cannot get back what he had learnt. He seems to have drowned his grammar on that terrible occasion. Now, just as we may lose some good thing by a dreadful occurrence, which seems to sweep over the mind like a huge wave and wash away our treasures, so by a blessed catastrophe, if Christ should meet with any man tonight, much which he has valued will be swept away! **You may write on wax, and may make the record fair. Take a hot iron and roll it across the wax, and it is all gone. That seems to me to be just what Jesus did with Paul's heart. It was all written over with blasphemy and rebellion, and He rolled the hot iron of burning love over his soul, and the evil inscription was all gone. He ceased to blaspheme, and he began to praise.**

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**R C Sproul on Chosen Instrument** - A fundamental principle of the law of economics is this: the single most important cause of increasing productivity is better tools. Only 3 percent of Americans today are farmers, yet they feed not only all of America but much of the world. Why is it that the American farmer can produce so much more food than farmers from other countries? It is not because the American has a higher IQ or a better physique or more information about agriculture. It is because the American farmer has better tools. The American farmer has a John Deere tractor, whereas farmers in other countries have a plow that is pulled behind a mule. A farmer working with a tractor and all the harvesting equipment we have in America today can vastly outproduce a farmer working alone with primitive tools. Karl Marx understood this, and he said that productivity increases when better tools are invented. He also understood the principle that whoever controls the tools controls the game. I learned that when I was a youth playing baseball on the sandlots of Pittsburgh. Before we had organized sports, we used to meet together at the ballpark. We arrived with all the necessary equipment—balls, bats, gloves—and we'd pick teams and play ball. We had no umpires, so whoever witnessed a play from the best angle would make the call. When there was a close play at first base, the first baseman would say, "You're out!" while the runner would claim he was safe. The argument would continue until the runner would say, "It's my bat, so I say that I'm safe." In other words, if the game was going to continue, it would have to go the way the one with the tools said. That is why Marx wanted the state to own the tools, so that it could control the means of production. It is by the improvement of tools that production increases, and the greater the productivity, the greater the basic level of living for the people. The more shirts produced, the lower the cost per unit. The lower the cost per unit, the more people can afford them. The same principle applies to food. Increased production means lower prices; lower prices means wider distribution. This is elementary, but we tend to forget it from time to time. The key is getting the tool, the instrument, that will increase productivity and then using it to its optimal value and production. The reason I [segued](#) into economics is that the principle we looked at is found in the language Jesus used to explain to Ananias what He was doing in calling the Apostle Paul. The term **vessel** means "**instrument, implement, or tool.**" **Jesus had chosen Saul as His instrument to help cultivate the kingdom that He had planted.** Saul hadn't chosen Christ, but Christ had chosen him for His purposes—to *bear His Name*. Saul had come *bearing papers of authority from the high priest* to wipe Christ's Name off the face of the earth, but Christ had stopped him. He gave Saul a new burden, to bear His Name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary – Acts)

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## **A New Creation**

Read: Acts 9:10-22

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Early in my work life I had a coworker who seemed to delight in using God's name as a profanity. He mercilessly taunted Christians who were new to their faith or who tried to talk with him about Jesus. On the day I left that job to move to another community and a new place of employment, I remember thinking that this man would never become a follower of Jesus.

Two years later I visited my old workplace. He was still there, but never have I witnessed such a dramatic change in a person! This man, so antagonistic to faith, was now a walking, talking example of what it means to be a "new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

And now, more than 30 years later, he's still telling others how Jesus "met him where he was—sin and all."

It occurs to me that the early Christians must have seen something similar in Paul, their fiery persecutor—a riveting example of what it means to become a new creation (Acts 9:1-22). What great hope both of these lives are to those who think themselves beyond redemption!

Jesus sought Paul and my former coworker—and me. And He continues today to reach the "unreachable" and model for us just how we can reach people too.

Lord, I want to learn to reach out to others and share Your love and forgiveness. Teach me and help me to step out in both faith and trust.

For further study, check out Truth with Love: Sharing the Story of Jesus by Ajith Fernando at [discoveryseries.org/hp141](http://discoveryseries.org/hp141)

No one is beyond the reach of God.

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## **The Restoration Business**

Read: Philippians 3:1-8

I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. —nkjv Philippians 3:8

Adam Minter is in the junk business. The son of a junkyard owner, he circles the globe researching junk. In his book *Junkyard Planet*, he chronicles the multibillion-dollar industry of waste recycling. He notes that entrepreneurs around the world devote themselves to locating discarded materials such as copper wire, dirty rags, and plastics and repurposing them to make something new and useful.

After the apostle Paul turned his life over to the Savior, he realized his own achievements and abilities amounted to little more than trash. But Jesus transformed it all into something new and useful. Paul said, "Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8). Having been trained in Jewish religious law, he had been an angry and violent man toward those who followed Christ (Acts 9:1-2). After being transformed by Christ, the tangled wreckage of his angry past was transformed into the love of Christ for others (2 Cor. 5:14-17).

When we turn our lives over to Him, He makes us into something new

If you feel that your life is just an accumulation of junk, remember that God has always been in the restoration business. When we turn our lives over to Him, He makes us into something new and useful for Him and others.

Are you wondering how to become a new person? Romans 3:23 and 6:23 tell us that when we admit we are sinners and ask for God's forgiveness, He gives us the free gift of eternal life that was paid for by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Talk to Him now about your need.

Christ makes all things new.

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## **Sphere Of Influence**

Read: Acts 25:1-12

He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before . . . kings. —Acts 9:15

The book *The Preacher and the Presidents* chronicles the ministry of evangelist Billy Graham. Spanning presidents from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush, Graham often had an open door to the White House. Yet despite his unusual sphere of influence, Graham repeatedly credited the grace of God working through him for his influence—not any personal talent he might possess.

The apostle Paul was another believer who was called to witness to people in high authority. Christ said of Paul, "He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

In Acts, we read that Paul's sphere of influence included rulers such as Felix, Festus, Herod Agrippa, and perhaps Caesar himself (Acts 24–26). But as Billy Graham would do centuries later, Paul pointed to the grace of God working through him: "Not I, but the

grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).

You may not be called to proclaim the gospel to heads of state, but God has placed people in your life with whom He wants you to share His message of hope. Why not pray for opportunities for God's grace to flow through you as a witness to someone in your sphere of influence?

Lord, help me make my witness clear,  
And labor faithfully,  
So friends and neighbors turn to Christ  
Through what they hear from me. —Anon.

The best place to witness is where God has placed you.

By Dennis Fisher

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**Acts 9:16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

NET Acts 9:16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

ESV Acts 9:16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Wuest Acts 9:16 I will show him how many things it is necessary in the nature of the case for him to suffer on behalf of my Name.

- **I will** Acts 20:22,23; 21:11; Isa 33:1; Mt 10:21-25; John 15:20; 16:1-4; 1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 11:23-27; 2 Ti 1:12; 2:9,10; 3:11
- **for** Acts 9:14; Mt 5:11; 24:9; 1 Peter 4:14; Rev 1:9
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SUFFERING IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

**For (gar)** - Term of explanation. What is Jesus explaining? He is showing Saul what it will "cost" to be His chosen instrument!

**Ray Stedman** is correct that here we come to "a word we do not like --**suffer**. Yet the Christian life invariably involves suffering." Stedman then goes on to answer the question "**Why is suffering a part of Christian life?** Because, of course, **suffering is the activity of love**. It is love that bears hurt. Love suffers. It takes the blame, it takes the hurt, it is willing to endure. Anyone called to be a Christian must learn to suffer, must learn to love. Love is hurt in the process of loving. That is why, in this fallen world, love must always suffer. This man is called to enter into the sufferings of Jesus Christ because Jesus loves this world, loves fallen man and wants to redeem him. But he cannot redeem without being hurt in return. So this man is also called to be hurt. What a tremendously responsive instrument he became. How much he suffered in order that he might manifest the love of the heart of God for a lost and wicked world. When we are called to follow Jesus Christ, we are called to suffer. We have to forgive. That hurts, doesn't it? We do not want to forgive; we want to hold out and take vengeance. We want our ego to be fed a little and our pride satisfied. But God has called us to suffer and forgive. That is part of the Christian life. But finally, this man is not called to do this in his own strength: God never sends forth men at their own charges; he is called and equipped to do it. **No one can manifest the suffering of Christian love without being filled with the Holy Spirit.**" ([Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy](#))

**I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake** - Notice the verb **must (dei)** in the **present tense** describes suffering as a continual necessity or perhaps better phrased a continual inevitability! In his last words before he died Paul wrote about his suffering with an emphasis on God's purpose

(2 Ti 2:9-10+) for which (FOR THE Gospel) **I** (present tense - continually) **suffer hardship (kakopatheo)** even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God (THE Gospel) is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason (HERE IS WHY PAUL IS WILLING TO SUFFER) I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

And lest we think this suffering was limited to Paul, he himself reminds Timothy and all genuine disciples of Jesus of the inevitability of suffering writing...

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Ti 3:12+)

**Comment** - Since all believers are in covenant with Jesus and identified with His Name, and will suffer for His Name's sake. (Read Jn 15:18-21, Mt 10:22) As an aside, this is not a popular preaching topic and I have seldom heard sermons on the fact that suffering is guaranteed if one is a genuine believer. As a result as a new believer when suffering for Jesus blindsided me, it greatly disturbed my faith. I had never been taught this important truth. If you are reading these notes, you are now responsible to heed and to teach this truth to those in your sphere of influences so that they are not surprised when the fiery ordeal comes upon them for their testing (1 Pe 4:12+).

**Show** (5263) (**hupodeiknumi** from **hupó** = under + **deiknuo** = show, make known the character or significance of something by visual, auditory, gestural, or linguistic means) literally means to show by placing under (as under one's gaze or before one's eyes) and so to show or instruct plainly, to set before one's eyes, to exemplify by words or actions. The idea is to direct someone's attention to something and so to point out or make known.

**Steven Ger** has an interesting comment - In what could be portrayed as "*God's karma*," the one who had caused such a variety of suffering would in turn experience an even greater variety of suffering (Paul provides a veritable *shopping list* of these personal miseries in 2 Cor. 11:22-33). ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**COMMENT** - Of course **Ger** does not believe in the Hindu doctrine of **karma**, but is using it **metaphorically**. He is using it in the Biblical sense of one reaps what they sow a principle Paul himself taught in (Gal 6:7-8+) See [What does the Bible say about karma?](#) and [Is "you reap what you sow" biblical?](#)

**Suffer** (3958) (**pascho**) generally means to experience something, but clearly in this context means to experience or be subjected to something bad or unpleasant. Luke uses this verb 5 times in Acts and 4 refer to the suffering of Christ. It is thus fitting that in this verse **pascho** refers to suffering of Saul/Paul his disciple. Paul refers to another purpose of his inevitable suffering writing "**I am glad when I suffer for you in my body**, for I am participating in the **sufferings of Christ** that continue for his body, the church." (Col 1:24NLT+, cf Peter's attitude toward suffering for the Lord's sake - Acts 5:41+)

**Jack Andrews** ([Sermon](#)) on Jesus' prediction of Saul's coming suffering - We do not serve a vindictive God. He is not waiting to get back at us. **Saul didn't suffer to pay debt for his past life. He didn't suffer to be saved, but he suffered because he was saved.** He suffered for the cause of Christ. He suffered persecutions for many because he bore the Name of Jesus all over the known world. John Phillips wrote, "Ananias had no need to worry about Saul's making the saints to suffer. From now on Saul would do the suffering. He would take upon himself the care of all the churches and repay a thousand times in his own suffering all the pain and woe he had inflicted on the people of God. And to his dying day he could carry in his breast a great remorse for all he had done to the infant Jewish church." Saul would have been able to testify with the 3rd stanza of "Amazing Grace" which goes,

"Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

**Jack Arnold** on **suffer for My name's sake** - As a new Christian, Paul had to learn that he was called to suffer for the name of Christ. As he took the Gospel out into a hostile world, he would encounter opposition which would cause him great physical and psychological suffering. To be associated with a rejected Messiah, would bring Paul much affliction and heartache. **Being a Christian involves suffering for Christ.** "For to you it has been granted (**ED: THIS VERB IS CHARIZOMAI FROM CHARIS = GRACE - HERE IS THE POINT OF THIS PASSAGE - SALVATION IN JESUS AND SUFFERING FOR JESUS ARE BOTH GIFTS OF GRACE FROM GOD!**) for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also **to suffer for His sake**" (Phil. 1:29+). Satan hates it when Christians move out and challenge men to come to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul said, "*What will you have me to do, Lord?*" he meant it. All bridges were burned; all personal desires were thrown overboard. Cost what it may, he would be Christ's true and loyal disciple. The sufferings were great but the blessings were far greater. ([Sermon](#))

As Luke writes later in Acts 14:22 "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

Faith in Christ brings great blessings but often great suffering. God calls us to commitment, not to comfort. He promises to be with us *through* suffering and hardship, not to spare us from them. - Life Application Study Bible.

**NET Note** on **for My name's sake** - Or "because of (huper) My Name." BDAG lists Acts 9:16 as an example of *huper* used to indicate "the moving cause or reason, because of, for the sake of, for." (**ED: In other words the "cause" or "reason" for our suffering for the sake of His Name is because of our identification with Him. So we might translate it "I will show him how much he must suffer because of My Name."**)

**Bob Utley** on suffering of the disciples of Jesus - Suffering is not the exception, but the norm for Christians in a fallen world (cf. Mt. 5:10–12; Jn 15:18–21; 16:1–2; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Ro 5:3–4; 8:17–18; 2 Cor 4:7–12; 6:3–10; 11:24–33; Phil. 1:29; 1 Th 3:3; 2 Ti 3:12; James 1:2–4; 1 Pe 4:12–16). There is a theological relationship between the **sufferings of Christ** and the **sufferings of His followers** in this fallen realm. The book of First Peter shows this parallel.

<b>Jesus' suffering</b>	1 Peter 1:11	1 Peter 2:21, 23	1 Peter 3:18	1 Peter 4:1, 13	1 Peter 5:1
<b>His followers'</b>	1 Peter 1:6-7	1 Peter 2:19	1 Peter 3:13-17	1 Peter 4:1, 12-19	1 Peter 5:9-10

**William Larkin** amplifies the words of Jack Arnold noting that "Every convert then and now needs to know "it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29+). **This verse was used to charge inquirers in Russian churches in the days of active persecution under atheistic communism. New Christians must know that discipleship is purposeful and costly.**" ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**Steven Cole** - Formerly, Saul had a mission, but it was self-willed and evil. He thought that he was serving God by eliminating these "heretics," but he was only feeding his pride and lust for power. He was advancing beyond many of his contemporaries (Ga 1:14), climbing the religious ladder to prominence. But now, he becomes an earthen vessel, filled with God's treasure (2 Co 4:7), with a new purpose of glorifying God, whether by life or by death (Php 1:20). **Formerly, he inflicted suffering on others; now, he will suffer much for the sake of Christ.** Formerly, he despised the Gentiles; now, he will offer to them the riches of Christ. (NOW PASTOR COLE APPLIES THIS TRUTH TO US TODAY!) If God has saved you from your sins, He has a purpose for your life, and it is not primarily for you to succeed in the American dream. His main purpose has to do with eternal realities. He wants to use you in His great cause of discipling the nations. He may let you fulfill His purpose by staying in America. But, He may call you to go to a country where Christ is not nearly so well known. The main thing is for you to be a willing and clean vessel, **"useful to the Master, prepared for every good work"** (2Ti 2:21+). ([An Unlikely Conversion Acts 9:1-19](#))

**ILLUSTRATION** - **Adoniram Judson**, the renowned missionary to Burma, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for Christ. For 7 heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and poverty. During this time he was thrown into Ava Prison, and for 17 months was subjected to almost incredible mistreatment. As a result, for the rest of his life he carried the ugly marks made by the chains and iron shackles which had cruelly bound him. Undaunted, upon his release he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the Gospel. The godless ruler indignantly denied his request, saying "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion!"

**Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

- **Ananias** Acts 22:12,13
- **laying his hands** Acts 6:6; 8:17; 13:3; 19:6; Mt 19:13; Mark 6:5; 1 Ti 4:14; 5:22; 2 Ti 1:6; Hebrews 6:2
- **Brother** Acts 9:13,14; 21:20; 22:13; Ge 45:4; Luke 15:30,32; Ro 15:7; Philemon 1:16; 1 Peter 1:22,23
- **the Lord** Acts 9:4,5,10,11,15; 10:36; 22:14; 26:15; Luke 1:16,17,76; 2:11; 1 Cor 15:8,47
- **that you** Acts 9:8,9,12
- **and be filled** Acts 2:4; 4:31; 8:17; 13:52
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TRUST AND OBEDIENCE OF ANANIAS

"We must obey and follow God's leading, even when he leads us to difficult people and places." - Life Application Study Bible

**So** - **So** most commonly denotes continuation and further thought development. In this context it refers to Ananias [unflinching](#) (after



initially "[flinching](#)") obedience to his Lord.

**Jack Thompson** - Think about this, the thing for which Ananias is forever honored in Scripture is for being Saul's friend . Ananias was not a great expositor or great evangelist; he was Saul's great friend. The greatest of all men of God need a good, trusted friend. Saul will never forget this man and neither should we. It would be Saul who would take the Gospel to Europe, which eventually came to America and ultimately to us. Ananias was a key agent in caring for Saul in the infant days of his conversion and we can thank God for Ananias' faithfulness and willingness to do God's will in this matter.

**Spurgeon** on Ananias' **response** after Jesus' **reassurance** - "It was — **1. Prompt.** He went his way with all speed. **2. Exact:** he entered into the house, and, putting his hands on him, said, "Brother Saul." He did as he had been bidden. And if I deliver my Lord's message just as He gave it to me, then my Lord is responsible for the success of it, and not myself. **3. Loving.** "Brother Saul." You cannot win souls by putting on a morose countenance. Do not be afraid to call the individual "Brother"; but take care that you mean it. Ananias did not use the term as a [cant](#) expression, but his spirit and feeling were brotherly. **4. Wise.** He did not pompously say, "I am an ordained official, and therefore speak with authority"; but "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared," etc. When he alludes to Paul's former course, he only gives a hint of it — "the Lord that appeared to thee." He does not say, "as thou camest to persecute us," but he allowed conscience to do its own work. He gives the items of his errand — "that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." **5. Faithful.** "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." The tendency with many is to say nothing upon that point. ([The Good Man Ananias - A Lesson for Believers](#))

**Jack Andrews** adds that "Ananias obeyed the will of God for his life. He obeyed the voice of the Lord. He was used by God to minister to one of the most, if not the most, effective Christians that has ever lived. When we are obedient to the Lord Jesus it is no telling how God will use us or who God will use us to minister to and influence for the Lord. **Warren Wiersbe** wrote, "God can use even the most obscure saint. Were it not for the conversion of Saul, we would never had heard of Ananias; and yet Ananias had an important part to play in the ongoing work of the church. Behind many well-known servants of God are lesser-known believers who have influenced them. God keeps the books and will see to it that each servant will get a just reward. The important thing is not fame but faithfulness." Ananias was faithful to the call of God on his life and God used him in the restoration of Saul. Ananias went his way and entered the house that God told him to enter. That tells me that Ananias' way was God's way! Where God wanted him he would go; what God wanted him doing he would do. When His way is our way we will be blessed by the Lord and used by the Lord. Too often our way is our way and we refuse and reject His way. Proverbs 16:25 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." When we go our way we need to make sure it is His way. " ([Sermon](#))

**Ananias departed and entered the house and after laying his hands on him said-** Notice Ananias' immediate obedience after Jesus had explained his "mission." He did not hesitate, vacillate or grumble. Formerly he had expressed some reservations, but no longer after he had heard the word of Christ. There is a principle here which is amplified by Paul's words in Romans 10:17 where he teaches that "**faith** comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ.**" Ananias' **faith** (trust) was strengthened by the **words of Jesus** enabling him to overcome his fear. **Faith** is always God's prescribed antidote for **fear**. What are you fearing today? Perhaps, hearing from the Word of Christ today might be just what you need to strengthen your faith and then be enabled by His Spirit (who takes the Word) to overcome your fear. As Paul wrote to Timothy "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control." (2 Ti 1:7NET)

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

([Play](#))

Notice how trusting, obedient **Ananias** ministered to Saul -

- (1) Plays a part in Saul regaining his sight - Lays hands on him
- (2) Instructs Saul - confirms it was indeed Jesus Who appeared to him on the road
- (3) Accepts Saul - as a Christian brother
- (4) Baptizes Saul - after exhorting him to consider baptism

As **Larkin** says "**Ananias'** ministry models for us the supportive, restorative role the church is to play in the lives of newly converted Christians." We don't hear about **Ananias** again in the NT (other than his interaction with Saul also noted in Acts 22:12). But he is not obscure to God and only eternity will tell us how valuable Ananias' ministry was to Saul and the expansion of the Kingdom of

God (cf Mt 6:19-21+, Lk 8:8+, Mk 10:30). God is always looking for men and women like Ananias, not as much for their ability as their availability and their faithfulness to fulfill His call on their lives! Are you an "Ananias?" ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**Wiersbe** adds "Behind many well-known servants of God are lesser-known believers who have influenced them. God keeps the books and will see to it that each servant will get a just reward. The important thing is not fame but faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:1–5)." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**APPLICATION** - It is not always easy to love others, especially when we are afraid of them or doubt their motives. Nevertheless we must follow Jesus' command (John 13:34) and Ananias's example, showing loving acceptance to other believers. (Life Application Study Bible)

**Related Resource:**

- Let Spurgeon's sermon challenge you - [The Good Ananias - A Lesson for Believers](#)(summary format)

**Brother Saul** - Ananias' address to Saul previously the persecutor as his spiritual brother in Christ serves to demonstrate the power of the Gospel, not only in transforming Saul's heart from murder to love, but of enabling Ananias' reception of Saul as his brother in Christ. And this must have greatly encouraged Saul to be so addressed. Ananias could have said you "former murderer", "former persecutor" or "former sinner", but filled with grace he calls Saul his **brother!**

**Brother** (80)([adelphos](#) from **a** = denotes unity + **delphus** = a womb) means literally from the same womb. Believers are all born from one Spirit and thus have a common "birth." *Adelphós* generally denotes a fellowship of life based on identity of origin. **Adelphos** in this context describes a spiritual brother, a fellow Christian, a fellow believer.

**The Lord Jesus** - Ananias recognizes Jesus as his Lord.

**Who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming-** Ananias relates his vision of Jesus which re-enforces the truth to Saul that it was indeed Jesus Who appeared to him on the road. Saul knows that there was no other way Ananias could have known about the Damascus Road encounter unless Jesus had actually told him. Surely this fact would serve to strengthen Saul's faith.

**Has sent me so that you may regain your sight-** Luke gives us more detail of what Ananias said in what amounted to Saul's "commissioning service." Luke quotes Paul's version of this event...

(Ananias) came to me (SAUL), and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, **receive your sight** (aorist imperative)!' And at that very time I looked up at him (cf "scales...fell" Acts 9:17). 14 (ANANIAS "COMMISSIONS" SAUL) "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth (A PROPHECY THAT SAUL WOULD HAVE MORE ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS). 15 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men (IMPLIES JEWS AND GENTILES) of what you have seen and heard. 16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and **be baptized** (aorist imperative), and **wash away** (aorist imperative) your sins, calling on His name.' (Acts 22:13-16)

**Comment:** It is interesting that in Acts 22 Saul's restoration of sight was associated with Ananias' command with no mention of laying on of hands. Here in Acts 9:17 Ananias lays his hands on Saul and speaks but Luke does not record the direct command to Saul to receive his sight. Acts 22 makes no mention of Saul's filling with the Spirit.

**Jack Arnold** on **brother Saul** - This must have been a tremendous comfort to Paul. Because of his stand for Christ, Paul was cut off from his former Jewish companions and forfeited the friendship of every Jew in the then known world. He needed the words "Brother Saul" to know he was loved and accepted by his Christian brethren. ([Sermon](#))

**Steven Cole** on **brother Saul** - Saul was on a mission to destroy the Lord's people. But now, he is dependent on one of the Lord's people to regain his sight. Ananias was a godly Jew who had accepted Jesus as his Messiah. After he receives the confirmation that he needs from the Lord, he goes to Saul and greets him, "Brother Saul." How wonderful those words must have sounded to Saul! "Brother Saul!" Formerly, he was public enemy number one of the church. But after God transformed him, he immediately became Brother Saul. One reason that the Lord sent Ananias, rather than healing Saul's sight directly in answer to his prayers, was so that Saul would begin to see what he later taught clearly, that the church is the body of Christ. We are members of one another. ([An Unlikely Conversion Acts 9:1-19](#))

**And be filled with the Holy Spirit-** The idea of filling is controlling, so that which fills a person, controls that person (Think of wine which is Paul's analogy in Eph 5:18+). The Spirit filled and took control of Saul.

**THOUGHT** - Dear new creation in Christ (like Paul was), are you daily allowing the Spirit to control your thoughts, words, actions? If not you are living life in your natural power, not His supernatural power! How's that working out for you? Fill yourself with the Word in the morning, as the Spirit uses the Word to energize you. See the intimate association of [Filled with His Spirit and Richly Indwelt with His Word](#). See [discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#). See [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

**Be filled** (4092)(**pimplemi**) can speak of literal filling (Mt 27:48), but in this passage is used figuratively. Saul was filled with the Spirit which signifying that he was wholly affected, controlled and influenced by the Holy Spirit. Compare Lk 1:15 = of John the Baptist while still in mother's womb, Lk 2:4, Acts 4:8 = of Peter, Acts 4:31 = the praying believers, Acts 13:9 = of Paul). Filled with an emotion (Lk 4:28, Lk 6:11 = filled with rage, Lk 5:26 = filled with fear, Acts 3:10 = wonder and amazement, Acts 5:17 = jealousy, Acts 13:45 = Jews filled with jealousy, compare Acts 19:29 = city filled with confusion).

Note that Ananias is not an apostle and yet he in a sense "commissions" Saul (actually Jesus commissioned him of course) and this is associated (in a way Luke does not specifically describe) with filling with the Spirit. Previously Saul had been filled with his old nature, which "empowered" his persecution of the Church. Now Saul had become a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17+) and had access to a new power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Saul needed to be filled with, controlled by, empowered by the **Spirit of Jesus** so that he might be enabled supernaturally to do the **work of Jesus**. This is the continual need of every believer who seeks to bear the Name of Jesus to a lost and antagonistic world.

**Kistemaker** observes that "The verbal portrait Luke paints is vivid yet lacking in detail. In descriptive language he reveals that Paul received his eyesight, but the words concerning the filling with the Spirit are sketchy. Luke gives no sequence of events, so we are unable to ascertain when the coming of the **Holy Spirit** occurred." (Ibid)

**Ray Stedman** - There were no tongues, no sign, no manifestation; there was simply a quiet infilling of the Holy Spirit, just as occurs today with anyone who believes in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came to live in him, to dwell within him to fill his life and equip him to manifest the love, the suffering love, of Jesus Christ. ([Beloved Enemy | Acts 9:1-19](#))

**MacArthur** adds "It is significant that unlike the Jews (Acts 2:1-4), the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), and soon the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-46), Saul had received the Spirit and his commissioning to service with no apostles present. Saul was a Jew, so there was no need to repeat the initial coming of the Spirit that occurred at Pentecost. Also, he was an apostle in his own right and did not derive his authority from the other apostles (Gal. 1:1; cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; Gal. 1:15-17), nor was he subject to their authority. Like them, he was chosen personally by the Lord Jesus Christ and received the Spirit for his commissioning and power directly from Him. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

As **Jack Arnold** says "to be effective in service for Christ and to endure the sufferings for Christ, Paul had to be **filled with the Spirit**. The Holy Spirit would be his power to live the Christian life. Paul was saved but he needed the filling or control of the Spirit for power to be effective for Christ." ([Sermon](#))

**Steven Cole** on **filled with the Holy Spirit** - Every Christian receives the indwelling Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. He gives us the power to overcome sin and His life in us produces the character qualities that are called the fruit of the Spirit (Ga 5:22-23). If you are seeking to live the Christian life in your own strength, you will be defeated and frustrated. But if you live daily in submission and dependence on the Holy Spirit, you will experience consistent victory over sin and the joy of salvation welling up within you. ([An Unlikely Conversion Acts 9:1-19](#))

**Brian Harbour** describes the Person and work of the Spirit for us.

- The Holy Spirit is a **seal** who marks us off as belonging to God (Eph. 1:13).
- The Holy Spirit is a **sage** who teaches us the things of God (John 16:13).
- The Holy Spirit is a **sustainer** who provides strength we will need to make it through each day (Rom. 8:11).
- The Holy Spirit is a **supplier** of spiritual gifts which we can use in carrying out the ministries of the church (1 Cor. 12:7).
- The Holy Spirit is a **supplicator** who steps in when we do not know how to pray as we should (Rom. 8:26).
- The Holy Spirit is a **substitute** for Christ, one just like Him, who will carry out in our lives the ministry Christ provided while He was on this earth (John 14:16).
- The Holy Spirit is a **sample** of the spiritual blessings that will be ours through all eternity (Eph. 1:14).

**Illustration** - A (SPIRIT FILLED/CONTROLLED) Sunday School teacher, a Mr. Edward Kimball, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Fredrick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F. B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they

planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach. During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ. Think of the impact that this one (SPIRIT FILLED/CONTROLLED) Sunday School teacher has had.

**Illustration** - In a little mission church in New Zealand, a line of worshipers knelt at the altar rail to receive the Lord's Supper. Suddenly, from among them, a young native arose and returned to his pew. Some minutes later, he returned to his place at the rail. Afterwards, one of his friends asked what happened. The young man explained, "When I went forward and knelt, I found myself side by side with a man whom some years ago had slain my father and whom I had vowed to kill. I couldn't partake of the Lord's Supper with him, so I returned to my pew. As I sat there, I thought about Jesus' statement at the first Lord's Supper: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." I remembered the Lord Jesus hanging from the cross and remember He said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." That's when I returned to the altar rail." At times we are going to have to minister to those who are hard to minister to. Ananias identified with Saul as a Christian ([Andrews](#))

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**Oswald Chambers - The glory that excels** (Borrow [My Utmost for His Highest page 110](#))

The Lord ... hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight. Acts 9:17.

When Paul received his sight he received spiritually an insight into the Person of Jesus Christ, and the whole of his subsequent life and preaching was nothing but Jesus Christ—"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." No attraction was ever allowed to hold the mind and soul of Paul save the face of Jesus Christ.

We have to learn to maintain an unimpaired state of character up to the last notch revealed in the vision of Jesus Christ.

The abiding characteristic of a spiritual man is the interpretation of the Lord Jesus Christ to himself, and the interpretation to others of the purposes of God. The one concentrated passion of the life is Jesus Christ. Whenever you meet this note in a man, you feel he is a man after God's own heart.

Never allow anything to deflect you from insight into Jesus Christ. It is the test of whether you are spiritual or not. To be unspiritual means that other things have a growing fascination for you.

'Since mine eyes have looked on Jesus,  
I've lost sight of all beside,  
So enchanted my spirit's vision,  
Gazing on the Crucified.'

**Acts 9:18** And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

- **immediately** 2 Cor 3:14; 4:6
- **and was** Acts 2:38,41; 13:12,13,37,38; Acts 22:16
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE SCALES FELL FROM SAUL'S EYES

**And (kai)** connects the falling scales with the laying on of hands.

**Spurgeon** on the **results** of Ananias' obedience - They were — **1. Immediate**; for Paul received his sight, was comforted and baptized at once. **2. Extensive**; for this Paul became a preacher of the gospel to every land. Go ye, then, wherever God sends you. Everybody is not a Paul, but yet you may find a Paul among your converts. The pearl fisher plunges into the sea; he does not know whether or no he shall bring up a pearl that will decorate an emperor's diadem, but he searches the deeps in that hope. No matter though the fisherman himself may be coarse and rugged, yet he may light upon a priceless pearl. And you, whoever you may be, plunge into your work with whole-hearted devotion (cf Mt 4:19), and you shall yet discover some hidden jewel which shall adorn Immanuel's diadem. ([The Good Man Ananias - A Lesson for Believers](#))

**Immediately** (2112)([eutheos](#) from  **euthus** = straight, immediate) is an adverb which generally means at once, right away, forthwith,

straightaway, without an interval of time or a point of time subsequent to a previous point of time (time when Ananias laid his hands on Saul).

All of Luke's uses of *eutheos* in Acts - Acts 9:18; Acts 9:20; Acts 9:34; Acts 12:10; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:10; Acts 17:14; Acts 21:30; Acts 22:29

**There fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight** - Presumably this occurred as Ananias laid his hands on Saul. The **something like scales** that fell was a reflection of the healing power of God, not the laying on of hands. **Warren Wiersbe** adds "By the power of God, his eyes were opened and he could see!" We don't know exactly what was on Saul's eyes, but the implication is that there was something physical which impaired his vision, and at this very moment the physical impediment fell off enabling him to see again.

This Bible verse gives us the common secular saying **"to have scales fall from (one's) eyes"** which in the secular world means "To suddenly be able to see a situation clearly and accurately." That's not a bad "spiritual" definition, because for the first time in his life, Paul had 20/20 spiritual vision to see Jesus for Who He really is, the Messiah and Savior of the world.

**Scales (3013)**(**lepis** from **lepo** = to peel, strip off the rind or husk) literally referred to fish scales (Lxx - Lev 11:9, 10, Dt 14:9) **or a thin layer that covers something**. We derive our English word **lepidopterous**, having wings (ptera) like butterfly wings, covered with scales. Liddell-Scott says "an egg-shell, Ar.; the cup of a filbert, Anth. 2. collectively, the scales of fish, Hdt." This is the only NT use of **lepis** and here it is actually a **simile** so it not referring to a scale like one might see on a fish or insect wing, but it somehow resembles it. "Medical writers use the word *λεπις* [*lepis*] for pieces of the skin that fall off (Hobart, Medical Language of St. Luke, p. 39)." (Robertson)

**Lepis** in Septuagint - Lev. 11:9; Lev. 11:10; Lev. 11:12; Num. 16:38; Deut. 14:9; Deut. 14:10;

**TDNT - lepis** has two meanings: a. "shell" (e.g., of a nut) and b. "scale" (e.g., of fish, snakes, or, figuratively, metal plates). The only NT use is in the story of Paul's conversion, when Ananias lays hands on the blinded Saul and "something like scales fell from his eyes" (Acts 9:18). The term comes from the medical world of the day which speaks of descaling the eyes, i.e., removing a growth of skin that causes blindness (**ED: FROM MY BACKGROUND AS A DERMATOPATHOLOGIST THIS IS NOT AN ACTUAL SCALE OF SKIN ORIGINATING FROM THE CONJUNCTIVA THAT COVERS THE EYE. IT COULD ONLY REFER TO OVERGROWTH OF SKIN OVER THE EYE BUT NOT ORIGINATING FROM THE EYE BULB ITSELF.**). The author needs no special medical knowledge to use the term, and the passage must not be thought to support the view that Paul suffered from an eye affliction (cf. Gal. 4:15). The metaphor suggests that, as the Lord has overcome Paul's enmity, so he has given him the witness that he is to go to the Gentiles "to open their eyes" and turn them from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). [G. BORNKAMM, IV, 232-33]

**Fell from (634)**(**apopipto** from **apo** = away from + **pipto** = to fall) means to fall off. In the Septuagint uses it can refer to things that fall (gleanings) (Lev 19:9, Lev 23:22). This verb was not used as a medical term related to the scales on the eyes so Luke is not giving us a "medical description". As a pathologist who dealt with esoteric diseases frequently, I am not aware of any medical condition that produces scales on the eyes which later fall off. Scars yes, but not scales.

**Vincent on there fell—scales** - Both words occur only here in the New Testament. In Paul's own account of his conversion in Acts 26:12-18. he does not mention his blindness: in Acts 22. he mentions both the blindness and the recovery of sight, but not the particular circumstances which Luke records. The mention of the scales, or incrustations, such as are incidental to ophthalmia, is characteristic of the physician, and *ποπίπτειν*, to fall off, was used technically by medical writers of the falling of scales from the skin, and of particles from diseased parts of the body. "We may suppose that Luke had often heard Paul relate how he felt at that moment" (Hackett).

**Stedman** on scales falling from his eyes - Immediately it changed his vision. Scales fell from his eyes. I think this is both literal and symbolic. All those long, built-up prejudices of a Pharisee against Gentiles; all the bigotry, the pride and the prejudice that twisted and distorted his view of the Gentile world; all of it disappeared in one moment. This man saw the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike, as men and women bearing the image of God and needing to be redeemed. He never again looked at them any longer as Jew and Gentile. He no longer saw those divisions. As he tells us himself, he learned to judge no man according to the flesh but to see in him only a potential subject for the kingdom of God. ([Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy](#))

**And he got up and was baptized (baptizo)** - Luke omits the exhortation from Ananias in Paul's second version of his conversion story. Ananias asked Saul "Now why do you delay? Get up and **be baptized** (aorist imperative = Don't delay! Do this now!), and wash away your sins, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16) As in several previous conversions recorded in Acts, water baptism followed conversion (Acts 8:12, 38+).

**Phillips** - Baptism publicly proclaimed him a member of the new and noble family of twice-born children of the living God. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Was baptized** (907) (**baptizo** from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. **Saul** received the outward sign that symbolized the inward change. In other words, **Saul** publicly identified himself with the Lord Jesus and visually (in the act of baptism) testified that he had died to self, had been buried with Christ, and had been raised to walk in the newness of life. (Ro. 6:3-6+) In short, baptism is a symbol of a believer's permanent union with and identification with Christ in the New Covenant.

**Bob Utley** adds that baptism "marks a change of ownership and allegiance."

**Robertson** says **Saul was baptized** "Apparently by Ananias (Acts 22:16) as a symbol of the new life in Christ already begun, possibly in the pool in the house of Judas as today water is plentiful in Damascus or in Abana or Pharpar (Furneaux), better than all the waters of Israel according to Naaman (2 Kings 5:12). ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**James Montgomery Boice** helps understand this figurative meaning of **baptizo** writing that "The clearest example that shows the meaning of **baptizo** is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be '**dipped**' (**bapto**) into boiling water and then '**baptised**' (**baptizo**) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of **baptizing** the vegetable, produces a **permanent change**. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to **our union** and **identification** with Christ...There must be a union with Him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!" (Bolding added)

**John G. Butler** on Saul's baptism - Baptism in those days really made you a marked person. Baptism showed everyone whose side you were on. It let everyone know where you stood regarding Jesus Christ... By being baptized, (Saul) cut the cords of approval by Jewish leaders, severed ties of friendship, and in general burned the bridges behind him. Few have paid such a great price for being baptized. But no price is too great to show that you stand with Jesus Christ.

**Wiersbe** comments on Acts 22:16 - The King James Version of Acts 22:16 conveys the impression that it was necessary for Saul to be baptized in order to be saved, but that was not the case. Saul washed away his sins by "calling on the Lord" (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). **Kenneth Wuest** translates Acts 22:16, "Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins, having previously called upon His name." In the Greek, it is not a present participle ("calling"), but an aorist participle ("having called"). His calling on the Lord preceded his baptism. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Paul had no hesitancy in following the exhortation of Ananias and was baptized (immediately). Damascus had 2 rivers running through town ([see picture](#)), the **Abana** and the **Pharpar**, either of which would have been good places for Saul's baptism. Once again we see the irony as Saul is baptized into the very church (1 Cor 12:13) he hated and hunted!

**Arnold** writes that **Saul** "wanted to outwardly identify himself with Christ even though he had already been inwardly identified by faith. One of the marks of a new Christian is that he wants to take his public stand for Christ in water baptism. We do not know how Paul was baptized, but we do know that his baptism had nothing to do with his salvation. He was saved three days before so his baptism had absolutely nothing to do with his salvation. It was probably Ananias who baptized Paul. Ananias was not an elder or a deacon but he baptized Paul. Ananias was never ordained but he baptized. Some of the great saints of the church were never ordained - John Calvin, John Bunyan, H. A. Ironside and D. L. Moody to name a few. According to the New Testament, it is not necessary for an ordained man to administer baptism or the Lord's Table. Any layman can water baptize a believer in Christ." ([Sermon](#))

**Ray Stedman** gives an interesting description of these events in Saul's life comparing them with the development of film in photography - Surely that is what we have in this remarkable account. It has always seemed to me that here is a striking parallel to the process of photography. God, in a sense, took a picture of Jesus Christ at this moment, and printed it upon the soul of this young man, Saul of Tarsus. From that moment on, anyone who looked at Paul the Apostle never saw Paul; he saw Jesus Christ. The fundamental principle of photography is to take light-sensitive salts, spread them on a film, and keep them in total darkness until the precise moment when what you want recorded is exposed to it. That is what happened to Saul of Tarsus. He was a young man, very sensitive to the things of God, and yet kept in darkness until the moment when the light was exposed. In that blinding light he saw an image, the image of Jesus Christ. It was printed indelibly upon his soul. After an exposure to light film is always kept in darkness to develop. It is put down into dark and bitter waters for awhile, and that is also what we find here. The newest apostle was led by the hand into the city of Damascus where for three days and nights he neither ate nor drank, while the image to which he was exposed was developed and embedded unforgettably in his heart. Saul of Tarsus was crucified, and Jesus Christ was seen in his life from then on (cf Gal 2:20+). ([Acts 9:1-19 Beloved Enemy](#))

Read: Galatians 1:11-18

There fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once. —Acts 9:18

In 1991, two operations restored Shirl Jennings' sight after 40 years of blindness. His family and friends reacted with absolute euphoria, but the next day Shirl's fiance recorded in her diary that he was "trying to adjust to being sighted . . . . Not able to trust vision yet. . . . Like [a] baby just learning to see, everything new, exciting, scary, unsure of what seeing means."

Although Shirl knew people and objects through his other senses, he could not recognize them by sight. People expected him to be fully adjusted immediately, but he was trying to figure out what everything was.

Isn't it much the same for us when we receive God's gift of salvation?

After Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus, the restoration of his physical sight became a powerful metaphor for the new spiritual sight he received from the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-17). We don't know much about Paul's 3 years in Arabia following his conversion (Galatians 1:15-18), except that it must have been a period of profound relearning about life and God.

It takes time to grow in our relationship with Christ, and to see with the new spiritual eyes He has given us. So let's be patient with each other, and especially with every new Christian we meet along our journey of joyful discovery. —DCM

More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me. —Hewitt

Conversion is a step of faith; maturity is a journey of faith.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:19 and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

- **he took food and was strengthened** Acts 27:33-36; 1 Sa 30:12; Eccl 9:7
- **Now for several days** Acts 26:20; 1 Sa 10:10-12; Gal 1:17
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL CONFRONTED BY CHRIST COMFORTED BY THE CHURCH

**William Larkin** has an interesting comment - Reports of "foxhole religion" and deathbed conversions leave us uneasy. And having just read about Saul's conversion, we might be wondering about him. How do we know his and others' experiences are genuine? ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**And he took food and was strengthened** - Saul had already developed the right priorities, taking care of spiritual matters before seeking to meet his physical need. In Acts 9:17-18 Saul was spiritually strengthened (filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized) and here he is physically strengthened.

**Jack Andrews** comments on Saul's 3 days without food - In those three days without sight he was not thinking about his belly, but about his behavior. He was not thinking about eating food, but about exercising faith. He was not caught up with consuming a meal, but about connecting with the Master. There is a proper time and place to eat. Paul understood that he need to take care of his body. He had been saved by the grace of God, restored by God, been baptized into the fellowship of the church, and now was having food with the saints that he had traveled there to persecute. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Strengthened** (1765)([enischuo](#) from **en** = in + **ischuo** = to strengthen) used only here and Lk 22:43 ("an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him" in His agony in the Garden) and means to be strong in anything, to be invigorated, become

strong. Its basic meaning is "to grow strong, to regain one's strength" as when Jacob, who was sick, strengthened himself to meet Joseph and his two sons who came to visit him (Genesis 48:2). This verb is used in the Lxx when Samson beseeches Yahweh to "strengthen (him) just this time" that he might avenge the Philistines for blinding him (Jdg 16:28). In 2 Sa 22:40 David acknowledges that Yahweh "has girded (him) with strength for battle."

**Now for several days he was with the disciples ([mathetes](#)) who were at Damascus** - Were they all together in Judas' house? Luke simply does not tell us. Physical food was followed by spiritual fellowship. The former strengthened him *physically*, while the latter strengthened him *spiritually*. This is a simple but amazing statement. These were the very disciples Saul had sought to imprison, and yet now they willingly embrace their former enemy as their friend and brother in Christ! Those Saul sought to bind became brothers in Christ! Not only that, but it is likely that these more mature disciples were discipling Saul who would one day become the great apostle Paul! The radical change in Saul after his conversion is once again a sure testimony to the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. O blessed Gospel!

**Robertson on several days** - An indefinite period, probably not long, the early period in Damascus before Saul left for Arabia (Gal. 1:13–24+). ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** comments that "One sure mark of a transformed life is the desire to be with fellow Christians...That does not mean, or course, that Christians are to have no contact with unbelievers. But a professing Christian who prefers the company of the people of the world is probably still one of them."

The apostle John puts it this way "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." (1 John 3:14+).

**John Phillips** quips "What a tremendous experience it must have been for this former predator of the [wolf tribe of Benjamin](#) to sit down with the **sheep**! And what an experience for them!" (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Jack Arnold** - Paul learned his need for Christian fellowship right here, for Christ would minister to him through fellow believers. Paul got into a group of Christians and spent time with them. Being in close association with other Christians is one of the most important things a new Christian can do, spending time with them, fellowshiping with them, being taught by them and learning from them. A primary need of a new Christian is small group fellowship. ([Sermon](#))

**ILLUSTRATION** - Two skeptics, [Gilbert West](#) and [George Lyttleton](#), attended England's Oxford University in the eighteenth century. [George Lyttleton](#) became a Lawyer in the eighteenth century and a staunch skeptic and unbeliever. Both West and Lyttleton planned to disprove Christianity. West wanted to refute the resurrection of Christ. Lyttleton attempted to discredit Paul's conversion. Their studies convinced them that the Bible was the Word of God and they were both saved by grace. West went on to write a book [Observations on the history and evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ](#) (1747) defending the resurrection as a fact. Lyttleton produced a case for Christianity by showing the reality of Paul's conversion. In his book on the resurrection, West (who actually became a Christian apologist!) included this quotation in his preface, "**Blame not before thou hast examined the truth.**" Lyttleton wrote "the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone...was itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation." Christians cannot force people to believe in Jesus. But believers must challenge those they meet to honestly consider the evidence for the claims of Christ. (**See longer version below**)

**R A Torrey's "[Two Lawyers Convinced](#)."** IN the great triumph of Deism in England, two of the most brilliant men in the denial of the supernatural were the eminent legal authorities, Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton. The two men were put forward to crush the defenders of the supernatural in the Bible. They had a conference together and one of them said to the other that it would be difficult to maintain their position unless they disposed of two of the alleged bulwarks of Christianity, namely the alleged resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and the alleged conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Lyttleton undertook to write a book to show that Saul of Tarsus was never converted, as is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, but that his alleged conversion was a myth, if Gilbert West would write another book to show that the alleged resurrection of Christ from the dead was a myth. West said to Lyttleton, "*I shall have to depend upon you for my facts, for I am somewhat rusty on the Bible.*" To which Lyttleton replied that he was counting upon West, for he too was somewhat rusty on the Bible. One of them said to the other, "*If we are to be honest in the matter, we ought at least to study the evidence,*" and this they undertook to do. They had numerous conferences together while they were preparing their works. **In one of these conferences West said to Lyttleton that there had been something on his mind for some time that he thought he ought to speak to him about, that as he had been studying the evidence, he was beginning to feel that there was something in it. Lyttleton replied that he was glad to hear him say so, for he himself had been somewhat shaken as he had studied the evidence of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.** Finally, when the books were finished, the two men met. West said to Lyttleton, "Have you written your book?" He replied that he had, but he said, "*West, as I have been studying the evidence and weighing it according to the recognized laws of legal evidence, I have become satisfied that Saul of Tarsus was converted as is stated in the Acts of the Apostles, and that Christianity is true and I have written my book on that side.*" The book can be found today in any first-class library. "Have you written your book?" said Lyttleton. "Yes, but as I have studied the evidence for the



resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and have weighed it according to the acknowledged laws of evidence, I have become satisfied that Jesus really rose from the dead as recorded in the gospels, and have written my book on that side." This book can also be found in our libraries to-day.

**Let any man of legal mind, any man that is accustomed to and competent to weigh evidence—yes, any man with fair reasoning powers, and above all with perfect candour, sit down to the study of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and he will become satisfied that beyond a peradventure that Jesus really rose from the dead as is recorded in the four gospels.**

**Acts 9:20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

KJV Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached **Christ** (THIS IS NOT CORRECT - THE CORRECT READING = **JESUS**) in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

- **And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus** Acts 27,28; Gal 1:23,24
- **saying, "He is the Son of God** Acts 8:37; Ps 2:7,12; Mt 26:63-66; 27:43,54; John 1:49; 19:7; 20:28,31; Ro 1:4; Gal 2:20; 1 John 4:14,15; Rev 2:18
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL TRANSFORMED FROM PERSECUTOR TO PREACHER

**And immediately** (KJV = **straightway**) - This is the Greek word **euthéos** which means at once (cf scales fell - Acts 9:18), and is one of Mark's favorite words (40 of the 78 NT uses). So after **several days...with the disciples**, Saul without delay or hesitation began to preach Jesus. Why? Because he was filled with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's role to to exalt the Person of Jesus. The impact of the Gospel on the heart and mind and lips of Saul was seen immediately. I recall when I was first saved 34 years ago, how I could not stop telling my relatives about Jesus. Even when I was rebuffed, I was not discouraged. There was a joy within my heart that I knew I MUST tell others about. Saul had the joy, joy, joy, down in his heart, and it came out of his mouth to all he met. O to have such a blessed compulsion persist all the days of our brief lives on earth!

**R.C. Sproul** said, "Just minutes before his conversion, all that Paul could think of was what he could do **to** Christ, but immediately after, all he could think of is what he could do **for** Christ, which reveals the essence of his **radical conversion**." (Acts Commentary) Have you had a **radical conversion**?

As **Jack Andrews** says of Saul "God had saved his soul and changed his life. All he wanted to do was talk about Jesus! Before all he wanted to do was talk against Jesus! Saul had a new tongue and a new testimony! Vance Havner said, "I still believe we ought to talk about Jesus. The old country doctor of my boyhood days always began his examination by saying, "Let me see your tongue." That is a good way to check a Christian, the tongue test and what he is talking about." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**THOUGHT** - I'm a medical doctor, so let me ask to "see your tongue" (so to speak, pun intended!) and also to check your heart, for out of your mouth comes that which fills your heart (Mt 12:34, see Pr 16:23), so if Jesus fills your heart as He did Saul's heart, out of your mouth will come praise and proclamation about Jesus and the precious gift of salvation found only in Him! When was the last time you talked about your Lord Jesus Christ to some soul dead in their trespasses and sins, a soul otherwise destined for eternal punishment where they will experience endless weeping and gnashing of their teeth? **Ask (beg) God for opportunities today to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and then keep your spiritual eyes open so that when the opportunity knocks, you can open the door!** Beloved, about one hour after I wrote this comment, I received a text "out of the blue" from a man named Steven with whom I have shared Christ in the past. Through the text (as described below) God opened a door to share the Good News with Steven again. What was the door God opened? Steven sent me a text video of his 4 yo son talking about Jesus' protection from the flood and then he linked it with the flood in Noah's day! When I asked Steven where he learned this Biblical truth, he said he had been reading a book of Bible stories to his son Liam at bedtime and that Liam had "memorized most of the stories!" (A direct quote!) Steven does not yet believe in Jesus nor does he take his family to church but look at what God is doing in answer to prayer! I have been praying for open doors of opportunity with Steven for about 2 years. So beloved, pray, pray, pray and then wait upon the Lord's timing and His way (like a text video of a 4 yo talking about Jesus!) and stay alert so that you do not miss the opportunity! All for the glory of the

Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

**He began to proclaim Jesus ([lesous](#)) in the synagogues** - Saul goes to the **synagogues** (plural indicates more than one synagogue in Damascus and some say there were 30 or more) where the Jews congregated, thus even though Jesus had told him he would go to the Gentiles, here he goes first to the Jews (the "**sons of Israel**" were included in Jesus' commission to Saul in Acts 9:15+ ; cf Ro 1:16+). And keep in mind, in light of the fact that the church was still in its infancy, the **synagogues** would have been a mixture of non-believing and believing Jews, the latter not yet having separated from their Jewish roots. **Proclaim** is in the imperfect tense signifying that Saul been **proclaiming** in one synagogue and then another and another, preaching about Jesus over and over.

As an aside, since the early church was all Jewish and even associated with the synagogues as discussed above, it is not surprising that the thorny issue arose over whether Gentile believers had to obey Jewish laws before they could be "Christians." This issue would be addressed by the church in Acts 15:5-6ff+.

**Toussaint** - Preaching to Jews in their **synagogues** was also his strategy on his missionary journeys (the first journey—Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; the second journey—Acts 17:2, 10, 17; 18:4; the third journey—Acts 18:19; 19:8). (BKC)

**Bob Utley** - What irony! He came earlier with a letter from the High Priests in Jerusalem to the synagogues in Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus and now he came to the same synagogues preaching Jesus as the Messiah (cf. v 21).

**Steven Ger** comments that "the greatest enemy of the gospel was to be its most passionate advocate. Saul's inexhaustible passion and zeal was now directed from the *energetic persecution* of the church to the *vigorous proclamation* of Jesus. The infamous enemy of the church was now advocating for its Founder...The sole radical change to Saul's theology (HE KNEW THE OLD TESTAMENT WELL) was the addition of Jesus as God's messianic provision. Having already spent his life laying a foundation, the Gospel served as the capstone of Saul's theology. This Gospel was not some odd-shaped piece which necessitated the entire reconfiguration of Saul's theological puzzle. Rather, for Saul, the Gospel was the key puzzle piece that had been missing all along and, once in place, provides the "big picture" which makes sense of the whole puzzle." ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**A T Robertson** on **proclaim Jesus** - This is Paul's platform as a Christian preacher, one that he always occupied to the very end. It was a complete reversal of his previous position. Jesus had turned him completely around. It is the conclusion that Saul now drew from the vision of the Risen Christ and the message through Ananias. By "**the Son of God**" Saul means the Messiah of promise and hope, the Messianic sense of the Baptist (John 1:34) and of Nathanael (John 1:49) for Saul is now proclaiming his faith in Jesus in the very synagogues where he had meant to arrest those who professed their faith in him. Peter laid emphasis on the Resurrection of Jesus as a glorious fact and proclaimed Jesus as Lord and Christ. Paul boldly calls Jesus the **Son of God** with full acknowledgment of His deity from the very start. Thomas had come to this place slowly (John 20:28). Saul begins with this truth and never leaves it. With this faith he can shake the world. There is no power in any other preaching. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Proclaim** (preach) ([2784](#))([kerusso](#) from [kerux/keryx](#) = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one whose proclamation he makes; [kerugma](#) = message preached) means to proclaim (publicly) means to [herald](#) or act as a [public crier](#) - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. So even as [kerusso](#) was used in the Greco-Roman world to proclaim loudly and widely the imminent coming of an earthly king, Saul was announcing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16-[note](#))!

**EXCURSUS ON ROOT WORD KERUX** - The original meaning of the root word [kerux](#) was a "[herald](#) at the royal court." Homer used [kerusso](#) and [kerux](#) in this connection. The [herald](#) not only announced the coming of the king, but he also carried his commands to the uttermost corners of his realm. As the government of Greece became more republican, these heralds came to serve the state rather than the court. Certain qualities were required of **heralds**. They must have powerful voices, so voice auditions were often held. Also they had to be capable of calming down an unruly mob, in order to faithfully communicate the command. An honest disposition was required, as a protection against the exaggeration of a royal decree. Furthermore, **they could make no additions or subtractions from the received message**. Later these heralds were also used to declare the message of a Greek deity or a religious oracle.

All Luke's uses of [kerusso](#) in Acts - Acts 8:5; Acts 9:20; Acts 10:37; Acts 10:42; Acts 15:21; Acts 19:13; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:31;

**John G. Butler** said, "If we are not going to preach Christ, we need to shut up and sit down; for we have no message of worth for the souls of men. Many churches, therefore, ought to close their doors and stop masquerading as churches; for they do not preach Christ. Rather, they discredit Him and deny Him."

**Synagogues** ([4864](#))([sunagoge](#)) first of all refers to a gathering place and in this context (and most NT uses) refers to the meeting place of Jews. In James 2:2 [sunagoge](#) is translated "assembly" because in that context it refers to an assembly of Christians. One can hardly miss the irony wrought by the miraculous transformation of the Gospel which is the power of God to take a man who was

heading to synagogues to persecute Jews believing in Jesus (Acts 9:2) and change his heart into a man who was going into those same synagogues to preach Jesus to unbelieving Jews!

O Blessed truth the Gospel shews,  
On which may be relied,  
As Paul taught unbelieving Jews:  
All doubts to lay aside.

**Saying He is the Son of God**- This is surprisingly the only time in Acts where Jesus is referred to as **the Son of God** (excepting Acts 8:37 which is not found in most manuscripts, also Paul alludes to Jesus as "Son of God" in Acts 13:33). Saul immediately believed and preached the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the **Son of God**, as well as Messiah. Paul used the titles "Son" and "Son of God" some fifteen times in his letters (cf. Ro 1:3–4, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32; 1 Co 1:9; 15:28; 2 Co 1:19, Gal 1:16; 2:20; 4:4, 6; 1 Th 1:10). The NT links the two titles **the Christ (Messiah)** and **Son of God** in a number of passages (Mt 16:16; 26:63; Lk 4:41; Jn 11:27; 20:31, Mk 14:61 = the Christ and Son of the blessed One. Also Son of Man and the Christ in Jn 12:34).

**Peter**, while maintaining the Deity of Jesus ("God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" Acts 2:36), gives special prominence to His **Messiahship**. **Paul**, fresh from the vision of the glory, puts the emphasis on His **Deity**. Peter's charge was that the Jews had crucified the Son of David (Acts 2:25-30); Paul's charge was that they had crucified the Lord of glory (1Cor 2:8). Saul's point was, not that the Christ was God, a truth plainly taught by Isaiah (Isa 7:14, 9:6,7), but that Jesus, the crucified Nazarene, was the Christ (the Messiah) and therefore was **God the Son**.

**Bob Utley** has an interesting note explaining that "the title "Son of God" had great theological meaning for those who knew the OT and its promises and categories, but the **NT writers were nervous about its use with Gentiles** because of their pagan background of "**the gods**" taking women with the resulting offspring being "the titans" or "giants."" (Bold mine) (See Utley's topic "[Son of God](#)")

**Saying** is not a verb but is the conjunction **hoti** ([3754](#)) which functions here to introduce a direct statement that "He is the Son of God." Thus Young's Literal version more accurately renders it "that he is the Son of God." (Act 9:20YLT)

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray:  
I woke—the dungeon flamed with light!  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

**Jesus** never used the title **Son of God** except at His trial when he was asked by the high priest Caiphas whether he was the **Son of God** and when he answered affirmatively, He was accused of blasphemy.

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ (THE MESSIAH), the **Son of God**." 64 Jesus said to him, "**You have said it yourself**; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." (Mt. 26:63-64). When Jesus answered affirmatively, he was **accused of blasphemy**. (Mt 26:63-64)

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I love **John Phillips** reconstruction of what it might have been like as Saul entered the Jewish Synagogues in Damascus and preached Jesus (it will be a treat to hear Paul's version of what actually happened)...

We can well picture what happened. News of his arrival would cause an immediate stir. Here was the grand inquisitor of the Sanhedrin, armed with documents demanding full cooperation of the faithful in the task entrusted to him of rooting out heresy. The ruler of the synagogue would be deferential. It was not every day an accredited agent of the Sanhedrin crossed the threshold of his synagogue. Saul would be given the chief seat. Every eye would be on him. Some would gaze at him with approval, others with apprehension. In due course Saul would beckon for the Scriptures to be handed to him. He would stand and read a passage, hand back the scroll, and face the congregation. A hush would fall. Now it was coming—a denunciation of the new sect, reasons for regarding it as heresy, fierce invective against Jesus of Nazareth and of the common fisherfolk who headed the apostasy in Jerusalem, news of measures actively under way in the capital to put an end to the cult, and a demand that those knowing of any Christians in Damascus put their knowledge in Saul's hands on pain of sharing the fate of the Christians. But instead, taking the reading of the day as his text, Paul preached Christ to the people, proving that Jesus is the Son of God. Their astonishment must have known no

**Stephen Ger** has an interesting comment on **Son of God** - The term "son of God" appears in the Hebrew Scripture to denote the unique qualities of and relationship between God and Israel (Hos. 11:1), God and the king of Israel (2 Sam. 7:14) and God and the promised Messiah (Ps. 2:7).

Contrary to popularly held contemporary beliefs, in the New Testament the term, "son of God," does not refer primarily to Jesus' physical birth or supernatural lineage or whether he was in possession of divine genetic material. Rather, the designation expresses His unique relationship with God. In Greco-Roman mythology, the child of a god and a human became a sort of "half-breed," possessing semi-divine status. This is not what was meant by the term "son of God" in the New Testament. In both Old and New Testaments, the term "**son**" (ben in Hebrew, huioi in Greek), in addition to its commonly understood use to refer to family membership and lineage, **was also a Jewish idiom used to indicate "a person's profession, his status or circumstance, or his character."**...A New Testament example, discussed earlier, is the name of Barnabas, Aramaic for "son of encouragement," which expresses his encouraging character. An additional example from the New Testament is the nickname, "sons of thunder," given by Jesus to James and John in recognition of their mutually boisterous natures (Mark 3:17). Finally, when Paul calls all Christians, "sons of Abraham" (Gal.3:7), he does not mean to indicate a miraculous transformation in anyone's physical lineage. Rather, "sons of Abraham" are believers who are characterized by the same sort of faith which Abraham exercised. This understanding of "son" as denoting character is the reason why the Jewish people perceived full well that when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, He was claiming essential equality with the very nature of God (John 5:18; 10:33-36). The Damascus Jews in the synagogues also had no difficulty grasping the force of Saul's argument that Jesus is the "Son of God." Wrapped up in this one weighty phrase is the entirety of Jesus' messianic identity: His birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to co-reign at His Father's right hand. In Acts 9:22, Saul's use of the term "Son of God" is paralleled to the designation Christos, "Messiah," indicating Saul's synonymous usage of the two terms. It is not surprising that throughout his ministry, Saul's preaching will place him in one life-threatening predicament after another, beginning here in Damascus. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

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### **Never Say "Never"**

Read: Acts 9:1-22

Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. —Acts 9:20

While a friend and I walked along the path of the former Berlin Wall, he told me, "This is one of those 'never say never' places in my life." He explained that during the years when the Wall divided the city, he had made a dozen trips through Checkpoint Charlie to encourage members of the church living under continuing surveillance and opposition in East Germany. More than once, he had been detained, questioned, and harassed by the border guards.

In 1988, he took his teenage children to West Berlin and told them, "Take a good look at this wall, because someday when you bring your children here, this wall will still be standing." A year later it was gone.

When Saul of Tarsus began to attack the followers of Jesus, no one could have imagined that he would ever become a disciple of Christ. "Never. Not a chance." Yet Acts 9:1-9 records the story of Saul's blinding encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Within a few days of that life-changing event, Saul was preaching in the synagogues of Damascus that Jesus was the Son of God, to the astonishment of all who heard him (vv.20-21).

When it comes to God's work in the most difficult people we know, we should never say "never."

God's power cannot be confined  
To what you think is possible;  
So when it comes to changing lives—  
Imagine the impossible. —Sper

Never say never when it comes to what God can do.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

- **amazed** Acts 2:6,12; 4:13; Nu 23:23; Ps 71:7; Isa 8:18; Zech 3:8; 2 Th 1:10; 1 John 3:1
- **Is this not** Acts 3:10; Mt 13:54,55; Mark 5:15-20; John 9:8,9
- **destroyed** Acts 9:1,2,13,14; 8:3; Gal 1:13-24
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEWS "STRUCK OUT OF THEIR SENSES"

**All those hearing him continued to be amazed** - Saul's preaching caused an uproar in the synagogues. Why were they so amazed? Because a **rabid persecutor** of Christ had become a **righteous proclaimer** of Christ! As **Robertson** says the hearers of Saul's proclamation "continued to stand out of themselves in astonishment at this violent reversal in Saul the (violent) persecutor." In the next verse they are described as **confounded**.

**Continued to be amazed** (astonished, astounded)(imperfect tense) (1839)(**existemi** rom ek = out + **histemi** = to stand) literally means to stand out of one's self (thus to be beside oneself). **Richards** adds that **existemi** "suggests astonishment mixed with anxiety, stimulated by extraordinary events that cannot be explained." It is notable that others had a similar reaction to Jesus (Mt 12:23, Mk 2:12; 5:42; 6:51, Lk 2:47+ - all use **existemi**), and this makes sense because all Saul was doing was imitating Jesus (1 Cor 11:1+)! If we are obedient to Paul's command in First Corinthians, we too will "imitate Jesus", so would it not be reasonable that we might encounter some individual who are "beside themselves!" Interesting thought to ponder! Have you ever had this experience?

**Existemi** means to be amazed, astonished or astounded describing "the feeling of astonishment mingled with fear, caused by events which are miraculous, extraordinary, or difficult to understand." (BDAG) It can describe one who is so astonished almost to the point of failing to comprehend what one has experienced.

Luke uses **existemi** in Acts 8x out of 17 NT uses -- it could be because Acts is an "**Amazing Book**"! - Acts 2:7; Acts 2:12; Acts 8:9; Acts 8:11; Acts 8:13; Acts 9:21; Acts 10:45; Acts 12:16

**Steven Ger** - Saul's preaching was rocking the Jewish world; they were bewitched, bothered and bewildered. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

Oh, how great the transformative power of God's grace! How wonderful it would be to if we saw more radical conversions in our day. Do it again Lord for Jesus' sake. Amen!

**Terry Trivette on New Bill** - If someone ever comes into real, redemptive contact with the risen Christ, they will not walk away the same. He will change them in an obvious way. I remember reading years ago about a man who was a terrible alcoholic. Every one simply called him "Old Bill". One night Old Bill stumbled into a rescue mission and heard the Gospel preached. In that service, Jesus did something in Old Bill's life. He was converted, and in much more than just an emotional decision, Bill received genuine salvation. From that day forward, he was a different man. His entire life was changed. The change was so obvious, that people stopped calling him "Old Bill". Instead, they referred to him as "New Bill." Old Saul had started to Damascus as an enemy of the people of Jesus. New Saul stood in Damascus as a witness to the power of Jesus. The change was obvious. ([Sermon](#))

**COMMENT** - My father Wilson was an alcoholic and a gambler and deserted by mother before I was one year old. I had zero contact with him for 18 years and then one day out of the blue he called me in college and told me how he had been born again. He was genuinely radically changed and was very evangelistic the remainder of his life. When I moved to Houston, that summer to stay with him, he told me about Jesus but I would have none of it at that time. I left and had little contact with him for the next 20 years, not knowing that this former alcoholic and gambler (and his devout wife) were praying daily for my salvation all that time. It was an exciting moment for me and for him when I called him at age 39 to tell him I had been born again! (See my full testimony)

Saul would become Paul, and the rest of his life would be living proof of His living Lord and His life giving Gospel, which is able to save even the worst of sinners...

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, **among whom I am foremost of all**. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal

life." (1 Timothy 1:15-16)

When we see this drastic, life-altering change in a terrorist turned apostle, preacher, and missionary, we are reminded that Jesus Christ can change anyone by His grace and for His glory. Has your life been radically changed? This truth should be a great encouragement to any lost sinner! You are never too far gone from God, that His grace cannot reach down and save you from the **guttermost to the uttermost** (cf Heb 7:25KJV)!

**And were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name-** This question expects an affirmative answer. Yes, he is the very one who ravaged Christians in Jerusalem.

**Destroy** (4199)(**portheo**) is an intense verb which means to attack, ravage, lay waste, cause complete destruction. Saul had quite a reputation of one who had pillaged and reeked havoc on Christians. Used in secular Greek of besieging a town or of soldiers ravaging. The other two uses are by Paul himself referring to his former rabid zeal to destroy Christians...

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to **destroy** it...<sup>23</sup> but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to **destroy**." (Gal 1:13, 23+)

**Those who called on this name** - This is another name for believers or disciples of Jesus. See discussion of this same term in Acts 9:14<sup>+</sup>.

**Jack Andrews** on this **Name** (Jesus) - People in the world and against the Lord still do not like to use His name. When they use His name they usually abuse His name. We need to always use His name in reverence and respect. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**And who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests-** The disciples had been informed before Saul arrived that he came on a mission to arrest and bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners.

## JESUS SAVES

Priscilla J. Owens, 1882

We have heard the joyful sound:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Spread the tidings all around:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Bear the news to every land,

Climb the mountains, cross the waves;

Onward! 'tis our Lord's command;

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Waft it on the rolling tide:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Tell to sinners far and wide:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Sing, you islands of the sea;

Echo back, you ocean caves;

Earth shall keep her jubilee:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Sing above the battle strife:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

By His death and endless life

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Shout it brightly through the gloom,

When the heart for mercy craves;

Sing in triumph o'er the tomb:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Give the winds a mighty voice:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Let the nations now rejoice:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Shout salvation full and free;  
Highest hills and deepest caves;  
This our song of victory:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

[Another Hymn by Travis Cottrell](#)  
[Jesus Saves](#)

**Acts 9:22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

NLT Acts 9:22 Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed **the Messiah**.

CSB Acts 9:22 But Saul grew more capable and kept confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this One is **the Messiah**.

Wuest And Saul kept on being endued with power to a greater degree, and he bewildered Jews, those residing in Damascus, proving that this very person is the Christ.

- **increasing** Ge 49:24; Job 17:9; Ps 84:7; Isa 40:29; 2 Cor 12:9,10; Php 4:13
- **confounding** Acts 6:9,10; 18:27,28; Luke 21:15; 1 Cor 1:27
- **proving** Acts 17:3; 18:5; 28:23; Luke 24:44,45
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SAUL CONFOUNDS JEWS BY PROVING JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

**But** - Term of contrast. What had the Jews just said about Saul (Acts 9:21b)? That was the natural man "before," but here Luke gives us the supernaturally empowered "after."

**Saul kept increasing in strength** - This is not a reference to physical strength (as shown by the context) but a reference to spiritual strength. During this time Saul did not get more of the Spirit, but in a manner of speaking the Spirit was getting more of him. Later Paul would write "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Php 4:13+) The "**through Him**" is through Christ and specifically through the Spirit of Christ Who indwelt him. In his last letter Paul commanded Timothy (and all believers) to "**be strong** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Ti 2:1+), where **be strong** is **present imperative**, signifying His supernatural strength is our great need all the time - DAILY, MOMENT BY MOMENT! **Be strong** is also in the **passive voice**, which in context would be a **divine passive**, and indicates that we need to make the choice (after confessing any known sin) to surrender or yield daily to the Spirit of Christ, so that we might be "receptacles" (so to speak) of His enabling supernatural power! How are you doing? As you read these notes today, who is your source of strength, yourself or Jesus? Those are the only two options for believers (for unbelievers the only option is "self!").

As Saul was increasing in **supernatural** strength, so was the **natural** opposition from the Jews. As **Robertson** puts it "Christ, the **dynamo** of spiritual energy, was now pouring power (Acts 1:8+) into Paul who is already filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17)." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

Yes Saul was increasing but he was still a new believer in Jesus and Kent Hughes puts this in perspective writing that "Every Christian goes through three stages: "**This is easy!**"—"This is difficult!"—"This is impossible!" (ED: SEE SWINDOLL'S SCHEMATIC BELOW) Saul was in the first stage. If we had been there in Damascus, we would probably have told him, "Saul, you are the hottest thing to hit Damascus since Alexander the Great. So get going! We will be praying for you." But Saul was not yet ready for front-line ministry. In fact, the Lord had a long program of preparation in store for him— longer than he or we would have ever imagined. Saul's impressive abilities and background, even combined with a dramatic conversion experience, did not qualify him for ministry. God still had some work to do to get him ready for what lay ahead." (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Swindoll** comments - I am convinced that all Christians must pass through three stages en route toward spiritual maturity. While everyone must pass through each stage, no one experiences them in the same way. Some zip right through the first, only to get stuck in the second. Others spend most of their lives trudging through the third and never quite reach full maturity. Regardless, the stages of growth are common to all—including Saul of Tarsus, perhaps the most notable Christian in all of history. In Acts 9, we see a synopsis of his spiritual growth:

- **“This is easy!”** (Acts 9:19-22)—Saul had great success debating his Jewish brethren in the synagogues. His natural abilities, great intellect, and extensive knowledge equipped him to outwit the finest minds of his day.
- **“This is difficult!”** (Acts 9:23-25)—Saul became the target of assassination plots and had to flee the city. As Dr. Stanley Toussaint writes, “Saul’s plans for persecuting Christians in Damascus took a strange turn; he had entered the city blind and left in a basket! Ironically he became the object of persecution.”
- **“This is impossible!”** (Acts 9:26-30)—Saul returns to Jerusalem to find no place among his old peers in the temple and no welcome in the understandably suspicious community of Christians. This portion of Paul’s spiritual journey took as long as four years to complete. Longer, if you include the decade he spent in his hometown of Tarsus. **Eventually, he did reach that critical milestone of spiritual maturity at which point a believer not only accepts the “impossible” standards of the Christian life but learns how to thrive in his or her helplessness through the power of the Holy Spirit. It could be said that a Christian doesn’t really begin to experience new life until he or she starts living by this all-important perspective.** ([Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary - Acts](#)) (Bold added)

**ED COMMENT:** Have you come to that point in your Christian journey where you have given up daily *trying* and started daily *dying* to the old self (cf Lk 9:23+, 1 Cor 15:31) that wants to convince you that you can live the Christ life without the Spirit of Christ? (Read Gal 3:3+) If not you are frustrated and likely experiencing frequent failures in your attempts at a holy walk. Only the Holy Spirit can empower a holy walk! And the only way to “deny yourself and take up your cross daily” is by the supernatural enabling power of the indwelling Spirit. You try it in your own strength and it will become [legalism](#). But when you begin to learn to yield to Him, trusting Him for the desire and the power it brings freedom! Php 2:12+ describes our responsibility to work out our salvation (i.e., [progressive sanctification](#)) and die daily, while Php 2:13NLT+ explains how we will even have the *desire* and the *power* to chose to die daily! We must all daily die to the self and surrender to the Spirit. When you learn this **“secret”**, you have begun to move from the stage of **“This is IM-possible”** to the glorious stage of **“This is HIM-possible!”**

And as an aside, while I love Swindoll’s schematic I would suggest a more accurate diagram would have our spiritual walk beginning at the highest point on the left side of the diagram and progressively sloping down as we grow in spiritual maturity. Why? Because as Jesus increases, we decrease! (cf Jn 3:30+) As we grow in grace (cf 2 Pe 3:18+, 1 Pe 2:2+), our pride gives way to humility, and humility is from a word ([tapeinos](#)) that originally meant “low lying” giving us a great word picture! As the Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another in Christ-likeness (i.e., greater degrees of spiritual maturity. See 2 Cor 3:18+ where taking in the Word is clearly vital in this growth process), we realize that the low place is the best place, for that “low place” is at the foot of the Cross of Christ and it is there that grace flows most freely. As James put it “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE **PROUD** (ELEVATED SELF), BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE **HUMBLE** (SELF LOWER, JESUS HIGHER).” (James 4:6+, cf what Paul had learned in 1 Cor 15:10+, 2 Cor 12:9+, 2 Cor 12:10+) ([Play the beautiful chorus Grace Flows Down](#) by Christy Nockels)

The hymn below by **John Berridge** (read about this remarkable saint and be challenged) emphasizes the call to humility and dependence on God’s power to live the Christ life. As you listen to the words you might consider making it a prayer (notice many of the lines are in the form of a prayer)

#### [Jesus cast a look on me](#)

Give me sweet simplicity  
Make me poor and keep me low,  
Seeking only Thee to know  
  
All that feeds my busy pride,  
Cast it evermore aside  
Bid my will to Thine submit,  
Lay me humbly at Thy feet  
  
Make me like a little child,  
Of my strength and wisdom spoiled



Seeing only in Thy light,  
Walking only in Thy might

Leaning on Thy loving breast,  
Where a weary soul can rest  
Feeling well the peace of God,  
Flowing from His precious blood

In this posture let me live,  
And hosannas daily give  
In this temper let me die,  
And hosannas ever cry!

**Increasing** (imperfect tense)(1743)(**endunamoo** from **en** = in + **dunamoo** = strengthen) in simple terms means to **put power in** (like a car needs gas for power) and thus to make strong or vigorous, to strengthen (active voice) or to be (passive voice) strengthened, enabled or empowered. **Dunamóo** is derived from **dunamis** which means to be able or to have power. This word is found only in biblical and ecclesiastical Greek. The idea is to cause one to be able to function or to accomplish something. It usually refers to spiritual or moral strengthening as in the present passage. This verb is found once in the Septuagint describing Gideon as God prepared his heart for battle = "The LORD's Spirit took control (Lxx = endunamoo - strengthened) of Gideon. He blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him." (Jdg 6:34NET)

**John Phillips** on **increasing** - The word is endunamoō, at the core of which is **dunamis**, the mighty, irresistible power, the inherent power that Jesus demonstrated in His life on earth. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Bob Utley** comment on **increasing** in the imperfect tense (over and over) is probably correct - It took some time for Saul's gifts and skills to develop. In context this refers to Paul's preaching and debating skills.

**Endunamoo** - 7x in NT - Acts 9:22; Ro 4:20+ = Describing Abraham's faith - "grew **strong** in faith, giving glory to God,"; Eph. 6:10+ = Paul's command for believers to "**be strong** (present imperative) in the Lord"; Phil. 4:13+ = "I can do all things through Him who **strengthens** me."; 1 Ti 1:12; 2 Ti 2:1+ = "**be strong** (present imperative) in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; 2 Ti 4:17+ = "the Lord stood with me and **strengthened** me so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth."

**THOUGHT TO PONDER** - Notice that Paul was strengthened at the beginning of his ministry here in Acts 9:22 and in 2 Ti 4:17 (last letter) was strengthened at the end of his ministry, both times for proclamation of the Gospel. And "in the middle" he says he can "do all things through Him who (continually - present tense) strengthens" him! Paul was supernaturally strengthened at the beginning, the middle and the end, or in other words throughout his entire ministry! This is significant because in 1 Cor 11:1+ Paul commands us to "**Be imitators** (present imperative) of me, just as I also am of Christ." Paul's pattern for ministry which we are to imitate is crystal clear! This truth begs the question - Who am I depending on to be the source of strength in my ministry (all believers have some sort of ministry!)? My *natural* strength (and "strengths") or Jesus Christ's *supernatural* strength dispensed through His Spirit Who indwells me? Those are the only two options beloved! One is futile and fruitless, while the other bears much fruit which lasts forever (Jn 15:5, 15:16)! When you stand before the **Bema Seat** of Christ (where each believer will stand) what will be His recompense for your deeds in your body during your short sojourn on earth? (2 Cor 5:10+, cf the advice of our Lord Jesus in Mt 6:20+ where the verb "**store up**" is present imperative calling for this to be our daily desire, our daily practice, our lifestyle)?

**Proclaim** in Acts 9:20 is in the imperfect tense (over and over) and **confounding** here is also in the imperfect tense. The picture is of Saul preaching Jesus again and again and the Jews be more and more confounded. In short, the more Saul preached, the more the Jews were confused and the greater their opposition grew as shown by their reaction in Acts 9:23.

**Steven Ger** - There can be no question that Saul had obviously absorbed and internalized Stephen's final message. It had not only been the executioners' cloaks that had been laid at Saul's feet that day. The baton of Stephen's ministry had also been dropped at Saul's feet. In Damascus, Saul picked up Stephen's fallen baton and began to run with it. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**And confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus** - Recall that at that time there were probably about 20,000 Jews living in Damascus, and clearly many (probably most) did not believe that the Man Jesus was their Messiah. The Jews were in dismay at Saul's radical reversal (conversion) and powerful preaching clearly showing them that Jesus was the long expected Messiah (and of course implicit was the fact that they had rejected Him!).

**Confounding** (**baffling**)(imperfect tense - again and again, over and over, in synagogue after synagogue)(4797)

([sugcheo/sugchunno](#) from **sun** = with, together + **cheo** = to pour) literally means to pour together, not a meaning found in the NT. Figuratively, it means to cause dismay, confound, be thrown into confusion, be amazed, be stirred up (cf use in Acts 2:6+ = "the crowd came together, and **were bewildered**"). In Acts 21:27 it means to stir up trouble, which would soon be the reaction of the Jews who were being confounded by Saul!

It is interesting that **sugcheo** is used to describe the **confusion of languages** at the Tower of Babel so that men could not understand one another (Ge 11:7) and "its name was called Babel, because there the LORD **confused** (Lxx = sugcheo) the language of the whole earth." (Ge 11:9) Similarly here in Acts 9, Saul controlled by and empowered by the Holy Spirit "confused the thinking" of his Jewish opponents, those who were not yet saved. John Phillips quips that "Saul burst upon the Jewish community in Damascus like a one-man Pentecost! It was to be a typical Pauline encounter with the unbelieving world."

**Sugcheo** is used only by Luke in Acts - Acts 2:6 = bewildered; Acts 9:22 = confounding; Acts 19:32 = confusion; Acts 21:27 = stir up; Acts 21:31 = confusion.

Recall that by some estimates there were from 20-30 Jewish synagogues in Damascus at this time and it is very likely that Saul made rounds to many or even all of them. Wherever Saul spoke about Messiah, he was repeatedly confusing or perplexing, bewildering and amazing the Jews. The idea of confound is to cause surprise or confusion in someone, especially by not according with their expectations. Not only would the Jews be surprised at Saul's conversion from persecutor of Jesus to proclaimer of Jesus, but also surprised that he was proving Jesus was the Messiah by using THEIR OWN Scriptures. Could you speak to a Jewish person about why Jesus is their Messiah using only the Old Testament? If not, you **should** equip yourself so that you are "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Peter 3:15+) You can equip yourself by studying the Messianic prophecies and at the very least becoming very familiar with the greatest OT prophecy of the Messiah, Isaiah 53 (see commentary).

**Sugcheo** is found 5x in the NT all in Acts - Acts 2:6; Acts 9:22; Acts 19:32; Acts 21:27; Acts 21:31 - bewildered(1), confounding(1), confusion(2), stir(1).

**By proving that this Jesus is the Christ**- In Acts 9:20 Saul's focus was Jesus is the **Son of God** and now he adds Jesus is the Christ. Note the definite article which means "THE Christ," which was a way of referring to the Messiah. Remember that while Saul had not been to an earthly seminary, he had God's "seminary" with him, for in addition to knowing the Old Testament very well, he had the Author of those Scriptures within him, enabling him to reason with clarity and conviction. Undoubtedly Saul was using the more than 300 specific Messianic passages in the OT to prove that the Man Jesus is their Messiah, God's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. As noted above the titles **the Christ (Messiah)** and **Son of God** are used together (cf. Mt 16:16; 26:63; Lk 4:41; Jn 11:27; 20:31).

**Bob Utley** adds that "Paul's method was much like Stephen's. They both used OT passages and their fulfillment in the life of Jesus of Nazareth to prove that He was the Messiah promised in the OT...Saul was asserting with power and conviction that Jesus of Nazareth, killed in Jerusalem, was indeed God's Son, the Messiah. If this was true, it changed everything for Jews (and Gentiles)! They had misunderstood and rejected Him. They had missed God's gift and remained in spiritual darkness and need.."

The **KJV** has **proving that this is very Christ** on which **J Vernon McGee** comments "The "very Christ" means the very Messiah. Saul confounded the Jews by preaching this. Saul of Tarsus is number one in several departments. He is number one in suffering; he is number one as a missionary. I think he is also number one in his I.Q.—he was a brilliant man. He was able to confound those who attempted to tackle him intellectually." (Thru the Bible)

**Proving** (4822)([sumbibazo](#) from **sun** = together + **bibazo** = to make to go up) means to bring together, to make or cause to go or come together, to join together. One can see Saul "joining together" the truths of the Old Testament with the truth that Jesus is alive. The picture of the verb **sumbibazo** is to bring together many parts from which a person is able to draw a conclusion. It means to [conclude](#) and then to [prove](#). In this passage **sumbibazo** means to present a logical conclusion and thus to demonstrate or prove that Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah. The present tense indicates he was doing this continually as he spoke of Jesus. One is reminded of the power and resultant persecution of Stephen another Spirit filled defender of the faith in Acts 6

But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with **Stephen**. 10 But **they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking**. 11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." 12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council (COMPARE THE JEWISH REACTION TO SAUL IN Acts 9:23). (Acts 6:9-12+)

**Robertson** on **sumbibazo** - It is the very word that Luke will use in Acts 16:10+ of the conclusion reached at Troas concerning the vision of Paul. Here Saul took the various items in the life of Jesus of Nazareth and found in them the proof that he was in reality "the

Messiah" (ho Christos). This method of argument Paul continued to use with the Jews (Acts 17:3+). It was irresistible argument and spread consternation among the Jews. It was the most powerful piece of artillery in the Jewish camp that was suddenly turned round upon them. It is probable that at this juncture Saul went into Arabia for several years (Gal. 1:12–24). Luke makes no mention of this important event, but he leaves ample room for it at this point. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Christ** (5547)(**Christos** from **chrio** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) describes one who has been anointed with oil, one who has been consecrated. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus (See also [Messiah - Anointed One](#)). The context clearly refers to the Messiah and thus some translations so render it (NLT, CSB, NAB, GWN, BBE). For example, the NLT says "the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed **the Messiah**." (Act 9:22NLT)

**John Phillips** applies the reaction to Saul's preaching to present day preaching --

When we preach, what happens? Little or nothing, all too often. What does the city know of our coming or going? Nothing! What difference does it make to the tavern keepers, to the dens of vice, to places where vileness parades itself brazenly and unashamed? What difference does it make to corruption and graft in City Hall? What difference does it make to the propagators of false religion? What stir do we cause in the halls of learning where godless humanism is taught with arrogance and pride? Too often it makes no difference. But when Paul went into the city he could not be ignored. The whole town knew he was there. Riots broke out, Jews and pagans were infuriated, and he was an immediate storm center. Paul shook whole communities. Here at Damascus we have the first intimation of the stormy, but wonderfully successful, life of the great apostle. The thing that caused the stir at Damascus was the fact that Saul was "proving that this was the Christ." The mantle of Stephen had fallen on Saul. No one was able to refute his arguments. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [How can I identify messianic prophecies in the Old Testament?](#)
- [Where do the Hebrew Scriptures prophesy the death and resurrection of the Messiah?](#)
- [I am Jewish, can I become a Christian?](#)
- [Is Isaiah 53 'The Suffering Servant' a prophecy about Jesus?](#)
- [Is Zechariah 11:12-13 a Messianic prophecy?](#)
- [Is Zechariah 12:10 a Messianic prophecy?](#)
- [Is Hosea 11:1 a Messianic prophecy?](#)
- [Is Micah 5:2 a Messianic prophecy?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the term 'Shiloh'? Is it a Messianic prophecy?](#)
- [Is 'virgin' or 'young woman' the correct translation of Isaiah 7:14?](#)
- [What are the seventy weeks of Daniel?](#)
- [What prophecy is Matthew 2:23 referring to regarding Jesus being a Nazarene?](#)

**Acts 9:23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

Wuest And when a considerable number of days had elapsed, the Jews consulted together with a view to putting him out of the way.

- **The Jews** Acts 9:16; 13:50; 14:2,19; 22:21-23; Josh 10:1-6; Mt 10:16-23; 2 Cor 11:26; 1 Th 2:15,16
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JEW'S HATCH PLOT TO KILL SAUL

**When many days had elapsed** - The time phrase **many days** is not specific and Luke does not tell us how many days Saul spent in Damascus.

**THOUGHT** - The Greek word for "many" is [hikanos](#) which literally means sufficient or adequate and which Friberg explains is derived "from a root **hik-** and related to **hikneomai** (reach, attain); used of implied measurement that reaches to a certain stage." And according to BDAG the word [hikanos](#) in a number of

contexts "pertains to meeting a standard," and thus conveys the meaning of "competent, qualified or able." The context for use of [hikanos](#) in Acts 9:23 is primarily related to time and literally could be rendered a "sufficient number of days." This raises the question "*sufficient for what?*" When one considers the other meanings of [hikanos](#) one thought is that these "**days**" speak of the length of time that was *sufficient* for Saul to become *competent* to preach Christ from the Scriptures. Just a thought to ponder!

**Elapsed** (4137)([pleroo](#)) means to fill or fulfill and here in the imperfect tense gives the sense "as time went on" indicating that the Jews felt the situation was daily becoming more intolerable.

**Paul** describes his Arabian "seminary" sojourn in Galatians -

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but **I went away to Arabia**, and **returned once more to Damascus**. 18 Then **three years later** I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. (Gal 1:15-18+)

**Comment:** Note verse 16 "**to reveal His Son in me**" - The verb reveal is [apokalupto](#) indicating God uncovered the truth about Jesus to Saul. Jack Arnold says "Paul needed more training; he needed right knowledge about Christianity to be more effective for Christ. So, taking the Scriptures under his arm, he went away into the desert of Arabia. He was probably there about three years. What was happening in Arabia? Paul was having Christ revealed to him. "to reveal His Son in me" (Gal 1:16). Paul during this time poured through the Scriptures page by page learning about Christ in the Old Testament."

Notice Galatians 1:17 says he went away to Arabia but it does not say how long until he returned to Damascus. The phrase **three years later** is placed in the sentence in such a way that it is difficult to identify what events were associated with the 3 years. As shown below in Swindoll's "[Option 1](#)" Saul stayed in Damascus "many days" and then departed for Arabia (no length of time given) after which he returned and ministered in Damascus for 3 years until a plot to kill him forced him to escape and go to Jerusalem. [Click here](#) for Swindoll's "Option 2" which I would say most commentators seem to favor (at least some variation of this time scheme).

**Kenneth Wuest** adds that "The words **after three years** do not merely refer to a lapse of time. They are argumentative. [That is, they build an argument.] Paul is showing all through this section, his entire independence of the Jerusalem apostles. Therefore, the three years have reference, not to the time after his return from Arabia, but to the period of time after his conversion."

Note that the term **Arabia** does not refer solely to a vast desert wasteland, like the deserts of modern day Saudi Arabia. In the first century **Arabia** was the region from Damascus in the north, through modern day Jordan and to the Red Sea on the south ([see map](#)). Of course this vast geographic expanse had deserts, but it also had many towns, and the famous [city of Petra](#) was a major city. [Wikipedia](#) identifies **Arabia** with "the Nabataean Kingdom (cf [King Aretas](#) the King of the [Nabataeans](#) from roughly 9 BC to 40 AD and mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor 11:32-33) controlled much of the trade routes of the region, amassing a large wealth drawing the envy of its neighbors. It stretched south along the Red Sea coast into the Hejaz desert, up to as far north as Damascus."

**Kistemaker** on the plot to kill Saul - the Jews work through official channels of local government and intend to achieve their objective to eliminate Paul. According to the parallel passage (2 Cor. 11:32-33), the official government representative in Damascus is not the Roman governor but the ethnarch (governor) appointed by Aretas IV, king of the Nabatean Arabs (9 B.C.-A.D. 40). In the last few years of his life, this Nabatean king took Damascus from Roman control and temporarily ruled it. His governor now gives orders to watch the city gates of Damascus, because he and the Jews want to capture and kill Paul. (BNTC-Acts)

**Robertson** has a lengthy note on **many days** - How "**many**" (considerable, [hikanai], common word for a long period) Luke does not say nor does he say that Saul spent all of this period in Damascus, and as we know from Gal. 1:16-18 was not the case. Paul there states definitely that he **went away** from Damascus **to Arabia** and **returned** there before going back to Jerusalem and that the whole period (THIS IS ROBERTSON'S INTERPRETATION - IT IS SIMILAR TO SWINDOLL'S [OPTION 2](#)) was about "**three years**" which need not mean three full years, but at least portions of three. Most of the three years was probably spent in Arabia because of the two explosions in Damascus (before his departure and on his return) and because he was unknown in Jerusalem as a Christian on his arrival there.....So we must assume the return of Saul from Arabia at this juncture, between Acts 9:22 and Acts 9:23, when

Saul resumed his preaching in the Jewish synagogues with renewed energy and grasp after the period of mature reflection and readjustment in Arabia. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**The Jews plotted together to do away with him** - If you can't beat him, kill him, seemed to be modus operandi of the unbelieving Jews, seeking to do to Saul what they had successfully carried out against Stephen! One can't miss the divine twist. The very one who stood at Stephen's stoning and sought to destroy Christians was now himself a marked man.

The accusation that Spirit filled Stephen hurled at the religious Jews in his audience gives us an apt description of this present group of Jews who were plotting to kill Saul...

"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. (Acts 7:51+, cf. the "Stone..rejected" in Acts 4:11+).

**Phillips** comments that "Throughout the rest of the book of Acts that was to be the case. Blindness fell upon the whole Jewish people with the exception of a small minority of believers." (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Robertson** writes "Things had reached a climax. It was worse than before he left for Arabia. Paul was now seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus about him (Acts 9:16)." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Plotted together** (4823)(**sumbouleuo** from **sun** = together + **bouleuo** = to take counsel) in the active sense means to advise or give advice on a course of action, tell them what they should plan to do ("advised" in Jn 18:14, "advise" in Rev 3:18; Lxx - 1 Ki 1:12). In the middle voice it means to consult usually in a negative sense to consult with intent to harm thus translated to plot (against Jesus - Mt 26:4, Jn 18:14, against Saul - Acts 9:23).

**Gilbrant** notes that **sumbouleuo** "can be found in classical Greek since the Fifth Century B.C. meaning (in the active voice) "advise one to do" and (in the middle voice) "consult with" (*Liddell-Scott*). Sumbouleuō is also found in the Greek tragedies. Josephus used **sumbouleuō** in both the Antiquities of the Jews and Wars of the Jews, but there is no difference in meaning in his use of this word (cf. Bauer). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Sumbouleuo** - 4x in the NT - Matt. 26:4; Jn. 18:14; Acts 9:23; Rev. 3:18

**Sumbouleuo** - 18 verses in the Septuagint - Ex 18:19 (God says "I will **give** you **counsel**"); Nu 24:14 ("I will **advise** you what this people will do to your people"); Jos. 15:18 ("she persuaded"); 2 Sam. 17:11; 2 Sam. 17:15; 1 Ki. 1:12; 1 Ki. 12:8; 1 Ki. 12:9; 1 Ki. 12:13; 1 Ki. 12:24; 2 Chr. 10:8; Job 26:3; Isa. 33:18; Isa. 33:19; Isa. 40:14 ("with whom did He consult); Jer. 36:16; Jer. 38:15; Dan. 6:7;

## **SAUL AT TO BE SILENCED AT ALL COSTS!**

**To do away with** (to kill him) (337)(**anaireo** from **ana** = up + **haireo** = to take) literally means to take up or lift up. This the same verb Luke used to describe the chief priests and the scribes seeking how they might "**put** (Jesus) **to death** (**anaireo**)." (Lk 22:2+). Peter (speaking for the apostles) accused the Sanhedrin "you had (Jesus) put to death by hanging Him on a cross" (Acts 5:30+). The result was the Sanhedrin "intended **to kill** (**anaireo**) them (the apostles)," (Acts 5:33+) the same reaction the Jews had to Saul's powerful proclamation of Jesus as Messiah! Saul was in good company!

**Robertson** adds "Saul now knew what Stephen had suffered at his hands as his own life was in peril in the Jewish quarter of Damascus." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

Saul's salvation was genuine for not only did he **profess Jesus**, but he boldly **proclaimed Jesus** to the Jews, his **actions** backing up his **words**.

**George Barna** alludes to this point writing that "**American Christianity has largely failed since the middle of the twentieth century because Jesus' modern-day disciples do not act like Jesus**. They fail to represent Him well not because they are incapable of Christlike behavior or out of an absence of good intentions, but because they do not think like Him. You and I may **profess** to be followers, but remember, **the most significant evidence of our loyalty is not what we say but what we do**." (cf Paul's description of profession without possession in Titus 1:16 - "They **profess** to know God, but **by their deeds** they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.") The point is that ever professor of Jesus needs to be reminded if they have not been changed by Jesus they have not been saved by Jesus (2 Cor 5:17+).

**William Barclay** is "spot on" with his comment that "No one persecutes a man who is ineffective and who obviously does not matter. [George Bernard Shaw](#) (CLEARLY NOT A BELIEVER IN JESUS) once said that the biggest compliment you can pay an author is to burn his books. Someone has said, 'A wolf will never attack a painted sheep.' Counterfeit Christianity is always safe. Real Christianity is always in peril. To suffer persecution is to be paid the greatest of compliments because it is the certain proof that men think we really matter." (Daily Bible Study - Acts)

**Thomas Constable** adds that "Luke included this incident (DAMASCUS PERSECUTION BY JEWS) to prove the genuineness of Saul's conversion. He who had been persecuting to the death believers in Jesus had now become the target of deadly persecution because of his changed view of Jesus."

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**Charles Swindoll's** discussion regarding the chronology of Saul's life before his first trip to Jerusalem as a believer (Acts 9:26). The differences between the two options revolve around how one interprets the "**three years later**" in Gal 1:18. In option one Saul's time in the desert is not specified before he "returned once more to Damascus" (Gal 1:17). Having arrived back in Damascus after receiving his "D.D." degree ("Doctor of Desert" Degree), he then spent **three years** in Damascus until he was forced to escape (Acts 9:24-25). (See [Insights](#))

**Swindoll** favors the option 2 below, explaining that "According to this chronology, Saul spent **'many days'**" (Acts 9:23) ministering in Damascus until he wore out his welcome in the synagogues. He then relocated to Arabia, spending two years getting better equipped for ministry. After he returned to Damascus and resumed his ministry there (Gal 1:17), the synagogue leaders plotted "to do away with him" (Acts 9:23), prompting his nighttime escape (Acts 9:24-25). He then traveled to Jerusalem. In this arrangement, a total of **three years** separated his conversion and journey to Jerusalem. In other words, **three years** after his conversion, not after his return to Damascus, Saul visited Peter in Jerusalem." ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary](#) - recommended resource).

**Kistemaker** favors a similar interpretation - The general time description, "many days had passed," relates to Paul's autobiographical comment: "Then after three years [since my conversion near Damascus] I went up to Jerusalem" (Gal. 1:18). The time period need not be three full years but may even be less than two years. In that case, we count one full year with the two partial years that precede and follow it (compare Acts 20:31). **This period of time includes his stay in Arabia and his days in Damascus.** (ED: AS SHOWN BELOW IN THE **DARK GRAY** PORTION OF THE TIMELINE) (Baker NT Commentary - Acts)

- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

**Acts 9:24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

KJV Acts 9:24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

Wuest But their plot became known to Saul. And they kept on watching the gates both day and night in order that they might make away with him.

- **their** Acts 9:29,30; 14:5,6; 17:10-15; 23:12-21; 25:3,11; Judges 16:2,3; 2 Cor 11:32
- **They were also watching the gates** Ps 21:11; 37:32,33
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SAUL GETS WIND OF ASSASSINATION PLOT**

**But their plot became known to Saul** - Luke does not tell us how it became known. Clearly, Jesus had given Saul a commission which was far from completed. The Jews had sought numerous times to put Jesus to death, but each time their plot had failed, because Jesus had not reached His final destination, the Cross. The point is that God's man is "immortal" until his mission is completed. We see this same principle in the 1260 day mission God assigned to the two witnesses (Rev 11:3<sub>±</sub>). The Antichrist was

not allowed to touch them until their mission was complete, John recording "**When they have finished their testimony**, the beast (ANTICHRIST) that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them." (Rev 11:7+).

A **plot** is a secret scheme to do something (especially something underhand or illegal)

**Jack Andrews** - When it is our time to go we cannot escape, but when it is not our time to go we can expect God to open up doors, provide protection, give insight and wisdom about decisions and places and people. ([Expository Sermons](#))

We see another Jewish plot to ambush and kill Paul was revealed to him when "the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul." (Acts 23:16+, cf Acts 23:30). These "*revelations*" to Paul of plans to kill him are encouraging examples of the wonderful protective **providence of God** in Paul's life. And beloved, given the truth that God is the same today and He was in Paul's day (Heb 13:8), you can rest assured that many similar (perhaps not quite as dramatic) episodes of divine providence have provided protection in your life. I am aware of three times God intervened to prevent my death (before I was a believer) and I am sure you have similar testimonies to the goodness and greatness of our loving Father's [watch-care of His children!](#)

**Plot** (1917)(**epiboule** from **epi** = upon, against + **boule** = plan) describes a purpose or design against someone, a secret plan to do harm to someone. A plot, a scheme or a conspiracy. **Louw-Nida** - "a plan for treacherous activity against someone." All 4 NT occurrences refer to the plots of the Jews directed against Paul (Acts 9:24; 20:3,19; 23:30). In Septuagint only in 2 Sa 2:16, Esther 2:2. (Four uses in the Apocrypha - 2 Ma. 5:7; 3 Ma. 1:2; 3 Ma. 1:6; 3 Ma. 1:25; 4 Ma. 4:13).

**Became known** (1097)(**ginosko**) means to know by experience, to come to understand and in this case presumably from someone telling Saul about the assassination plot.

**Kistemaker** comments on the ironic twist - "What a reversal of events! The persecutor who breathed murderous threats against the Christians (Acts 9:1+) now receives his own death warrant. The religious zealot who made the followers of Christ suffer now suffers himself for the sake of Christ (see Acts 9:16+). At this point, his life of suffering has only begun (refer to 2 Cor. 11:23-29)." (BNTC-Acts)

**They were also watching the gates day and night** - They were **watching the gates**, but not the walls! Saul was in good company, for the Jewish leaders had repeatedly watched Jesus closely (with a malicious intent) (Mk 3:2; Lk 6:7; 14:1). We see here a fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic words that "I will show him how much he must suffer for My Name's sake." (Acts 9:16+)

**Watching** (3906)(**paratero** from **para** = beside + **tereo** = watch) means to watch closely, to observe scrupulously or carefully. **A T Robertson** adds that **paratero** means literally "watching beside (para) or insidiously or on the sly as in Luke 6:7, they kept on watching (imperfect tense) by **day and night** to kill him. In 2 Cor. 11:32 Paul says that the Ethnarch of Aretas **kept guard**" (ephrourei, imperfect active of phroureo) to seize him. Probably the Jews obtained the consent of the Ethnarch and had him appoint some of them as guards or watchers at the gate of the city." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Vincent** adds (on **paratero**) - They kept watching. The compound verb, with para, by the side of, means to watch carefully or closely, as one who dogs another's steps, keeping beside or near him.

**So that** - Term of purpose. They were being vigilant to exterminate! The hunter has become the hunted!

**They might put him to death** - This is the same verb [anaireo \(see above\)](#) used in Acts 9:24 where it is translated **to do away with**.

**Vance Havner** said, "A real fire brand is distressing to the devil and when a wide-awake believer comes along, taking the gospel seriously, we can expect some sinister maneuvering for his downfall."

**Acts 9:25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

- **let** Josh 2:15; 1 Sa 19:11,12; 2 Cor 11:33
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**SAUL BECOMES**

## A "BASKET CASE"

**But** - Term of contrast. The Jews hatched their plot, **BUT** Saul's disciples "[wove](#)" their own plot with a woven basket!

Saul was quite a showman - entering the city **blind** and leaving in a **basket**!

**His disciples** - Did you notice the phrase "**his disciples** ([mathetes](#))?" Saul is already bearing fruit! Clearly Saul was already obeying Jesus' command to "**make disciples**" ([matheteuo](#) in the aorist imperative = Do this without delay!) (Mt 28:19+)! Are you as convicted as I am? Saul is still a new believer and is already making disciples! How long have you been a believer in Jesus? Do you have any disciples? If not you are in clear disobedience to Jesus' command!

As an aside you always have to be cautious with versions which paraphrase the text because they are more interpretative. In that regard the NLT paraphrase of this passage is a poor rendering -- "some of the other believers (Act 9:25NLT) Yes, they were believers but the NLT rendering misses the fact that they were Saul's disciples! (As does the generally more literal KJV and NKJV)

**Ger** - By this time, Saul had attracted his own personal group of disciples, his talmudim, as was normative for rabbis.

**Took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket- Through an opening in the wall** is explained by Paul in 2 Cor 11:33 as "Either through the **window** of a house overhanging the wall, or through a **window** in the wall itself opening to houses on its inner side. Hackett says that he observed such windows in the wall at Damascus." (Vincent)

**Robertson** - See Joshua 2:15f. (cf. 1 Sa 19:12) for the way that Rahab let out the (Israeli) spies "by a cord through the window." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Let down** ([2524](#))(**kathiemi** from **kata** = down + **eimi** = to be) means to let down from higher to lower place, as the paralytic on the cot lowered from roof to floor before Jesus (Lk 5:19), of Peter's vision of the great sheet "lowered by four corners" (Acts 10:11; Acts 11:5). Gilbrant adds that "The word is also used of many things which go down (e.g., rivers, a growing beard, etc.)."

**Kathiemi** - Lk. 5:19; Acts 9:25; Acts 10:11; Acts 11:5

**Kathiemi** - 3x in the Septuagint - Ex 17:11 ("when he [Moses] let his hand down [Lxx - kathiemi], Amalek prevailed"), Ps 29:10, Zech 11:13 ("throw it [Lxx - kathiemi] to the potter" - Messianic prophecy).

**J Vernon McGee** quips in his pithy style - I'm sure it must have been quite a thrilling experience to have been let down over the wall in a basket. Yet we never read anywhere in the New Testament that Paul toured the Roman Empire giving a lecture on the subject, "Over the Wall in a Basket." That ought to be a lesson for a great many folk who deal in sensationalism today. Here is a man who has had a most remarkable experience, but he has something more important to present. We must never let our experience get in the way of presenting Christ. We must never let our person get in the way of the Person of Christ. Sometimes I hear the very pious prayer, "Hide the preacher behind the cross." No, friend, that is not what he needs. Rather, we should pray, "Help the preacher to present Christ in such a way that the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and show them to us. Help him to present Christ!" This was Paul's method.

**Lowering** ([5465](#))(**chalao**) means to loosen, slacken, relax, "to cause something to move down gradually" (Louv-Nida) and then to let down from a higher place to a lower one - a bed from roof (Mk 2:4), a net from a boat (Lk 5:4,5), a boat from a sinking ship (Acts 27:30, and here of Saul in a basket from a window in the wall (Acts 9:25, also used in 2 Cor 11:33 "**cast** [Jeremiah] into the cistern" - Jer 38:6), finally letting down the sea anchor (Acts 27:17). Unfurl the ship sail in Lxx of Isa 33:23.

**Chalao** - let down (6), let down let down (1), lowering\* (1). Mk. 2:4; Lk. 5:4; Lk. 5:5; Acts 9:25; Acts 27:17; Acts 27:30; 2 Co. 11:33

**Chalao** - 4x in the Septuagint - Ex 39:21; Isa. 33:23; Isa. 57:4; Jer. 38:6

**Swindoll** explains that "Many ancient cities were enclosed by two walls separated by a gap of approximately 15 feet. The bottom was filled with stone and rubble to make it more difficult for enemies to breach the city's defenses. Higher up, however, wooden beams spanned the gap between the inner and outer walls to form floor joists for living quarters. Most likely, Saul escaped through an apartment window facing outward." (Swindoll's Living Insights)

**Paul** later recounts this episode giving us additional details not included by Luke...

In Damascus the ethnarch under **Aretas** the king was guarding (phroureō) the city of the **Damascenes** in order to seize ([piazo](#)) me, 33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands." (2 Cor 11:32-33)

**Comment:** The Jews apparently stirred up the civil authorities, something they did at other times (cf Acts



16:19-24, Acts 17:5-9, Acts 18:12-13ff). Saul refers to [Aretas](#) the King of the [Nabataeans](#) (ca 9 BC to 40 AD) who apparently assisted the Jews in the plot and helped by setting up guards around the city of Damascus.

Notice that this account of his lowering in a basket is included in the long list of persecutions mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor 11:23-33

**Large basket** ([4711](#)) (**spuris/sphuris** from **speira** = something that is coiled) refers to a large flexible basket for carrying provisions. Ger adds it was "suitable for carrying bales of hay, straw, cords of wood or *small Jewish rabbis trying to make a getaway*." **Friberg** adds that a **spuris** was "used by Jews especially on longer journeys, for carrying along **levitically clean provisions**, such as food and hay for sleeping on (Mt 15:37)." **Spuris** is used in classical Greek to denote a "large basket" that would hold money or food (cf. Liddell-Scott).

**Zodhiates** lists 2 synonyms - **kóphinos** ([2894](#)), a wicker basket; **sargánē** ([4553](#)), a large basket made of ropes or a wicker basket made of entwined twigs.

**Spuris** - large basket(1), large baskets(4). - Matt. 15:37; Matt. 16:10; Mk. 8:8 = "seven large baskets"; Mk. 8:20 = "large baskets full of broken pieces"; Acts 9:25

**A T Robertson** on **in a large basket** - In a basket (en sphuridi). The word used when the four thousand were fed (Mark 8:8 = Matt. 15:37). A large basket plaited of reeds and distinguished in Mark 8:19-20. (= Matt. 16:9-10) from the smaller [kophinos]. Paul uses sarganē, a basket made of ropes. This escape by night by the help of the men whom he had come to destroy was a shameful memory to Paul (2 Cor. 11:33). ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Albert Barnes** wrote, "Saul was certain of death if he remained; and as he could secure his life by flight without abandoning any principle of religion, or denying his Lord, it was his duty to do so. Christianity requires us to sacrifice our lives only when we cannot avoid it without denying the Savior, or abandoning the principles of our religion."

**John Phillips** - Thus ended Saul's first effort to evangelize his own people.

**Jack Arnold** has an interesting comment on this episode - This was one of the most meaningful experiences in Paul's life. Why? He was learning humility and dependence upon Christ for success. He was learning that heritage, education, background, position and even zeal did not make one a success for Christ. He was learning that God did not need his abilities as much as his availability. Without this humiliating experience Paul would have never learned how much he needed Christ to carry out His ministry through Paul. Paul also had to learn that when he preached primarily to the Jews, he caused trouble, for God was slowly teaching this young man that his preaching ministry was to the Gentiles primarily. ([Sermon](#))

**Anderson** - His suffering commenced in the first place where he ever preached the gospel. From the human point of view, his being let down the wall of Damascus was the first of many narrow escapes; here, the plot was due to the Jews. But when he recalled the event in 2 Cor 11:32-33, the plot was due to "the governor under Aretas the king" being desirous to take Saul, so it appears that this was a joint military-religious plot against God's new servant. But when Saul escaped from the town by night in a basket, it is obvious that the early disciples and preachers did not presume on divine protection, however bad the circumstances. If He chose to deliver them, Amen; but they did not take unnecessary risks....After many experiences, the apostle Paul could later write, "who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Cor 1:10), (What the Bible teaches)

**Jack Andrews** - From 1907 through the 1910's, Harry Houdini performed with great success in the United States. He would free himself from jails, handcuffs, chains, ropes, and straitjackets, often while hanging from a rope in plain sight of street audiences. Because of imitators and a dwindling audience, on January 25, 1908, Houdini put his 'handcuff act' behind him and began escaping from a locked, water filled milk can.

The possibility of failure and death thrilled his audiences. Houdini also expanded his challenge escape act—in which he invited the public to devise contraptions to hold him. Some of the contraptions that Houdini escaped from included nailed packing crates which was sometimes lowered into the water, riveted boilers, wet-sheets, mailbags, and even the belly of a whale that washed ashore in Boston.

In 1912, Houdini introduced perhaps his most famous act, the Chinese Water Torture Cell, in which he was suspended upside-down in a locked glass-and-steel cabinet full to overflowing with water. The act required that Houdini hold his breath for more than three minutes. Houdini performed the escape for the rest of his career. Despite two Hollywood movies depicting Houdini dying in the Tortures Cell, the escape had nothing to do with his death. Houdini was indeed a great escape artist. He would escape from trouble that he got himself into on purpose. We are reminded of Saul's great escape from trouble that he got himself into for preaching. ([Expository Sermons](#))

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**Acts 9:26** When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 9:26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

NLT Acts 9:26 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!

- **when** Acts 22:17; 26:20; Gal 1:17-19
- **he was trying to associate with the disciples** Acts 9:19; 4:23
- **but they were all afraid of him** Mt 10:17-19; 24:10; Gal 2:4
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

## A LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION

**Kistemaker** points out that Acts 9:19b-30 "displays a remarkable similarity to the parallel preceding section (Acts 9:19b–25): Paul's introduction to the churches, his preaching in the local synagogues; the threat to his life, and the escape to other places." (BNTC-Acts)

**When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples**([mathetes](#)) **but they were all afraid of him**- Think about the fact that it was 3 years after his conversion and the name "Saul" still evoked fear in the disciples! If Saul's arrival was not greeted with enthusiasm by the Church, one can only imagine the reaction of the Sanhedrin when they learned of his arrival!

**Trying** ([peirazo](#)) is in the imperfect tense, indicating Saul was being rebuffed again and again! The KJV uses the more common meaning of the verb [peirazo](#) translating it "he **assayed** to join himself." This is actually not a bad translation as one of the meanings of the verb [assay](#) in English is "to make an effort or attempt (to do something)." Luke uses [peirazo](#) two other times in Acts to describe "**put** the Spirit of the Lord **to the test**" (Acts 5:9) and to "**put** God **to the test**" (Acts 15:10)

**To associate** (present tense - continually) ([2853](#))([kollao](#)) means to join closely together (even to glue together) and so unite or join himself with the other believers. In Acts 5:13 Luke records that after the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira "none of the rest dared to **associate** with them; however, the people held them in high esteem." In Acts 17:34 while Paul was presenting the truth of the resurrection, some sneered at him, so he left their midst "but some men **joined** him and believed." (Acts 17:34) Peter uses [kollao](#) as the Gospel spreads to the Gentiles declaring "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew **to associate with** a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean." (Acts 10:28).

All the uses of [kollao](#) in the NT -

Matt. 19:5 = "**be joined** (GLUED!) to his wife"; Lk. 10:11; Lk. 15:15; Acts 5:13; Acts 8:29; Acts 9:26; Acts 10:28; Acts 17:34; Ro12:9; 1 Co 6:16; 1 Co. 6:17; Rev. 18:5

**They were afraid** (imperfect tense)([5399](#))([phobeo](#)) means they were in an state of heightened apprehension, and became frightened, scared, terrified. Notice that Luke says **ALL**, which presumably would include the apostles! Luke alludes to a similar reaction to Saul in Damascus, Ananias declaring "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem." (Acts 9:13)

**A T Robertson on they were afraid** - They were fearing him. Imperfect middle picturing the state of mind of the disciples who had vivid recollections of his conduct when last here. What memories Saul had on this return journey to Jerusalem after three years. He had left a conquering hero of Pharisaism. He returns distrusted by the disciples and regarded by the Pharisees as a renegade and a turncoat. He made no effort to get in touch with the Sanhedrin who had sent him to Damascus. He had escaped the plots of the Jews in Damascus only to find himself the object of suspicion by the disciples in Jerusalem who had no proof of his sincerity in his alleged conversion. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Phillips** comments that Saul's "new sympathy for the saints was extremely suspect. One and all the believers shunned him, naturally thinking he had come to spy on them. What happened to Peter's spirit of discernment? Why did not John befriend him, take him home, introduce him to Mary, the Lord's mother? Where was Andrew? Of all the apostles, Andrew was the one always reaching out to bring outsiders to Jesus. What happened to Nathaniel, that "Israelite indeed, in whom [was] no guile"? (John 1:47). How disappointing that none of the apostles were willing to so much as investigate the testimony of Saul. Surely a few minutes'

conversation with him would have enabled the Spirit of God in Saul to bear witness with the Spirit of God in them. "They were all afraid," the Holy Spirit says. They "believed not." (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** adds "Saul must have seemed to them to be the quintessential wolf in sheep's clothing, now trying to destroy from within what he had previously tried to destroy from without."

**Peterson** comments that "Even believers who have seen the power of God at work in their own lives can doubt God's ability to change others. It is also true that, 'this shows a misdirected fear of the persecutor rather than God (cf. Luke 12:4–5)'" (Pillar NT Commentary)

All of Luke's uses of **phobeo**

Lk. 1:13; Lk. 1:30; Lk. 1:50; Lk. 2:9; Lk. 2:10; Lk. 5:10; Lk. 8:25; Lk. 8:35; Lk. 8:50; Lk. 9:34; Lk. 9:45; Lk. 12:4; Lk. 12:5; Lk. 12:7; Lk. 12:32; Lk. 18:2; Lk. 18:4; Lk. 19:21; Lk. 20:19; Lk. 22:2; Lk. 23:40; Acts 5:26; Acts 9:26; Acts 10:2; Acts 10:35; Acts 13:16; Acts 13:26; Acts 16:38; Acts 18:9; Acts 22:29; Acts 23:10; Acts 27:17; Acts 27:24; Acts 27:29;

**Bob Utley** summarizes Paul's post-conversion visits to Jerusalem mentioned in Acts...

1. Acts 9:26, first visit
2. Acts 11:30, relief visit
3. Acts 12:25, after mission
4. Acts 15:2, Jerusalem Council
5. Acts 18:22, brief visit with the church
6. Acts 21:17, visit with James and the elders and resulting Nazarite vow and arrest

**Not believing that he was a disciple** - NLT has "They did not believe he had truly become a believer!" This is the reason they were afraid. It is interesting that in Acts 18:27+ when Paul "wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him." Here as he desired to go to Jerusalem, he had no letters from the disciples (e.g., no letter from Ananias, etc).

**Steven Ger** suggests "They believed that Saul was an ingenious "plant," a "mole," and that his conversion was a sham, a clever charade that was simply his latest tactic to infiltrate the community of faith in order to identify and arrest believers in Jesus." ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Believing** (4100)(**pisteuo**) in the present tense means that the disciples in Jerusalem continually did not consider Saul as to be a true believer and that he was therefore not worthy of their trust. They refused to accept Saul as a genuine disciple and thus were unwilling to accept him.

**Disciple** (3101)(**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. **Mathetes** was more than a mere pupil but was also an adherent of a teacher, in this case Jesus.

**Robertson** suggests "They had probably heard of his conversion, but they frankly disbelieved the reports and regarded him as a hypocrite or a spy in a new role to ruin them." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Swindoll** - When the Christian life becomes impossible, the believer must learn the all-important concept of surrender. "Surrender" doesn't mean "quit." There's no bitterness or self-pity or blame or resentment in surrender. The surrendered spirit has no sense of entitlement. The surrendered Christian recognizes his or her own powerlessness. But that attitude comes hard for those who have enjoyed great success in the past and to those who naturally possess immense potential. Saul began his spiritual journey as a self-sufficient, zealous, driven, highly capable religious leader with a clear sense of direction. His encounter with the risen Lord then put him on an entirely new path in life. Without a doubt, his conversion energized the most astute Christians; a man with obvious potential for the kingdom had just embraced the Messiah. One could only imagine what the great Saul of Tarsus could accomplish when filled with the Holy Spirit! But this self-willed man of God had a long way to go before he would reach his potential for the Lord.

**A. W. Tozer** once wrote, "It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply." **Alan Redpath** once said something similar: "When God wants to do an impossible task, He takes an impossible man and crushes him." That's not to suggest that God takes delight in hurting people; it's only to say that a painful recovery usually follows spiritual surgery. For people like Saul, the therapeutic rehabilitation of a strong will can take a very long time—in his particular case, almost fifteen years! When, at last, a strong will surrenders—when the individual finally comes to terms with the truth of his or her own helplessness—God has help waiting nearby. Just three years into his journey, Saul spent the beginning of his time in Jerusalem on his own, being avoided by the believers (Acts 9:26). Saul had no identity, no community, no direction, no hope. He could do nothing for himself to turn things around. Since life had become impossible, surrender was essential. That's when Barnabas came to his rescue (Acts 9:27; cf. Acts

4:36).(Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** adds that "He still had to learn that Paul had to die. Ambition and pride must be crucified. Self-sufficiency must be put to death. He had to learn what Jesus taught His disciples, "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Nothing, nothing can be done to further Christ's kingdom without explicit trust in Jesus Christ to sovereignly work for us. Pride, culture, education, tradition, position and ancestry always die hard but they must die if a Christian is to be an effective witness for Christ. ([Paul, The New Creature](#))

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## **Facing Our Past**

Read: Acts 9:20-30

He tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. —Acts 9:26

Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, spent 40 years helping people hear and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. When he died in April 2012, one newspaper article carried the headline, "Charles Colson, Nixon's 'dirty tricks' man, dies at 80." It seemed surprising that a man so transformed by faith should be identified with things he did as a politically ruthless presidential aide decades earlier before he knew the Savior.

The apostle Paul's conversion and his early Christian witness were greeted with skepticism and fear. When he began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God, people said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose?" (Acts 9:21). Later when Paul went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples, they were afraid of him (v.26). In years to come, Paul never ignored his past, but spoke of it as evidence of the mercy of God (1 Tim. 1:13-14).

Like Paul, we don't need to parade our failures or to pretend they didn't happen. Instead, we can thank the Lord that through His grace and power, our past is forgiven, our present is changed, and our future is bright with hope for all He has prepared for us.

Transformed by grace divine,  
The glory shall be Thine;  
To Thy most holy will, O Lord,  
We now our all resign. —Burroughs

Only Jesus can transform our life.

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## **The Gift of Encouragement**

Read: Acts 4:32–37; 9:26–27

Joseph . . . whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:36–37

An old Merle Haggard song, "If We Make It Through December," tells the story of a man laid off from his factory job with no money to buy Christmas gifts for his little girl. Although December is supposed to be a happy time of year, his life seems dark and cold.

Discouragement is not unique to December, but it can be amplified then. Our expectations may be higher, our sadness deeper. A little encouragement can go a long way.

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of encouragement. May we encourage others as they have encouraged us.

Joseph, a man from Cyprus, was among the early followers of Jesus. The apostles called him Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." We meet him in Acts 4:36–37 when he sold a piece of property and donated the money to help other believers in need.

Later, we read that the disciples were afraid of Saul (Acts 9:26). "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles" (v. 27). Saul, later called Paul, had formerly been trying to kill the believers, but Barnabas defended him as a man transformed by Christ.

All around us are people longing to be encouraged. A timely word, a phone call, or a prayer can bolster their faith in Jesus.

The generosity and support of Barnabas demonstrate what it means to be a son or daughter of encouragement. That may be the greatest gift we can give to others this Christmas.

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of encouragement. May we encourage others as they have encouraged us.

Encouragement may be the greatest gift we give this Christmas.

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## The Blessing of Encouragers

Read: Acts 9:26–31

But Barnabas took [Saul] and brought him to the apostles. Acts 9:27

The 2010 movie *The King's Speech* tells the story of England's King George VI, who unexpectedly became monarch when his brother abandoned the throne. With the country on the brink of World War II, government officials wanted a well-spoken leader because of the increasingly influential role of radio. King George VI, however, struggled with a stuttering problem.

I was especially drawn to the film's portrayal of George's wife, Elizabeth. Throughout his struggle to overcome his speech difficulty, she was his constant source of encouragement. Her steadfast devotion provided the support he needed to overcome his challenge and rule well during the war.

The Bible highlights the stories of encouragers who gave powerful assistance during challenging circumstances. Moses had Aaron and Hur's support during Israel's battles (Exodus 17:8–16). Elizabeth encouraged her pregnant relative Mary (Luke 1:42–45).

After his conversion, Paul needed the support of Barnabas, whose name literally means "son of encouragement." When the disciples were fearful of Paul, Barnabas, at the risk of his own reputation, vouched for him (Acts 9:27). His endorsement was essential to Paul being welcomed by the Christian community. Barnabas later served as Paul's traveling and preaching companion (Acts 14). Despite the dangers, they worked together to proclaim the gospel.

Believers in Jesus are still called to "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). May we be eager to offer encouragement to help support others, especially as they face difficult circumstances.

The encouragement of a friend can make all the difference.

By Lisa Samra ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

- **Barnabas** Acts 4:36; 11:22,25; 12:25; 13:2; 15:2,25,26,35-39; 1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:9,13
- **the apostles** Gal 1:18,19
- **how he had seen** Acts 9:17; 1 Cor 15:8
- **that He had talked to him** Acts 9:20-22; 4:13,29; Eph 6:19,20
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BARNABAS LENDS SAUL A HELPING HAND

**But** - Term of contrast. The contrast between the disciples (apparently including the apostles!!!) who were fearful and one who did not fear. Saul was in dire straits and in need of a friend. In Damascus, the Lord had provided Ananias and now the Lord provides Barnabas to "run interference" for Saul.

**Barnabas took hold of him** - We know that Barnabas was filled with the Spirit and thus he was bold in the Lord. Barnabas, "Son of Encouragement" came alongside Saul and served as a buffer as he brought him to apostles in Jerusalem. Years later in his great

"definition" of love in First Corinthians Paul would write words that aptly describe the selfless action of Barnabas - "**believes all things.**" (1 Cor 13:7) The Spirit wrought love in Barnabas believed Saul's story and sincerity and that his coming was not a spy mission or subterfuge!

**Rackham** writes that **Barnabas** acted like Saul's [sponsor](#) vouched for the truth of his vision."

One can only imagine the confusion of the high priest and Sanhedrin that the one they had 3 years earlier given letters to for the purpose of destroying followers of Jesus was now following Jesus!

One rendering of **Barnabas'** name is "**Son of Consolation**" and what a welcome consolation he must have been to Saul! [Consolation](#) describes the comfort received by a person after a loss or disappointment. Saul was human and surely he felt some disappointment. Only eternity will reveal how precious was Barnabas' befriending of this man who would become the greatest apostle of all.

**John Phillips** says "Nothing in this world can be more frustrating than to be an object of universal suspicion and mistrust, to be eyed by everyone, to be kept at arm's length. Saul was a **social leper** to everyone in Jerusalem. But Barnabas believed him....To the end of his days Paul never forgot what he owed to Barnabas, the first man to trust him in Jerusalem. **May we not seek to play the part of a Barnabas to some new believer?**" (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Banabas** (921) ([barnabas](#)) is transliterated (the following origin is suggested but is not absolutely certain) from the Aramaic **bar** (denoting "son") and **nebiy** (denoting prophet) so strictly speaking his name meant "son of prophet." The Jews used the phrase "**son of...**" to denote a person's basic character or characteristics. E.g., James and John were called **sons of Thunder**" (Mk 3:17 - referring to their impulsive and impetuous character as see in Mk 9:38, 10:35-45, Lk 9:54), Judas is a "**son of perdition**" (Jn 17:12), in Judges 19:22KJV we read of the "**sons of Belial**" men characterized by evil or worthlessness. **Barnabas** by contrast was a "**son**" characterized by his encouraging spirit. Every body needs a few of these "Barnabas types" of men in their midst! Are you one? Let's get even more practical -- Is there anyone that this very moment the Holy Spirit is urging you to encourage **today** by a visit, a call, a text, a hand-written (old-fashioned) note? Then follow through in obedience and be a Barnabas to that person today! You will experience the joy of being one of God's sons (daughters) of encouragement!

"**Barnabas** is seen in Acts on four other occasions. (1) Acts 11:22–24; (2) Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; (3) Acts 13:1–2, 50; 14:12; (4) Acts 15:2, 12, 22, 25, 37." (Toussaint)

**Barnabas** - 28x in 27v - One can form a good sense of this man's great character by studying the following passages. Acts 4:36; Acts 9:27; Acts 11:22; Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1; Acts 13:2; Acts 13:7; Acts 13:43; Acts 13:46; Acts 13:50; Acts 14:12; Acts 14:14; Acts 14:20; Acts 15:2; Acts 15:12; Acts 15:22; Acts 15:25; Acts 15:35; Acts 15:36; Acts 15:37; Acts 15:39; 1 Co. 9:6; Gal. 2:1; Gal. 2:9; Gal. 2:13; Col. 4:10

#### Related Resources:

- [What can we learn from the life of Barnabas?](#)
- [Barnabas](#) - Whyte's Dictionary of Bible Characters - nice discussion
- [Barnabas](#) - Fausset Bible Dictionary
- [Barnabas](#) - Bob Utley

**Took hold** (1949)([epilambano](#) from **epi** = upon + **lambano** = take hold of) means to lay hold of, get a good grip on, take possession of. All NT uses are in the [middle voice](#) (pictures one taking to oneself). The verb in some context can mean to seize. In this context Barnabas got a firm grip on Saul in order to help him. The added nuances are that Barnabas was concerned and took an interest in Saul. *Epilambano* occurs in the papyri in the sense of "taking a care or concern upon oneself."

**A T Robertson** - Barnabas saw the situation (**ED: I WOULD ADD THAT HE [DISCERNED](#) THE SITUATION!**) and took Saul to himself and listened to his story and believed it. It is to the credit of Barnabas that he had the insight and the courage to stand by Saul at the crucial moment in his life when the evidence seemed to be against him. It is a pleasing hypothesis that this influential disciple from Cyprus had gone to the University of Tarsus where he met Saul (INTERESTING THOUGHT - [TARSUS](#) WAS IN [CILICIA](#) AND WAS OPPOSITE THE [ISLAND OF CYPRUS](#) AND HAD ONE OF THE 3 MAJOR UNIVERSITIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD) If so, he would know more of him than those who only knew his record as a persecutor of Christians. That fact Barnabas knew also, but he was convinced that Jesus had changed the heart of Saul and he used his great influence (Acts 4:36; 11:22) to win the favour of the apostles, Peter in particular (Gal. 1:19) and James the half-brother of Jesus. The other apostles were probably out of the city as Paul says that he did not see them. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**And brought him to the apostles** - First, Barnabas brought the money from sale of his land and "laid it at the apostles' feet." (Acts 4:36-37) And now he brings Saul to the apostles. The apostles knew of the integrity of Barnabas and this gave him entree to the

apostles so that they were now willing to receive Saul. Barnabas was a man greatly used of the Lord! And as we shall see, God is not finished with this choice "vessel for honor" (2 Ti 2:21).

## **BARNABAS SHARES SAUL'S TESTIMONY**

**Barnabas** had the key which opened the door for Saul's acceptance, and subsequent ability to move around Jerusalem with freedom, boldly speaking of Jesus.

**And described to them** - Notice that it is Barnabas, speaking to the apostles for Saul. Saul would have had to tell him about his conversion, but incredible as the story was (a bright light in the sky at noon!), Barnabas believed Saul. It would appear that in addition to all of his other wonderful gifts, Barnabas also had the gift of discernment.

**Described** (1334)(**diegeomai** from **diá** = through + **hēgéomai** = to lead) means to conduct a narration through to the end with considerable detail. **Barnabas** gave a full and detailed account to the apostles concerning Saul's conversion and post-conversion proclamation of Jesus, so amazing and confounding the non-believing Jews that they sought to kill him.

**How he had seen the Lord on the road** - This fulfilled a major criteria of a genuine NT apostle -- they had to have had a personal encounter with Jesus. Although Acts 9:1-9 does not state that Saul saw the Lord, here we see affirmation that he did see Jesus and thus met one of the major requirements of apostleship. Any who call themselves apostles today are not apostles in the same sense as these original apostles, as none of the modern "apostles" has seen the risen Jesus.

**Larkin** makes an important point - In a day when we often elevate individualistic, personal, subjective experience over communal, ecclesial, corporate judgments, Saul's example shines. His call is "for real" because it stands up to the test of the apostles, those charged with guaranteeing the message and mission of Christ's church. Any contemporary claims to God's call must similarly be tested by the deposit of the apostles and prophets: the Scriptures. ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**And that He had talked to him** - Presumably Barnabas explained to the apostles that Saul had received a commission from Jesus, when the Lord spoke to him.

**And how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus**- Barnabas explained that Saul was a fearless speaker in the Name of Jesus, which the apostles would have understood his bold preaching for that is what they had experienced (cf Acts 4:8, 31, 33). This would have been objective evidence that Saul's conversion was not a "fox hole" profession of Jesus, but was a full fledged possession of the Jesus.

**Larkin** - In Luke's understanding and Paul's, bold speaking is both characteristic of Christian witness and the result of a supernatural filling with the Spirit (Acts 4:8, 13, 31; 9:17, 27–28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; Eph 6:19–20; Phil 1:20; 1 Th 2:2).

**Spoken out boldly** (3955)(**parrhesiazomai** from **parrhesia** = freedom or frankness in speaking or confident in spirit and demeanor <> **pas** = all + **rhesis** = speech) describes one as acting with an attitude of openness that comes from freedom and lack of fear. Barnabas tells the apostles how Saul had spoken out freely, openly, fearlessly and boldly. Saul had spoken about Jesus to the Jews without any sense of fear or constraint. Barnabas presented Saul to the apostles as a disciple of Jesus who was a bold and courageous for the good news of Jesus.

The apostle Peter understood the sense of the Greek verb **parrhesiazomai**, because he himself had used the root word **parrhesia** in Acts 2:29+ when he said "Brethren, I may **confidently** (**parrhesia** - also in Acts 4:13) say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

**Parrhesiazomai** - 9x in 9v most in Acts - confidence(1), had the boldness(1), speak out boldly(1), speak boldly(1), speaking out boldly(2), speaking boldly(1), spoke out boldly(1), spoken out boldly(1).

Acts 9:27; Acts 9:28; Acts 13:46; Acts 14:3; Acts 18:26; Acts 19:8; Acts 26:26; Eph. 6:20; 1 Thess. 2:2

**A T Robertson** - Peter was convinced and Saul was his guest for two weeks (Gal. 1:18+) with delightful fellowship (στορησαι [historēsai]). He had really come to Jerusalem mainly "to visit" (to see) Peter, but not to receive a commission from him. He had that from the Lord (Gal. 1:1f+.). Both Peter and James could tell Saul of their special experiences with the Risen Christ. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**R. Kent Hughes** said, "How beautiful is the ministry of Barnabas—giving a word of encouragement, confirming others' gifts, reconciling believers with believers, taking a risk for Christ in human relationships, promoting the ministry of others, rejoicing in another's success. God mightily uses men and women like Barnabas for His glory!" (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Rich Cathers** - It seems to me that one of the chief characteristics of Barnabas was the ability to see a need and then without needing to be asked, he does something about it. We see this when he sells a piece of property to meet needs in the church. We see it here when Paul needs a helping hand into the church. A Barnabas is a person who has his eye open to needs, and then responds with encouragement. It might be a new person visiting church and doesn't quite know how to fit in. It might be a person who has not been around awhile, perhaps they even have slipped a bit in their walk. It might be someone who is simply going through a rough period and need a word of encouragement. We all are called to be a "Barnabas".

**John G. Butler** said, "Those who claim to be converted ought to show it in such things as their conduct, their conversation, their clothes, their companions, their creed, and their comfort in time of trial. True Christianity is not skimpy in giving proofs. If a claim of Christianity comes with few proofs, its genuineness is indeed suspect."

**ILLUSTRATION** - Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. While breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. His own fans began to ridicule him. He stood as second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then shortstop 'Pee Wee' Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that are around his shoulder saved his career.

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## Building Bridges

Read: Acts 9:17-27

Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. —Acts 9:27

A new believer recently attended our worship service. He had long, multicolored, spiked hair. He dressed in dark clothes and had multiple piercings and tattoos. Some gaped; others just gave him that "It's good to see you in church, but please don't sit next to me" smile. Yet there were some during the greeting time who went out of their way to welcome and accept him. They were bridge builders.

Barnabas was that bridge builder for Saul (also called Paul). When Saul arrived in Jerusalem 3 years after his conversion, many disciples were afraid of him and doubted his transformation (Acts 9:26). He didn't receive a warm welcome from the Jerusalem church greeters for good reason. Saul had a terrible reputation for persecuting Christians! But Barnabas, a Jewish convert, believed God's work of grace in Saul's life and became a bridge between him and the apostles (v.27).

Saul needed someone to come alongside him to encourage and teach him, and to introduce him to other believers. Barnabas was that bridge. As a result, Saul was brought into deeper fellowship with the disciples in Jerusalem and was able to preach the gospel there freely and boldly.

New believers need a Barnabas in their lives. We are to be a bridge in the lives of others.

Oh, I would be to others  
A cheering ray of light,  
Inspiring them with courage  
To climb some newfound height! —Bosch

Be a bridge of encouragement to someone today.

By Kevin Williams ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:28** And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV 9:28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

- **moving about freely in Jerusalem** Acts 1:21; Nu 27:16,17; 2 Sa 5:2; 1 Ki 3:7; Ps 121:8; John 10:9; Gal 1:18
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**SAUL'S BOLDNESS  
IN THE LORD**



**And he was with them** - "Saul stayed with the apostles" (NET) How long was Saul in Jerusalem? We cannot be definitive. Paul himself later wrote that he "stayed with (CEPHAS - PETER) fifteen days." (Gal 1:18). This statement however does not exclude that he might have been in Jerusalem longer (e.g., how long was he in the Holy City being rejected by the saints, before Barnabas came to his rescue? We simply do not know).

**Moving about freely in Jerusalem** - This is rendered more literally as "*coming in and going out* in Jerusalem" (YLT). This phrase is an OT idiom that describes a person's everyday life or daily activities, the regular conduct of life. (cf Nu 27:17 = "who will *go out and come in* before them", 1 Ki 3:7 = "I do not know how to *go out or come in*").

The idiom of *going in and out* pictures the fact that "Barnabas and Peter and James opened all the doors for Saul and the fear of the disciples vanished." (Robertson)

**Speaking out boldly in the Name of the Lord** - **Speaking out boldly** is in the present tense, indicating that it was Saul's continual practice to speak freely and fearlessly about Jesus.

**Speaking out boldly** (3955) See above for [parrhesiazomai](#). Bold speech in Acts is evidence of filling with the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 4:31+ = "*all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness [parrhesia]*"). It is the Spirit Who gives one the supernatural power to preach with confidence and boldness. In preaching you have only two choices - your power or His power! Amen or oh my! Are you seeking His filling and His power that you might preach with boldness and confidence? Ask the Almighty for this confidence and boldness as in Acts 4:29+ "Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your Word with all **confidence** ([parrhesia](#))."

**Bruce Barton** - REVAMPED REPUTATION - It is difficult to change one's reputation, and Saul had a terrible reputation with the Christians. But Barnabas, a Jewish convert (mentioned in 4:36), became the bridge between Saul and the apostles. New Christians (especially those with tarnished reputations) need sponsors, people who will come alongside to encourage them, teach them, and introduce them to other believers. By guiding and mentoring those who are young in the faith, we help them establish a new identity as followers of Christ. Find a new believer in your church who needs practical help and encouragement in growing. Become a Barnabas to that person.

**Acts 9:29** **And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

NLT He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they plotted to murder him.

- he spake Acts 9:20-22,27
- disputed Acts 6:9,10; 17:17; 18:19; 19:8; Jude 1:3,9
- Grecians Acts 6:1; 11:20
- but Acts 9:23; 2 Cor 11:26
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **A MURDER PLOT TO SILENCE SAUL**

**And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews** - A Hellenistic Jew was a Greek-speaking Jew (and thus usually one who was born outside of Israel) in contrast to one speaking a [Semitic](#) language. **Thayer** adds that a **Hellenist** describes "one who imitates the manners and customs or the worship of the Greeks, and uses the Greek tongue; employed in the N. T. of Jews born in foreign lands and speaking Greek (Grecian Jews)." The only other use of this specific Greek word (Hellenistes) is Acts 6:1+.

This is fascinating because in a sense Saul is continuing the work of Stephen as described in Acts 6:8-10+! Saul was witnessing to the very same audience that had masterminded the stoning of Stephen, the Greek-speaking Jews! And just as they were "unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which (STEPHEN) was speaking," Saul's debating skills proved too much (and of course Saul had the "sword of the Spirit, the Word of God" Eph 6:17+) for the Grecian Jews. So just as with Stephen, once again the Jews concluded, if you can't beat 'em, then kill 'em!

**Larkin** comments on this section that "The church's mission has come full circle: its chief opponent has become its chief

**protagonist!"** ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**Arguing** ([debating](#), disputed)(4802)([suzeteo](#) from **sun** = together + **zeteo** = to seek, inquire) in a positive sense means to inquire together or discuss but in this context clearly has the negative sense meaning to dispute, debate or argue (Mk 1:27, etc). Of Pharisees arguing with Jesus (Mk 8:11), of Scribes arguing with Jesus' disciples (Mk 9:14), of Jews arguing with Stephen (Acts 6:9), and finally in this passage of Saul arguing with the Hellenistic Jews. The imperfect tense pictures Saul **arguing** with one Jew, then another Jew, again and again. He may well have known some of these men, but he was now a changed man with a new agenda. This man was on a mission to exalt the Name of Jesus!

**NET Note** on **Hellenistic Jews** - which NET Bible translates "Greek speaking Jews" - "Hellenists"... is largely unknown to the modern English reader. The translation "Greek-speaking Jews" attempts to convey something of who these were, but it was more than a matter of language spoken; it involved a degree of adoption of Greek culture as well.

#### Related Resources:

- [What is Christian apologetics?](#)
- [What is a Christian worldview?](#)
- [What is an apologist?](#)
- [What is the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry \(CARM\)?](#)

**Swindoll** comments that "As a result of their interaction, this group tried to kill Saul. At the time, some probably considered this a stroke of cosmic justice; Saul reaped the harvest of seeds he had once sown against Stephen. And indeed Saul had helped to nurture the anti-Christian attitude that came back to bite him. But grace always abounds! Saul had been forgiven of his sins, regardless of the temporal consequences that remained."

**But they were attempting to put him to death** - Saul to these Hellenistic Jews was a turncoat and a traitor. The **verbattempting** (*epicheireo*) means to set one's hand to do something and in the imperfect tense pictures them as trying again and again and indicates the incomplete or unsuccessful action. The implication then is that the Jews made a number of attempts but they all failed! The **good hand** of the Lord was on Saul which preventing the Jews from laying their **evil hands** on him! (See Hand of the Lord).

**Attempting** (2021)(*epicheireo* from **epi** = upon, in + **cheir** = hand) means to take in hand, to put the hand to, to set one's hand to some task, to endeavor to perform a task, to undertake. To take in hand, undertake, attempt, whether effective or not. The only other uses are by Luke (Lk 1:1 = "Inasmuch as many **have undertaken** to compile an account of the things accomplished among us," Acts 19:13 = "**attempted** to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus.")

As twentieth-century martyr [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) once said "**Suffering..is the badge of true discipleship.**"

**Warren Wiersbe** writes that "Paul wanted to minister to the Jews in Jerusalem, but God commanded him to depart from the city (SEE SCRIPTURE BELOW). God's kingdom program at Jerusalem was now at a close, and Paul had a ministry to fulfill among the Gentiles." (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

"It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, 18 and I saw Him saying to me, '**Make haste** (aorist imperative - Do not delay! Do this now! This is urgent!), and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' 19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.' 21 "And He said to me, '**Go!** (present imperative - keep on going!) For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 22:17-21)

**Jack Arnold comments** - Paul had to learn that all that is important in life is God's program for him. He could add nothing to make God's plan for his life successful. He had to learn that all he needed was Christ. All he needed was the Sovereign Christ working in him and through him. Paul had to learn that lesson before he could be a valuable servant to Christ. ([Paul, The New Creature](#))

**John Phillips** amplifies Wiersbe's comments writing that "Increasingly now Judaism was turning against Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and Christianity. Within a few decades judgment would fall. The Temple, now the rallying point of opposition to the gospel, would be burned to the ground, and the Jews would be scattered again, left to wander deeper and deeper into the maze of an ever-growing Talmud." (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Acts 9:30** But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. (**NASB:**

KJV 9:30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

- when Acts 9:24,25; 17:10,15; Mt 10:23
- Caesarea Acts 8:40
- or Mt 16:13
- Tarsus Acts 9:11; 11:25
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See Map of Events Associated with Saul's conversion and ministry](#)

## SAUL ESCAPES TO TARSUS

**But when the brethren learned of it** - The fellow believers in Jerusalem (cf Ananias addressing Saul as "brother Saul" Acts 9:17+). **Brethren** ([adelphos](#)) are literally those born of the same womb, and figuratively speaking all believers have been born of One Spirit (cf 1 Cor 12:13, Jn 3:3-6), children of God in God's family (Jn 1:12-13+, 1 Jn 3:1+).

**Barton** - In these short sentences, we can see two characteristics of Saul, even as a new believer in Christ: he was bold, and he stirred up controversy. These would characterize Saul's ministry for the rest of his life. Here we must insert the added details provided by Acts 22:17–21. God reminded Saul of his calling to go to the Gentiles. (Borrow [Life Application Commentary page 506](#))

**Learned** (1921)([epiginosko](#)) means to know, to realize, to recognize. Speaks of full knowledge.

**They brought him down to Caesarea** - When one leaves Jerusalem it is always phrased as **down** (and conversely going is phrased "go up to" Jerusalem), because of its elevated location (2474 feet above sea level).

**Caesarea** ([Caesarea Maritima](#)) was a city on the coast of Palestine, south of [Mount Carmel](#) and was also known as "Caesarea by the sea." ([See pix of many ruins that remain](#)) It was predominantly inhabited by Gentiles and was a center of Roman administration and the location of many of Herod the Great's building projects. Read Josephus' description in [Josephus Antiquities 15.9.6](#).

The proper noun **Caesarea** occurs 17x in the NT, and 2 uses refer [Caesarea Philippi](#) (Mt. 16:13; Mk. 8:27) ([Map](#)) ([See picture of this area today](#)) and the remainder (all the uses in Acts) refer to [Caesarea by the Sea](#).

Mt. 16:13; Mk. 8:27; Acts 8:40; Acts 9:30; Acts 10:1; Acts 10:24; Acts 11:11; Acts 12:19; Acts 18:22; Acts 21:8; Acts 21:16; Acts 23:23; Acts 23:33; Acts 25:1; Acts 25:4; Acts 25:6; Acts 25:13

**And sent him away to Tarsus** (see [map](#) of Paul's early ministry) - How was Saul sent? Although Luke does not tell us specifically, it was almost surely by ship since [Caesarea Maritima](#) was a major seaport at that time and Tarsus was also near the coast about 360 miles from Jerusalem.

While the estimates vary somewhat, most commentators feel that Saul remains in **Tarsus** ("no insignificant city" - Acts 21:39) for the next 10 years (some say as few as 5-7 years). As **Swindoll** says "He would spend the next decade learning, growing, and becoming ever more ready for leadership in the church. God had marked this brilliant Pharisee for ministry among the Gentiles, but the church was not yet ready for him. While God prepared Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the apostle, He also prepared the Jewish church in Jerusalem to welcome Gentiles as brothers and sisters." (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** - Paul was probably in Tarsus for ten years and for that ten years nothing is heard about Paul. These ten years of Paul's life are passed by in silence. During this time he was not a leader in the church. Think about this for a moment. The first fourteen years of Paul's life as a Christian were not too significant in the eyes of men, but God was using these years to train and teach this man about grace and honing him as a sharp razor to be His instrument. Paul's main ministry came after these fourteen years of obscurity when he was about forty-five years old. Fourteen years later God led Barnabas to go to Tarsus and get Paul to help him in the ministry at Antioch. And even then he went there as Barnabas' assistant and not as the chief "honcho." When Paul came to Antioch, he came a broken, humiliated, humble man, who no longer boasted of himself or trusted in himself but trusted only in Christ. He had learned the lesson that God is not so interested in our ability as much as our availability. He learned the lesson, "Without Me you can do nothing." ([Paul. The New Creature](#))

**Sent away** (1821)([exapostello](#) from **ek** = out, forth + **apostello** = to send away) means to send away or send forth. **BDAG** - (1) to send someone off to a locality or on a mission, (Acts 17:14, 7:12, 11:22, Gal 4:4, 6) (2) to send off as an act of dismissal, send away (Lk 1:53, 20:10-11) (3) to send something off in an official sense, send, dispatch (Lk 24:49, Acts 13:26)

**Exapostello** - 13x in 13v - send...away(1), sending forth(1), sent(3), sent...away(3), sent away(1), sent forth(3), sent...off(1).

Lk. 1:53; Lk. 20:10; Lk. 20:11; Lk. 24:49; Acts 7:12; Acts 9:30; Acts 11:22; Acts 12:11; Acts 13:26; Acts 17:14; Acts 22:21; Gal. 4:4; Gal. 4:6

**Exapostello** in the **Septuagint** has over 200 uses and here are just a few -

Gen. 3:23; Gen. 8:10; Gen. 8:12; Gen. 19:29; Gen. 25:6; Gen. 26:29; Gen. 26:31; Gen. 31:27; Gen. 31:42; Gen. 32:13; Gen. 45:1; Gen. 45:24;

Ps. 18:14; Ps. 18:16; Ps. 20:2; Ps. 43:3; Ps. 57:3; Ps. 78:45; Ps. 78:49; Ps. 81:12; Ps. 104:10; Ps. 104:30; Ps. 105:26; Ps. 105:28; Ps. 106:15; Ps. 110:2; Ps. 135:9; Ps. 144:6; Ps. 144:7

**Larkin** concludes this section noting that "The persecution and divine preservation are further evidences of the genuineness of Saul's call. Through his experience we also learn that avoidance of known trouble is not necessarily a sign of cowardice (Krodel 1986:181). If undergoing a known danger, especially a life-threatening one, will prevent a Christian missionary from fulfilling the known plan of God, then he or she should avoid it by every legitimate means possible." ([Paul's Conversion and Early Ministry Acts 9:1-31](#))

**John Phillips** - Tarsus in Cilicia, part of the territory ruled by the Roman legate in Syria. Tarsus was a thousand years old. It had a checkered history under the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, who had constituted it a free city in 64 B.C. It was a university town, along with Athens and Alexandria one of the three great centers of learning in the Roman world. We can have little doubt that Saul of Tarsus threw himself into the evangelization of his hometown with his typical zeal as soon as he had the Holy Spirit's permission to do so. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Ger** adds this note on **Tarsus** - it was the strategic gateway whether by land or by sea between the eastern and western segments of the Roman Empire. There had been a substantial Jewish population in Tarsus since 171 B.C..

#### Related Resources:

- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Tarsus](#) - lengthy article
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Tarsus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Tarsus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Tarsus](#)

**Acts 9:31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

- **the church** Acts 8:1; Dt 12:10; Josh 21:44; Judges 3:30; 1 Chr 22:9,18; Ps 94:13; Pr 16:7; Isa 11:10; Zech 9:1; Hebrews 4:9
- **being built up** Ro 14:19; 1 Cor 3:9-15; 14:4,5,12,26; 2 Cor 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Eph 4:12,16,29; 1 Th 5:11; 1 Ti 1:4; Jude 1:20
- **going on in the fear of the Lord** Neh 5:9,15; Job 28:28; Ps 86:11; 111:10; Pr 1:7; 8:13; 14:26,27; 16:6; Pr 23:17; Isa 11:2,3; 33:6; 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:21; Col 1:10
- **in the comfort of the Holy Spirit** John 14:16-18; Ro 5:5; 14:17; 15:13; Gal 5:22,23; Eph 1:13,14; Eph 6:18,19; Php 2:1; 2 Th 2:16,17
- **it continued to increase** Acts 6:7; 12:24; Esther 8:16,17; Zech 8:20-23
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SUMMARY OF THE STATE OF THE CHURCH

**So** (Then, therefore) (**oun**) "This verse is another summary text in Acts (cf. Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 6:7). (NET) With this summary statement, Luke will now transition to the ministry of the apostle Peter and in Acts 9:32-12:25 we see the Jewish Church embraces Gentiles. Saul now disappears from the record until Acts 11:25. In the interim, Paul had some experiences that are not recorded in Acts but are referred to in 2 Corinthians 11.

This verse might be subtitled "A Church Growth Seminar" or "How to Grow your Church."

**Swindoll** comments on the "so" - The word rendered "so" by the NASB is a Greek conjunction (**oun** [3767](#)) that has different functions depending upon the context. When used in a narrative, it simply resumes the story after an interruption. In this case, we might insert the word "meanwhile." Luke's narrative took a brief detour to present the major events surrounding Paul's conversion; meanwhile, the church had continued its own spiritual journey. Peter's ministry would carry him, as well as the congregation he led, into uncharted waters.

**The church** ([ekklesia](#)) **throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria** - Luke uses the word "church" in the singular so is speaking in general, of the church universal. Things were going well for the Body of Christ in the land of Palestine.

- **Alexander Maclaren** - [A Bird's-Eye View of the Early Church](#)

**Kistemaker** comments that Luke "uses the word church in the singular to indicate the unity of the body of Christ. Jewish Christians from the south (Judea) and the north (Galilee) lived in perfect harmony with Samaritan Christians." (Ibid)

**Enjoyed peace** - **Enjoyed** is the Greek verb *echo* which means "had," so they "had peace" or "possessed peace." **NET Bible** has "experienced peace." And since Church is the subject and is in the singular Luke's point is that the entire Church in Palestine **enjoyed peace**.

**Timothy Beougher** - Notice that the verse begins with the word then. The context of this verse is the conversion of Saul and the resulting decrease of external persecution on the church. However, peace involves much more than the absence of persecution. A church can have peace outwardly and not inwardly. Peace involves absence of conflict, both outwardly and inwardly, and the presence of harmony. **A church filled with division will not see multiplication**. The climate of peace naturally produces an atmosphere of unity. Are you helping to unify your congregation or do you create divisions?

**A church filled with division  
will not see multiplication!**

**Robertson** comments on the peace the church enjoyed - The obvious meaning is that the persecution ceased because the persecutor had been converted. The wolf no longer [ravined](#) the sheep. It is true also that the effort of Caligula A.D. 39 to set up his image in the temple in Jerusalem for the Jews to worship greatly excited the Jews and gave them troubles of their own ([Josephus Antiquities 18.8.2-9](#))....(enjoyed peace = had peace is) Imperfect active. Kept on having peace, enjoying peace, because the persecution had ceased. ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**John Phillips** on **enjoyed peace** - It is not only the blood of the martyrs that is the seed of the church. God can use times of rest and tranquility as well as times of rage and tribulation. He brings His people into green pastures and beside the still waters from time to time. He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us. A truce now seems to have been accepted in Palestine. Jews and Christians decided to leave each other alone. Judaism set its sails towards the sunset in its stubborn refusal to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. The church dropped anchor for the time being before spreading its sails again in search of new worlds to win for Christ. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Peace** ([1515](#))([eirene](#) from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again, a meaning conveyed by the common expression of one "having it all together". It follows that **peace** is the opposite of division or dissension. **Peace** as a state of concord and harmony is the opposite of war. **Peace** is a condition of freedom from disturbance, whether outwardly, as used here to describe the church or inwardly, personal inner peace of individual saints.

**Being built up** - The present tense signifies that this was happening continually. How? We see a major "clue" in Acts 20:32+ where Paul gives his parting instructions to the elders of the church at Ephesus writing...

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able (WHAT IS THAT EDIFIES? DON'T MISS IT!!!) **to build you up** ([oikodomeo](#)) and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Clearly, the preaching and teaching of the pure milk of the Word (1 Pe 2:2+) was foundational. The Word of God is the "building blocks" (so to speak), which the Spirit of God can then take and use to grow the saints in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pe 3:18+).

**Robertson** comments on **being built up** that "One result of the enjoyment of peace after the persecution was the continued edification (Latin word *aedificatio* for building up a house), a favourite figure with Paul." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Being built up** (edified) ([3618](#))([oikodomeo](#) from **oikos** = dwelling + **doma** = building [of a house] from **demo** = to build) means

literally to build, construct or erect a dwelling. To build a house. Figuratively it means to edify. **BDAG** has "to help improve ability to function in living responsibly and effectively." In our English dictionaries to **edify** means "to instruct and improve especially in moral and religious knowledge." Most of the uses in the Gospels are of a literal building (Mt 7:24, 26; 23:29; Mk 12:1; Lk 6:48; 12:18) Most of Paul's uses of **oikodomeo** are figurative and refer to spiritual edification - 1 Cor 8:1, 10:23, 1 Cor 14:4, 17, 1 Th 5:11) The early church was growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pe 3:18). Note, not just in knowledge but in love (and grace), for "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies."

**Beougher** - We grow spiritually (ARE EDIFIED) through spiritual food and spiritual exercise. Our spiritual food is the regular intake of God's Word, and our spiritual exercise is our ministry and service (**ED**: I WOULD ALSO ADD SPIRIT ENABLED OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD WE TAKE IN). If you are going to grow spiritually, it will cost you time and effort (see Col. 2:6, 7+).

Are you growing in Christ or just growing old?

**Rick Coram** said, "God cannot do something through a church until God does something in a church." Edification is a work of God in the church and for the church.

**And going on in the fear of the Lord**- Or **walking in the fear of the Lord** where **walking** involves a way of life. The NET Bible has "Living in the fear of the Lord." **Going on** is present tense signifying continually living in the light of and being motivated by this powerful truth, the fear of the Lord. The **fear of the Lord** is not a fright or terror or dread of the Lord, but a sense of reverence for His holiness and majesty and grace. (See [The Fear of the Lord](#)) How many sermons have you heard on the Fear of the Lord? Probably none. This topic is seldom preached on as it is often relegated to an "Old Testament teaching." I taught a Sunday Class once on the Fear of the Lord and one of the mature women (a BSF substitute teaching leader) gently objected with the statement "That's an OT teaching. Now that Jesus has come we don't need to fear the Lord." Oh, how wrong she was, as even this verse describing the growth of the early church demonstrates. What would God's Spirit do in your church today if your people began to truly comprehend and live in the light of a biblicentric **fear of the Lord**? I think you know the answer! In fact fear of the Lord is scattered throughout the NT (e.g., Mt 10:28, Lk 1:50, Lk 12:5, 2 Cor 5:11, 7:1, Eph 5:21, Eph 6:5, Php 2:12+, 1 Pe 1:17+ - read that one again! Memorize it! Rev 14:7+ = the "Eternal Gospel" in Rev 14:6! Rev 15:4, And finally the last use in the Bible = Rev 19:5+ - This is a call to the saints in heaven!) So "**fear**" is a **firm foundation** of the **faith**. To jettison a study of fear of the Lord is to miss the beginning of knowledge and wisdom for Pr 1:7, 9:10! Since most saints have never heard a sermon on this critically important doctrine, let me encourage you to take 68 minutes and listen carefully to **Dr Steve Lawson** as he preaches an excellent message on [The Fear of the Lord](#).) And then if you are a pastor or teacher, I would strongly encourage you to preach or teach a short series on The Fear of the Lord. You may experience a little push back as I did, but you won't regret it! Job "got it" for Job 1:1 describes him as "blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil." Why was Job habitually turning away from evil? Because he had a holy fear of God (cf the frequent association of fear and evil - Job 28:28, Pr 3:7, 8:13, 16:6, 19:23). Paul says the days are evil (Eph 5:16+). What is the Biblical antidote for evil? How can we obey Paul's command to "**be careful** (**blepo** in present imperative = as your lifestyle - only possible by continued dependence on the Holy Spirit) how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise (IN WISDOM)?" (Eph 5:15+, read Pr 9:10) Just some food for thought!

**INSIGHT** - When we come to the subject of the fear of God, the Bible speaks of **fear**" of the Lord in some **295** verses! Scripture speaks of men fearing God, His name, His Law or His Word. In the OT there are 235 ref to the **fear of God**. In the NT there are 43 references to the fear of God which, by the way, is the same number of references as man's love to God! From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible proclaims that the **fear of the Lord** is a fountain of life and those who drink deeply of it shall have the blessings of God in this life and in the life to come. However, those who reject the fear of the Lord will end up in the ways of death. There is no middle road! The fear of God is the predominant response to and fundamental attitude toward God, His Word, His Law and His name, that God desires. This is why it is mentioned more times than any other aspect of vital piety. (From [The Fear of the Lord](#))

**Jack Andrews** - When we fear the Lord we will want to live a life that is pleasing to Him. Fearing the Lord means that we will not act independently of Him or live like we do not know Him or like we will not be accountable to Him. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**And in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**- "Walking...in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Act 9:31ESV) [Paraklesis](#) from the [Parakletos](#) (Comforter, Helper - another Name for the Holy Spirit - KJV refers to the Spirit as the Comforter four times = Jn 14:16KJV, Jn 14:26KJV, Jn 15:26KJV, Jn 16:7KJV)! Are you in need of comfort or encouragement? The One Who can provide for your need lives within you! Lean on Him. He is able.

**Timothy Beougher** - Acts 9:31 tells us the New Testament church was, "walking ... in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." This church was alive! A clear spiritual dynamic was at work! Distinct characteristics identify a dynamic church. The church must live by faith (Heb. 11:6; 2 Cor. 5:7). The church must commit to holiness (Eph. 4:30). The church must depend on prayer (Eph. 6:18). Without these components, our church would be dead! Are we making progress in these areas?

**Andrews** - "When we walk in the fear of the Lord we will have the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Where there is compliance to God there will be comfort from God. When we have a genuine fear of the Lord we will have God's comfort in our lives" ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Comfort** ("encouragement" NLT, CSB) ([3874](#))([paraklesis](#) from **parakaléo** = beseech <> **pará** = side of + **kaléo** = call) refers to calling to one's side or one's aid which can be for the purpose of providing solace, comfort, consolation, exhortation, encouragement.

**Comfort** is from Latin **com** = with + **fortis** = strong, and means to invigorate, to enliven, to cheer, to strengthen one's mind when depressed, to give new vigor to one's spirits, to give strength or hope to another, to ease their grief or trouble.

**Encouragement** is from **en** = in + **corage** from Latin **cor** = heart. It describes the act of inspiring one with confidence and/or hope, filling with strength, and suggests that the raising of one's confidence is accomplished especially through an external agency.

**MacArthur - Paraklêsis** (encouragement) has the root meaning of coming alongside someone to give assistance by offering comfort, counsel, or exhortation. It is precisely the kind of assistance exemplified by the Good Samaritan, who, after doing everything he could for the robbed and beaten stranger, "took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you'" (Luke 10:35; cf. Lk 10:30, 31, 32, 33, 34). ([MacArthur, J. Philippians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Wuest on paraklesis** - The word has various meanings; "a calling near, a summons, imploration, supplication, entreaty, exhortation, admonition, encouragement, consolation, solace." The well-rounded all-inclusive idea is that of encouragement, of aid given the needy person, whether it be consolation, exhortation, or supplication. ([Philippians Commentary - Verse by Verse Comments online](#))

**Vincent on comfort** - From parakaleo, to call toward or to one's side for help. The word is rendered in the New Testament both exhortation and consolation. Compare Acts 13:15; Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:17; Heb. 12:5; and Luke 2:25 (see note); 2 Thess. 2:16; Matt. 5:4. In some passages the meaning is disputed, as Philip. 2:1, where, as in 1 Cor. 14:3, it is joined with παραμύθιον or παραμυθία, the meaning of which also varies between incentive and consolation or assuagement. Here exhortation is the rendering approved by the best authorities, to be construed with was multiplied: was multiplied by the exhortation of the Holy Ghost; i.e., by the Holy Spirit inspiring the preachers, and moving the hearts of the hearers.

**A T Pierson** on the Holy Spirit - "Is it not already but too evident that the church of our day has little or no conception of the pricelessness of blessing involved in this [Paraklesis](#) of the Spirit? What if once more this lesson could be learned? What 'rest' would the church have from internal dissension and division, from heresy and schism! What edification, 'being built up' on the most holy faith! What holy 'walking in the fear of the Lord,' what rapid multiplication, and what world-wide evangelization! **There is now an evil now cursing or threatening our church life which this 'comfort of the Holy Ghost' would not remedy and perhaps remove.**"

**It continued to increase** - "increased in numbers." (NET) "Multiplied" (ESV). Why did the church continue to increase?

**Continued to increase** (to multiply)([4129](#))([plethuno](#) from **plethos** = fullness from **pletho** = to fill) means to be made full, grow, increase or be multiplied. In the active sense it means to cause to increase, to cause to become greater in number, to multiply (increase in number especially greatly). The imperfect tense pictures the church as growing over and over. As **Robertson** says commenting on the imperfect tense "The multiplication of the disciples kept pace with the peace, the edification, the walking in the fear of the Lord, the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The blood of the martyrs was already becoming the seed of the church. Stephen had not borne his witness in vain." ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

Notice that **continued to increase** is in the **passive voice**, which clearly is the ["divine passive."](#) for only Christ has the power to enable His Body to grow supernaturally!

**Brian Harbour** sums up what was going on in the church with this equation, "Throughout the Book of Acts: boldness + witness + the power of the Holy Spirit = growth."

**Jack Andrews** - The church grew spiritually and that led to the church to grow numerically. When there is genuine spiritual growth within the church there will be genuine numerical growth from without. A church growing spiritually will be reaching out to a lost and dying world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. A church that is healthy will be an evangelistic church. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Bruce Barton** - POISED FOR GROWTH - Was the church growing because it was enjoying a time of peace? No. The key to the church's growth here is found in the last part of this verse. The believers were "encouraged by the Holy Spirit." As long as Christians live and worship in the Spirit, demonstrating changed, supernatural lives (Galatians 5:22-23), the church will always attract unbelievers. (Borrow [Life Application Commentary page 506](#))

**Berit Kjos** - The fear of the Lord involves a sober awareness of what He loves, of what He despises, and of the consequences of disobedience and rebellion against Him. It leads to a sincere desire to please Him, heartfelt gratefulness for His mercy, and

unending delight in His loving presence. So when we choose to 'fear the Lord' we will heed Romans 12:9, 'Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.'

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**Dr. Thom Rainer** - Ten Reasons Many Churches Do not Grow." Under reason number two, "Conflict in the Church," Rainer wrote: "I wish I could say that conflict in the American church has abated, but that just does not seem to be the case. The reasons behind the conflicts are as innumerable as one could imagine: Leadership style, facility differences, power and control, worship style, programming, times of services, and the list goes on and on. It seems that for many the church has become the place to have 'my needs and desires met,' rather than seeking to serve God and others through the local congregation."

Have you ever noticed that the words "unite" and "untie" use the same five letters? The difference is where you put the letter "i".

There are two mottos that churches can adopt: (1) "We've never done it that way before!" or (2) "We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us" (Phil. 4:13 NKJV).

Vance Havner said, "If the Holy Spirit were to leave all the churches in America, 95% of them could continue on with no interruption of activity." (From Timothy Beougher:)

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### **David Jeremiah - WALK IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD**

We're to walk with the wise, and we're also to walk in the fear of the Lord. Consider the first-century example Luke records for us: "the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace.... And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

Walking in the fear of God, however, is an almost forgotten concept. Christians were once described as "God-fearing people," and pastors preached about the fear of the Lord. Nowadays, though, we're so eager to present the Gospel in an inoffensive way that we've gotten away from using—and practicing—the verb fear. Yet the phrase the fear of God appears repeatedly in Scripture. There are over 300 references to it in the Old Testament alone.

In his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer wrote this:

In olden days men of faith were said to walk in the fear of God.... However intimate their communion with God, however bold their prayers, at the base of their religious life was the conception of God as awesome and dreadful. This idea of God transcendent runs through the whole Bible and gives color and tone to the character of saints....

Such a fear of God isn't an unhealthy phobia, but a therapeutic sense of awe at His greatness. One way to cultivate this attitude is to visit a location that speaks of His grandeur. You might choose a classic cathedral where you can sit in silence awhile. Or you might find a mountain ledge or a thundering waterfall where the sheer, dangerous beauty of God's creation makes you dizzy. Perhaps a camping trip away from city lights will allow you to gaze into the black sky and see the splendor of the stars. Spending time like this is a way to cultivate a reverence for God Almighty, Omnipotent, Holy, and Eternal.

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### **Don Fortner - 'Walking in the fear of the Lord'**Read Proverbs 1:7–31

Believers are men and women who walk in the fear of the Lord. God's people do not have a slavish dread of God. We are not afraid to speak to him and about him. We are not afraid that he will become angry with us, disinherit us, or punish us for sin. Faith in Christ removes that kind of terrifying fear. Yet the believer does not think, talk about, or seek to God carelessly, flippantly, without reverence for his infinite, glorious, righteous being. A true heart knowledge of the triune God will produce godly fear in a man's heart. The fear of the Lord is simply reverence for him. It is much like the reverence a son has for his father, involving both love and respect. God has won the admiration of his children's hearts, causing us to reverence him. We reverence his name, his being, his Word and his works. All that God is, all that has to do with him, all that he says and all that he does is held in high esteem by those who know him.

This fear of The Lord shows itself in many ways. To fear God is to hate evil. The man who knows God hates the evil of his own heart and life, hates the evil performed by others and hates the evil of false doctrine, which robs God of his glory. 'Those who fear the Lord are careful not to offend him. We cherish our fellowship with the eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we take care not to grieve and offend him, because we want nothing to hinder the fellowship we enjoy. The heart that fears the Lord withholds nothing from him, no matter how dear and valuable, when he calls for it. To fear the Lord is to worship him. It is to worship God, as he is revealed in Scripture, in our hearts. Such fear of the Lord is progressive. Believers walk in the fear of the Lord. The more a man knows him, the more he fears him. God grant that I may be found 'walking in the fear of the Lord'. Amen.

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**Love That Feels** - THE FEAR OF THE LORD felt by the saint is not a sick, cringing fear of punishment. It is, rather, the kind of confidence a young child has in her father. She is convinced that his power is much greater than anything that might harm her, and



equally convinced that he will use his strength on her behalf. Thus she loves him deeply, “fears” him the most, and all the while rests in his care.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - I heard about this dead church where the pastor did something a little unusual. In the middle of the sermon he had everyone get up and greet one another. A lady that was new to the church approached a man that was sleeping. All the noise and stirring about woke the man up and he looked up and the lady stretched out her hand and said, “Hello, I’m Gladys Dunn.” The disgruntled man said, “Ma’am, I’m glad it’s done too!” That is not a healthy church.

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**F B Meyer - The Church had peace, being edified; and ... was multiplied. (R.V.)**

The Church grew not simply by addition, but by multiplication. Three added to three make six; three multiplied by three, nine. That is the Pentecostal ratio of increase. These are the conditions of Church growth:—

First, there must be peace. — Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. As far as it lies in our power, let each of us live peaceably with all men. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away out of our hearts, with all malice, and let us be kind one to another, tender-hearted, and imitating God the great Peacemaker.

Next, the Church must be edified. — We must build ourselves up on our most holy faith. And, indeed, such growth in grace and the knowledge of God is almost inevitable where the Holy Ghost breaks up the reign of apathy and stagnation. When its foundations are deeply laid in righteousness and peace, the City of God arises into the pure air.

Moreover, the members of such a Christian community must walk in the fear of the Lord. To walk means the daily plodding, routine life — full of commonplaces, somewhat prosaic — but always ruled by the fear of grieving the heart that was pierced on Calvary. Lastly, we must walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, or, as the words might be rendered, in the paracletism of the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, Teacher, Guide; and we should habitually dwell in his radiant and helpful environment. What a difference there is between sea weeds and sea flowers expanding in their rock surrounded aquariums, and the same when taken into common air! Such is the contrast wrought by the Spirit.

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**Chris Tiegreen - Encouraged by the Holy Spirit . . . ACTS 9:31NIV**

The battle had been raging for a long time. I was enduring one of the most difficult periods of my life, and I wasn’t sure if I could keep going. Was I headed in the right direction? Were my ways pleasing to God? Was my faith going to be rewarded? I was very discouraged, fearing the answers to those questions might be no. I was emotionally at the end of my rope. One morning when I was particularly depressed, I prayed before I got into my car: “Lord, please encourage me today. I just need to know You’re with me.”

When I got to work, the “verse of the day” on my personalized web browser was Isaiah 43:1-2: “Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.” A few minutes later, someone stopped by my office to let me know they had been praying for me. And in the afternoon, I received some encouraging news about the situation. It wasn’t a resolution, but it was a promising turn of events. And to top it off, I received a completely unrelated phone call from one of my favorite people. By the end of the day, I felt lighter and my faith felt stronger. The situation hadn’t changed, but I knew I wasn’t alone in it or on the verge of defeat. God had orchestrated an encouraging day.

It doesn’t always happen that way so quickly. Sometimes God lets us experience a little darkness as we reach out for light. But He eventually encourages us because it’s His nature to do so. He wants us to know He is on our side, and He will use His entire repertoire of expressions to say so.

**Acts 9:32 Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV 9:32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

- **As** Acts 1:8; 8:14,25; Gal 2:7-9
- **the saints** Acts 9:13,41; 26:10; Ps 16:3; Pr 2:8; Mt 27:52; Ro 1:7; Eph 1:1; Php 1:1
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Luke now takes up the ministry of Peter in Acts 9:32-12:25, during which time Saul is in Tarsus, the length of time being estimated at about 10 years by several commentaries, although we do not have exact dates. In any event, these would be the “silent years” of Saul. Beginning in Acts 9:32, Luke deals with Peter at Lydda (Acts 9:32–35), at Joppa (Acts 9:36–43, 10:9–23, at Caesarea

Maritima (Acts 10:1–8, 23–48) and finally at Jerusalem (Acts 11:1–18; Acts 12:1–17).

**Steven Ger** gives us a chronological context (not sure how he arrived at this dating, but recorded for your information) - It is now the year A.D. 40. Almost three years had passed since Saul left Jerusalem for Tarsus. This period of peace and absence of persecution had enabled the church to expand throughout the length and breadth of Israel. Luke picks up the narrative of Peter by joining him as he travels the circuit of churches throughout the Jewish cities of Judea and Samaria and Galilee, encouraging and building up the believers....The city of Lydda...is located twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, roughly two thirds of the way between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean coast in the region Philip had traversed as he made his way up from Azotus to Caesarea almost five years earlier (Acts 8:40). ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Jack Arnold** - In Acts 9:31-43, there are three miracles performed; two are stated as miracles and the other must be inferred. There is the healing of the (paralyzed) man, Aeneas, which is a miracle of the body. There is also the raising of a dead person in Dorcas which is a miracle of both the body and spirit. Lastly, there is the overcoming of the dogmatic man in the life of Peter which is a miracle of the heart. ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**Bob Utley** points out that "This section seems to be extremely important because it deals with the continuing struggle over the Gentile mission and Peter's part (as head of the Apostolic group) in that struggle. Luke deems the Cornelius account so important as to repeat it three times in this section."

**Larkin** gives us background - Peter's ministry to Aeneas and Dorcas parallels that of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:18–37 = both instances of restoring life to the dead) as well as that of Jesus (Lk 5:17–26; 8:41–56) and Paul (Acts 14:8–12; 20:7–12). Clearly Peter acts in continuity with the prophets, the Old Testament "apostles" who spoke and acted for God. This shows also that what the risen Lord commands is in continuity with what the earthly Jesus did. And it implies that Paul's mission did not deviate from that of his Jewish Christian predecessors (Talbert 1986:43). ([The Mission Is Inaugurated Through Peter - Acts 9:32-11:18](#))

**Hughes** entitles Acts 9:32-10:23 as "Peter's Preparation for Greater Ministry," of course referring to the giving of the Gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10. Clearly this preparation was important because Peter even though a Christian had a strong inheritance of Jewish contempt for Gentiles. Hughes states that at this time it would have been about 6 years after Jesus' crucifixion and the Church was still predominantly Jewish.

**Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions** - The last time we saw Peter was when he was on his way "back to Jerusalem." (Acts 8:25) Luke does not tell us what Peter was doing in all those regions, but most likely a mixture of edification of the saints and winning of new saints. Lydda is about 25 (or more) miles from Jerusalem, so one sees the apostles obeying Jesus words in Acts 1:8, and no longer restricting their ministry to Jerusalem. Peter may have passed through Emmaus for it lies 18 mi west of Jerusalem and about 7 miles from Lydda.

In one sense Acts 9:32-43 gives us some details on how the Church "continued to increase" as described in the summary statement in Acts 9:31.

Paul has an intriguing note about Peter "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" (1 Cor 9:5). Paul's implication is that Peter took his wife along on missionary journeys. Interesting.

**John MacArthur** applies the fact that Peter was "on the move" in **all those regions** - Peter was not set in some hierarchical office but was moving, which made it easy for God to direct him. Those actively involved in ministry are usually the ones to whom God grants the most ministry opportunities. God has always seemed to entrust His richest ministries to His busiest saints. Just being wholeheartedly active in ministry places one in strategic opportunities."

**Jack Andrews** - QUESTION: Is our town different because we are here? Are we making a difference in this town? Johnny Hunt said, "D.L Moody passed through the cities of Great Britain and Ireland and left behind him a tail of Bible Institutes, evangelistic associations, missions, revived churches, and redeemed lives. How many broken hearts comforted, broken lives mended, broken homes rebuilt, would one have found in his trail?" God used Peter, God used D.L Moody, and God can use you and me. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**He came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda- Came down** is used because Peter presumably came from the higher elevations of Jerusalem or Samaria (from about [300 meters to about 30 meters](#) above sea level for Lydda). **Lydda** (also called Lod in OT - 1 Chr 8:12) lies about 25 miles NW of Jerusalem at the intersection of the Kings Highway ([map](#)) and the road from Jerusalem to Joppa. It is interesting to note that if you have ever flown to Israel, you probably landed at Lod, the site of the Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv. If one examines the route of Peter's journeys on this [map](#), notice that God is providentially bringing Peter closer and closer to [Caesarea Maritima](#) (by the sea). **Lydda** is inland, **Joppa** on the coast and **Caesarea** further up the coast to the North. It appears that God is progressively "positioning" or preparing Peter to take the Gospel to the Gentile **Cornelius** (in Caesarea), as

described in Acts 10. Lydda while predominantly Jewish but did have a mixture of Gentiles.

Where did these **saints** in **Lydda** hear the Gospel? While there could have been some believers who were "scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" in Acts 8:1+, there is another possibility. Recall that in Acts 8:40 Phillip traveled through this area ([see Phillip's journey on this map - note Azotus to Lydda](#)) and was "preaching the Gospel" so these saints

**Saints** (Acts 9:13, 41)(**40**)(**hagios**) is literally a holy one and properly means set apart, separated, distinct, holy. In the Bible **hagios** describes a man or woman who (when by grace through faith they believe in Jesus) is apart by God and for God. Their eternal position in God's eyes is that they are **holy** because they are in an unbreakable blood covenant with Christ and are one with Him and identified with Him. the supreme Holy One. The saint's positional holiness is imputed to their "spiritual account" from Christ. As holy ones they are brought near and into God's holy presence as Paul describes in Romans 5:2+ (cf Eph 2:6+). Those who are holy in their position, need to daily seek to be holy in their practice (1 Pe 1:15+). Stated another way, one is proven to be "holy" to an unholy world by his or her holy lifestyle, such a lifestyle ONLY being possible by daily reliance on the supernatural enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf Gal 3:3+, Eph 5:18+, Gal 5:16+). In summary, if you are a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, you are a genuine saint. No church announcement or pronouncement is necessary to make you a saint. St Paul is no more of a saint than you are. We are all on equal footing at the foot of Christ's Cross. So next time you meet with a believer, you might want to surprise them by saying something like "Good morning, saint \_\_\_\_ (their first name)!" Try it!

**THOUGHT TO PONDER - Saints** have been supernaturally set apart (sanctified by the Holy Spirit, 1Pe 1:2+; 2Th 2:13, Ro 15:16+, Acts 20:32+, Acts 26:18+, 1 Cor 1:30, 6:11) for a special purpose (cp Ep 2:10+ - see also God's Masterpiece, Mt 5:16+, Php 2:15+), set apart from the world (Gal 6:14+, cp Jas 4:4+, 1 Jn 2:15+, 1 Jn 2:16+, 1 Jn 2:17+), the power of **Sin** and the **fallen flesh** (Ro 6:6+, Ro 6:11+, Ro 6:12, 13, 6:14+) and the dominion of the **devil** (Col 1:13+, Acts 26:18+, Heb 2:14, 15+) and unto God (Ro 14:7, 8, 9+).

**Hagios** is Paul's favorite description of believers and designates the believer's **position** in Christ (see discussion of in Christ and in Christ Jesus) as **holy** or **set apart from** that which is secular, profane, and evil and **dedicated unto** God, His worship and His service (note order - worship before service, cp Mary and Martha - Lk 10:38, 39, 40, 41, 42+).

**Saints** are now to live in this present evil age (Gal 1:4) in a manner which reflects what we were redeemed and "re-created" to be (1Pe 2:24, 25+; cp 2 Cor 7:1+) --- **holy ones** in **character** (character is what God knows we are; reputation is who other people think we are) and **conduct**, set apart by God to be exclusively His possession (1 Cor 6:19, 20+, Titus 2:14+) manifesting holiness of heart.

Contrary to some religious teachings, the Bible itself never uses the word **hagios** or **saint** to refer to a "special class" of believers who are a "notch above" the rest. We are all equal at the foot of His Cross! (cp 2 Cor 3:5,6+, saints have "a faith of the same kind" as Peter! - 2Pe 1:1+)

To reiterate, those who are **holy** in position (in Christ) now have the responsibility (and the power) to live **holy** in their experience (Christ like). **Positional holiness** is tantamount to justification, while **experiential holiness** represents progressive sanctification (growth in holiness or Christ likeness). (See related topic - Three Tenses of Salvation)

**Lydda** (click [map](#) for Peter's possible route to Lydda) is found only in Acts (Acts 9:32, 35, 38) Greek form of Lud or Lod. It stands in the plain of Sharon nine miles from Joppa, and is called Lidd or Ludd. It acquired great importance during the Crusades as the native place of St. George, patron saint of England. Acts 9:33-34.(See [summary with multiple other references](#))

#### Related Resources:

- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia - [Lydda](#)
- American Tract Society [Lydda](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Lydda](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Lydda](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Lydda](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Lydda](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Lydda](#) [Lod](#), [Lydda](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Lydda](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Lydda](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Lydda](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Lydda](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Lydda](#)

- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Lydda](#)
  - McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Lydda \(2\)](#) [Lydda](#)
  - The Jewish Encyclopedia [Lydda](#)
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**ILLUSTRATION** - When the U.S. government decided to build the first transcontinental railroad, two railroad companies were commissioned to do the work. The Central Pacific began laying track east from Sacramento, California, while the Union Pacific began working west from near Omaha, Nebraska. The two lines met at Promontory, Utah, in May 1869, and drove the last spike to connect the continent. The church began with two lines moving toward each other, each having a separate beginning point but destined to meet and be joined. These lines were the Jews and Gentiles, two great bodies of people God was bringing together to make one new unified body (Eph. 2:15). And the two “foremen” He was using were Peter and Paul (Gal. 2:7).

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### **The Life God Blesses By Dr. David Jeremiah**

Scripture: Acts 9:32–43, especially Acts 9:36 At Joppa, there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.

Introduction: The violinist Paganini stood before a packed house and played a number of difficult pieces, but one of the strings on his violin broke. He improvised on three strings, but a second string broke. Near the end of the concerto, a third snapped! Amazingly, he finished the piece on one string. The audience stood and applauded till all hands were numb. In the same way, think of what God can do with one man or one woman whom He blesses and uses.

**1. A Life Marked by Ministry** (Acts 9:32–33). God uses a life marked by ministry. Peter was a go-getter, going everywhere with the gospel. God seems to use busy people. It seems like every biography I read tells the story of someone who’s on the move, doing the work God has assigned. We find God’s will by being about the will He’s already revealed to us.

**2. A Life Marked by Humility** (Acts 9:34–35). As Peter itinerated, he came to Lydda where he found a certain man named Aeneas who had been bedridden for years. Peter told him, “Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Peter approached Aeneas, not to seek glory for himself, but for the Lord. God will not use those who are not humble in His sight. If you want to be impressed with yourself, God won’t bless you; but if you’ll allow God to work in your life and if you’ll give Him the glory, He will honor you. Peter wasn’t the healer, just the instrument. This was a one-person miracle, but its impact affected the entire city and area. Peter dealt with one man, but many turned to the Lord. Was Peter a God-blessed minister? I guess he was!

**3. A Life Marked by Availability** (Acts 9:36–39). From the restoration of Aeneas, Peter moved to the resurrection of Dorcas. The second miracle was a result of being available for the first one. If Peter hadn’t been in Lydda, they wouldn’t have come to get him. Walking with the Lord is an adventure. We start one place, and one opportunity leads to another. And Peter was willing to go. He didn’t have any roots that would keep him from being where God wanted him to be. This woman (Tabitha is her Aramaic name, and Dorcas is her Greek name; both words mean gazelle) was apparently a very graceful woman. The Bible calls her a “certain disciple.” She was full of good works and charitable deeds. Verse 39 says she sewed tunics and garments for those around her. She was a model of the verse saying we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). When Dorcas died, her friends washed her body, laid her in an upper room, and went for Peter.

**4. A Life Marked by Dependency** (Acts 9:40–41). Peter needed something in that hour he couldn’t provide, so he knelt and prayed. We need a spirit of dependency: “Lord, if You don’t do something here, nothing’s going to happen.” When Peter finished praying, he turned to Dorcas, and said, “Arise.” She opened her eyes and sat up. Imagine the joy in the church that day.

**5. A Life Marked by Productivity** (Acts 9:42). The life God blesses is marked by productivity because everyone in Joppa heard of this, and as news spread more progress was recorded for the kingdom.

**6. A Life Marked by Flexibility** (Acts 9:43). This verse is about Peter’s remaining among the Gentiles. Peter has yet to deal with the idea that Gentiles are included in the church. He’d grown up with traditional Jewish prejudices, so when he dwelt with Simon the tanner—oh my goodness, tanners dealt with dead bodies. To a Jew, a tanner was an outcast from synagogue and society. Now everyday Peter woke up to see stinking animal skins hanging through the house. God was teaching Peter that the legalistic life was over, and now in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

**Conclusion:** God blesses a life that’s marked by ministry. What are you doing to serve God? A life marked by humility. Do you give the glory to Christ for what He’s doing in your life? A life marked by availability. Are you willing to go to Joppa? A life marked by dependency. When you do something for God, do you kneel and pray? A life marked by productivity. When you serve the Lord, something’s going to happen. And a life marked by flexibility. Are you willing to serve God no matter the circumstances?

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**Acts 9:33** There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV 9:33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

- **who had been bedridden eight years** Acts 3:2; 4:22; 14:8; Mark 5:25; 9:21; Luke 13:16; John 5:5; 9:1,21
- **for he was paralyzed** Mark 2:3-11
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**There he found a man named Aeneas** - Notice Aeneas did not find Peter but Peter found Aeneas. Acts 9:32 says Peter came down to the **saints**, so it was seem that it was in this group of believers that he encountered **Aeneas**, whose name means "praise." Was Aeneas saved? Some commentators do not think he was but in a sense it is a moot point because if he wasn't, he soon would be (see Acts 9:35 = "**ALL**"). This is the only mention of Aeneas. It is interesting that here Luke gives us the lame man's name here and in Acts 3:2 he says "a certain man who had been lame." Spurgeon on [Aeneas](#).

**Found** (2147) ([heurisko](#)) means to find after searching and so to discover (Mt 7:7) or to find accidentally or without seeking in the sense of happening to come across (Mt 12:44). Most likely in this context, the sense is that in the group of believers, Peter came across one who was lame. The Greek verb *heurisko* is first in the sentence for emphasis.

**Who had been bedridden eight years** - "who had been confined to a mattress." (NET) When I was in medical school I did a rotation in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and saw patients paralyzed for many reasons ranging from genetic defects in infants to accidents in vigorous, productive young adults. It was one of the most heart rending rotations of my entire medical training. So when Luke describes Aeneas as **bedridden**, it congers up many images of human beings unable to carry out even the most basic things dealing with personal hygiene and daily survival. Such was the case of Aeneas for 8 long years!

**Steven Ger** - Peter encountered a believer (**ED**: AS NOTED NOT ALL COMMENTATORS AGREE) named Aeneas, who had become a bedridden paralytic eight years earlier, in A.D. 32 (**ED**: THE DATES ARE APPROXIMATIONS), during Jesus' earthly ministry. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Bedridden** is 3 words - [katakeimai](#) = lying + **epi** = upon + **krabattos** = mattress, pallet, cot, bed

**For he was paralyzed** - We are not told why he was paralyzed, but that it was for 8 years in contrast to the lame man in Acts 3 who was lame from birth.

**Paralyzed** (3886) ([paraluo](#) from **pará** = from + **lúo** = to loose) means to loosen beside, to relax, to weaken, to disable, to undo, to cause to be feeble, to be paralyzed. It is used in NT only in the passive voice (action from without or outside of the recipient). Here **paraluo** is in the [perfect tense](#) which indicates this was Aeneas permanent condition, whatever the cause.

**Acts 9:34** Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; **get up and make your bed.**" Immediately he got up. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV 9:34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

- **Jesus Christ** Acts 3:6,12,16; 4:10; 16:18; Mt 8:3; 9:6,28-30; John 2:11
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **A PROVIDENTIAL MEETING WITH A PURPOSE**

In God's providence, Peter an apostle and Aeneas a lame man are brought together, yes to give physical healing to Aeneas but of far greater eternal value of bring salvation to all the souls in this region and ultimately magnifying God's grace and glory in and through Jesus Christ. O, to be so sensitive to the Spirit's leading in our life!

**Peter said to him, "Aeneas** - Notice Peter's absolute confidence. He knew God's will. Now imagine if he had done this in his dependence on his own human wisdom and fleshly strength and nothing had occurred. Those watching this event would surely be

impacted and probably negatively. And yet Peter's first words (at least according to Luke) after finding or discovering this lame man were "Jesus Christ heals you." How could he be so confident? While the text does not say, one has to believe Peter was a man continually filled with the Spirit and he had his "spiritual ears" attuned to listen to the Spirit's urgings. And so Peter knew God's will and knew this is what he was to say. How wonderful would it be if were so in touch with Jesus, that moment by moment we knew what He was calling us to say or do!

**Jesus Christ heals you** - The idea is "this instant the Messiah heals you" or "heals you here and now." In other words the Greek tense indicates that healing takes place when Peter speaks. Note that Peter did not say "Peter heals you." Jesus is the Healer. Jesus is Jehovah Rapha. Peter did not claim he had the power to heal Aeneas. Peter was an instrument, a willing "vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Ti 2:21+), but Jesus was the Source of the supernatural Power. And so Jesus gets the "credit" and the glory. Not a man but the Messiah (cf Ps 115:1). Also given that Peter used the specific Name **Jesus Christ** indicates that Aeneas must have had some knowledge of the Messiah.

- Alexander Maclaren - [Working Like Christ](#)

**Downname** - See the marvelous difference between a man left to his own pathetic strength (as he was when he denied Christ) and the same confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit, as Peter now was when he confidently told Aeneas, "Jesus Christ heals you," and in full confidence of a cure beyond all human ability or creaturely power asks him to rise and make his bed.

**Steven Cole** points out that "Whether God uses us to perform a miracle or to bring a soul to salvation, we cannot rely on our own ability or take any credit for ourselves. We can only say, with Paul, that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." ([Faith in the God of All Power Acts 9:32-43](#))

As **Paul** said in Second Corinthians "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;" (2 Cor 4:7)

**Alexander Maclaren** said it this way - "The first condition of work for the Lord is—hide yourself behind your message, behind your Master, and make it very plain that His is the power, and that you are but a tool in the Workman's hand"

**Arnold** adds that "The only person who has the power to heal the physical body or the authority to forgive the sin-sick soul is Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. If any human being claims the power to heal bodies or forgive sins, this is false doctrine coming from the mouth of a false teacher." ([The Miracle Worker](#))

This miracle recalls the miracle Jesus performed in Matthew 9...

Mt 9:1 Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city. 2 And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." 4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? 5 "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'? 6 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then He \*said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home."

**Heals** ([2390](#))(**iaomai**) means to cure, to heal, to restore. **iaomai** is used literally of deliverance from physical diseases and afflictions and so to make whole, restore to bodily health or heal. **iaomai** refers primarily to physical healing in the NT (although clearly there is overlap because some of these instances involved demonic oppression - Lk 9:42), and much less commonly to spiritual healing or healing (saving) from "moral illnesses" and the consequences of sin.

Luke has the most NT uses of **iaomai** - Lk. 5:17; Lk. 6:18; Lk. 6:19; Lk. 7:7; Lk. 8:47; Lk. 9:2; Lk. 9:11; Lk. 9:42; Lk. 14:4; Lk. 17:15; Lk. 22:51; Acts 9:34; Acts 10:38; Acts 28:8; Acts 28:27

**Jack Arnold** - He did not say, "Aeneas, arise and Christ will heal you," which would indicate that Aeneas had some power in himself to heal himself. No, Christ imparted healing power which enabled Aeneas to rise up. So it is in the spiritual realm, Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit moves in power on a helpless sinner to save him, and in granting that power the sinner is able to believe in Christ and be saved. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8).([The Miracle Worker](#))

**Get up and make your bed** - This signifies instantaneous and full recovery. As an aside don't you wish this would work as well with your teenagers in the morning! Sometimes it seems like you need a miracle to rouse them to get ready for school! Or as Steven Cole puts it "Those of you with teenagers know just how impossible that command is, unless the Lord grants the power!" ([Faith in the God of All Power Acts 9:32-43](#))

**Get up** - [anistemi](#) (arise) in the aorist imperative (as is **make your bed**). Do this now! Don't delay!

**John G. Butler** says "The blessing was followed by duty. The cure was followed by a command. The restoration was followed by responsibility. When God does something for you, do not be surprised if He then wants you to do something for Him."

**Steven Ger** - Not only did Peter heal Aeneas, but he commanded him to get up and roll up his own bedroll, reminiscent of the same lighthearted instructions Peter had witnessed Jesus giving to the paralytics He had healed (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:11; Luke 5:24; John 5:8) ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Immediately he got up** - Note this miracle was immediate, complete, perfect and permanent. Notice also that the lame man obeyed Peter immediately, this indicating that he had an element of faith. He believed Peter's words "**Jesus Christ heals you.**" In Acts 3:7-8 Peter seized the lame man and raised him and "immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk." We are reminded of the prophecy of Isaiah that "Then the lame will leap like a deer." (Isa 35:6+), which is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom. But it is as if this healing is a foretaste of that glorious future day.

**Jack Andrews** ([Expository Sermons](#)) applies Aeneas' immediate obedience noting that "When God gives us a command that is humanly impossible when we obey we find that His command is divinely empowered. God's commands are coupled by God's empowerment. He does call us to do the humanly impossible, but nothing is impossible for God. The Lord Jesus healed this man and it was evident in the man arising and making his bed....Aeneas' healing was not just for Aeneas' benefit. The Lord worked in Aeneas and for Aeneas and now He wanted to work through Aeneas. This man experience triumph over his sickness and his victory was in Jesus. As the old hymn states it,

**"I heard about His healing, of His cleansing power revealing,**

How He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see.

And then I cried, "Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit,"

And somehow Jesus came and brought to me the victory."

Play [Victory in Jesus](#), [Another version](#), [Country Version - cool](#)

**Immediately** (2112) see above on [euthes](#). Uses in Acts - Acts 9:18; Acts 9:20; Acts 9:34; Acts 12:10; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:10; Acts 17:14; Acts 21:30; Acts 22:29.

**David Jeremiah** writes "Aeneas' healing followed the pattern of healing found in all the Bible: It was instantaneous. When blind people were healed, they saw. When lame people were healed, they walked. When deaf people were healed, they heard."

**Larkin** asks and answers "**What is the relationship between miracle working and evangelism** (Acts 9:35, 42)? **In Acts, miracles accompany about half of the occasions of effective preaching of the gospel** (Acts 2:4,14-41; 2:43,47; 3:1-10,11-26; 4:29, 30,33; 5:12-16; 6:8, 10,7:1-53; 8:5/6; 9:34,35; 9:40-41,42; 13:10-11,12; 14:1,3; 14:10/15-17); **on the other occasions they do not** (Acts 8:35-38; 9:22; 9:28-29; 10:34-43; 11:20-21; 13:16-41; 16:14-15; 16:31-34; 17:1-4; 17:22-34; 18:4-5; 19:8-10; 20:18-21). ([The Mission Is Inaugurated Through Peter - Acts 9:32-11:18](#))

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**A Short Course in Miracles** - Many people, including many believers, think that miracles are relatively common in the Bible, but actually that is not the case. In fact, miracles were clustered around three main time periods in the past - (1) The Exodus, Wanderings, and Conquest of the Promised land (2) During the ministries of Elijah and Elisha miracles validated their prophetic message to God's people at a time when many had turned from the living God to dead idols. (3) The ministry of Jesus Christ and the days of His apostles who were instrumental in laying the foundation for His Church. Of course, God is supernatural, above nature, for He created nature, and so in one sense He is always supernaturally at work. Every saved soul is a result of His supernatural work. Miracles constitute a special element of supernatural activity, when there is an obvious display of supernatural activity (e.g., healing a lame man, raising a dead woman, etc) and usually to make a point. True miracles are a defiance of the laws of natural order and represent an undeniable display of His power to attract people's attention and to authenticate His activity or His message (or messenger, such as Moses, Elijah, Jesus, Peter, Paul, etc). In addition, miracles also may remedy a problem that could otherwise not be rectified naturally.

As **Charles Swindoll** says "The Creator interacts with His creation from outside nature—"super-naturally"—in all sorts of ways. He creates what appear to be coincidental circumstances, He alters otherwise normal patterns of events, He empowers people to accomplish what they otherwise could not, He heals people in ways that defy medical treatment or explanation. All of these are the supernatural activities of God....The Lord never ceases to work supernaturally, but miracles are exceedingly rare....The Lord never ceases to work supernaturally, but **miracles are exceedingly rare.**"

In the future, during the time of the Tribulation described in Revelation 6-19 miraculous events will again occur with some frequency, but during that time some of those "miraculous events" will be performed by Satan who will attempt his final deception of the world

(cf 2 Th 2:8-10). Of course, Satan can do nothing that God will not allow and ultimately which God will not overcome with His omnipotence!

#### Related Resources:

- [Are the miracles in the Bible to be taken literally?](#)
- [Is cessationism biblical? What is a cessationist?](#)
- [Why doesn't God still perform miracles like He did in the Bible?](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Miracle](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary - [Miracles, Signs, Wonders](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Miracles Miracles of Christ, the Miracles through Evil Agents](#)
- American Tract Society [Miracle](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Miracles](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Miracle](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Miracles](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Miracles](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Miracles Miracles \(2\)](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Miracles](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Miracle](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Miracle](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Miracles](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Miracles](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Miracle](#)

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**Steven Cole** - At a missions conference in 1986, Stuart Briscoe said, "All that's being done in evangelical Christianity in America can be done with good equipment, modern media, and a few gifted men. Very little that is happening in the church is explainable solely on the basis of God's activity and authority." His words should make us pause and ask, "Is that true in our church? Is it true in my life personally? Is there anything that can only be explained by God's activity and power?" Some react to such words by seeking miracles, such as speaking in tongues and divine healing. They argue that the church today should be doing the works of Jesus, and even greater works. While I believe that we should pray for the sick to be healed, we also must recognize that often it is not God's will to heal miraculously. I do not disregard dramatic encounters with the Lord, although I think that 99 percent of what is called speaking in tongues today is *not* the New Testament gift. Unless a person develops discipline unto godliness and a consistent walk in the Holy Spirit, no experience, however dramatic, will result in lasting change. ([Acts 9-32-43 Faith in the God of All Power](#))

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**Jack Arnold** on **miraculous healing today** ([The Miracle Worker](#)) - This raises the question, "**Does Christ heal today?**" The answer is obviously, "**Yes.**" The evidence is overwhelming that Christ does heal today. There are many recorded instances of sudden, complete and permanent healings which came to Christians and there is no known medical explanation for the cure. If we say there is no supernatural healing today, we are adopting a very unscientific attitude, for the facts prove otherwise. God does heal today through believing prayer of Christians individually and collectively and through the prayers of the elders of the church.

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15).

God, however, is not obligated to heal everyone or anyone. God heals whom and when and where He will. He is sovereign. He sometimes heals miraculously but most of the time He heals through the use of medicine and skillful doctors. There have been many good and sincere Christian ministers who were sincerely wrong in their theology about healing. Every Christian and every Christian minister has blind spots and holds to some wrong theology. No one man has all the truth but obviously some men have more truth than others. Men such as the late [S. D. Gordon](#), a Presbyterian, and [A. B. Simpson](#), the founder of the [Christian Missionary Alliance Church](#), taught that **healing is in the atonement of Christ**. They based their thinking on two verses.

"Surely our griefs (sickness) He Himself bore, And our sorrows (pains) He carried . . . And by His scourging we are healed" (Isa. 53:4-5+).

"And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled saying, 'HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES, AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES'" (Mt. 8:16-17).



[Gotquestions](#) has a succinct explanation referencing also 1 Peter 2:24 which Arnold for some reason does not mention - Isaiah 53:5+, which is then quoted in 1 Peter 2:24, is a key verse on healing, but it is often misunderstood and misapplied. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." The word translated "healed" can mean either spiritual or physical healing. However, the contexts (**ED: Context should always be kept "king"** to avoid the trap of misinterpretation and then as with Gordon and Simpson misapplication) of Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2 make it clear that it is speaking of spiritual healing. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24). The verse is talking about sin and righteousness, not sickness and disease. Therefore, being "healed" in both these verses is speaking of being forgiven and saved, not physically healed. (See also [What does it mean that "by His stripes we are healed"?](#))

**Spurgeon** comments on 1 Peter 2:24 - By His sufferings, you were **cured of sin**. His death not only removed from you the penalty of sin; but what is far better, **it also removed from you the dread disease itself.** ([1 Peter 2 Commentary](#))

**They argue that since Christ bore our sicknesses, healing is in the atonement** and just as our sins are forgiven completely by Christ so, too, we can claim freedom from sickness. They admitted that everyone must die, but no Christian had to die of an illness. They felt for anyone to die of sickness was to die out of the perfect will of God, for it was God's will to cure sickness as well as sin. They further argued that the only reason a person is not healed of sickness was because he did not exercise strong faith. If a man was not healed when he claimed a healing, the problem was not in the atonement but in the man's weak faith. This position was held by the late Kathryn Kuhlman and is presently held by Earnest Angley. Most Methodists, holiness pentecostals and modern day charismatics hold this view as well. The simple answer to the belief that healing is in the atonement of Christ is that Isaiah 53:4 refers in context to spiritual healing and Matthew 8:16-17 refer to the earthly ministry of Christ, not his atoning work. Furthermore, Paul prayed three times for God to deliver him from some illness but was refused his request.

"... there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me" (2 Cor. 12:7b-8).

Lastly, Christ moved among multitudes of sick and only healed a few. Logically, if we believe that the atonement is effective or efficacious (actually works), then no Christian should ever be sick or die, for the atonement must remove sickness or be powerless. The final key, however, is understanding that healing is a sovereign act of God and He heals whom and when and where He pleases. It is also interesting to note that **S. D. Gordon and A. B. Simpson**, who both taught a Christian does not have to die of illness, **both died of a drawn out, terminal sickness**. Because they thought they could claim freedom from this sickness, they died under a sense of having had God turn His back on them, and they were disappointed with their own failure to muster enough faith to be healed. **The theology that says healing is in the atonement is not only false teaching but it leads to despair and frustration for most people who hold it.**

**Are there then faith healers today? Men who have the spiritual gift of miracles?** The sign gifts passed away with the Apostles and there are no people today who can claim the power of God to heal men. There is faith healing but no faith healers. What about people who claim to be healers and people seem to get healed in their meetings? My answer to that is the Devil also has the power to heal and does heal, and so convincing are these demonstrations that many Christians are led astray, but the Bible predicts this will happen, especially towards the end of the age. "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). **We must test all healing by the ultimate criteria of the Bible and not by visible results.** ([Acts 9:32-43 The Miracle Worker](#))

**Related Resource:** [Are We Physically Healed by Jesus' Stripes?](#) by Cameron Buettel

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**Charles Swindoll** rightly says that the miracles will be seen again in the period preceding the end of this age, but in the intervening time between the apostolic era and the end time tribulation, they will be rare. That said, he does not exclude the possibility that God might choose to intervene miraculously in human history, but he gives us some wise words to judge anything said to be a miracle today.

I will be looking for at least four indications of authentic, miraculous work, all of which are reflected in the miracle accounts involving Peter that we just looked at.

**Number one: The Lord alone is glorified, never a man or a woman.** If the supernatural activity exalts a person in any way, you can rest assured that it's not of God! My advice? Get out. Get away. Any activity that doesn't glorify God, regardless of how impressive, does God's people no good.

**Number two: There is no showmanship.** In the Bible, miracles rarely have a large audience, and the display of divine power is quiet, serene, dignified, and personal. None of the Old Testament prophets, none of the apostles, and not even Jesus Himself ever used miracles to impress, entertain, dazzle, or draw a crowd.

**Number three: Unbelievers are convinced to believe.** Throughout the Scriptures, God's miraculous activity gave people the opportunity to believe. Many responded in faith; others couldn't deny divine activity, yet they willfully rejected Him. Regardless, miracles reveal God's goodness and power so that those far away will approach Him.

**Number four: Biblical truth is validated.** When God works a miracle, you don't have to hide your Bible behind your back or defend against critics. Miracles create the opportunity to proclaim the truths of God boldly. Miracles remove doubt and then create a crisis of the will. Therefore, if someone witnesses a genuine miracle and then rejects Christ, the problem is not in the head but in the heart. (Acts - Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary).

**Acts 9:35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV 9:35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

- **all who lived at Lydda and Sharon** Acts 4:4; 5:12-14; 6:7; 19:10,20; Ps 110:3; Isa 66:8
- **Sharon** 1 Chr 5:16
- **and they turned to the Lord** Acts 9:42; 11:21; 15:19; 26:18-20; Dt 4:30; Ps 22:27; Isa 31:6; Lam 3:40; Hos 12:6; 14:2; Joel 2:13; Luke 1:16,17; 2 Cor 3:16; 1 Th 1:9,10
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE EVANGELISTIC IMPACT OF AENEAS' HEALING

The one miracle of **physical healing** gave rise to many far greater miracles of **spiritual healing** (salvation)!

**And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him** - Sharon is a fairly large area that stretches from Joppa to Mt. Carmel beyond Caesarea Maritima. As explained below although Lydda is the name of a specific town, the name Sharon describes more of a district, a larger area than just a town. **A T Robertson** agrees that this refers to "The Plain of Sharon, not a town. Thirty miles long from Joppa to Caesarea." Peter was faithful to follow the leading of the Spirit and Aeneas was obedient to Peter's commands, and the result of his living, walking "testimony" was new birth of the souls in this area. As an aside, while Luke does not state it, Peter undoubtedly preached Jesus to the population. And although Luke says "**ALL**" which might give the mistaken impression that everyone in this area was saved. Notice the **ALL** refers to **ALL** who saw Aeneas. Those individuals did turn to the Lord. But it is doubtful that **ALL** of this fairly large region actually saw Aeneas. In any event, this was clearly a large number of souls added to the Kingdom of God.

**Hastings Bible Dictionary** (see [left or coastal side of this map for plain of Sharon](#)) - Sharon was the ancient name of the undulating Maritime Plain which extended from Mt. Carmel to some distance beyond Jaffa- perhaps to the Nahr Rûbîn and the low hills to the S. of Ramleh-where it merged in the Philistian Plain. It was admired by prophets and poets for the richness of its vegetation and the beauty of its wild flowers- 'the excellency of Sharon' (Isaiah 35:2+ = in the Millennium), 'the rose of Sharon' (Song of Solomon 2:1). From the groves of oak which at one time covered a great part of its surface, especially in the north, it was also called "the forest" (Septuagint, Isaiah 33:9; Isaiah 35:2; Isaiah 65:10)...Strabo (XVI. ii. 27) says that in his time there was next to Carmel 'a large forest'. The only part of **Sharon** which is alluded to in the NT is the **southern end, lying around Lydda** (now Lydd), **where the fields and orchards were exceedingly well-watered and fertile and the population was dense.** Here the presence of St. Peter in the early Apostolic Age, though his visit was only brief, as he was urgently summoned away to Joppa, is said to have given rise to a widespread spiritual movement: '**all that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon turned to the Lord** (Acts 9:35). The Authorized Version renders '**at Lydda and Sharon,**' apparently mistaking '**Sharon**' for a town or village in the neighbourhood of Lydda. The use of the article (ton Sharona - literally "the Sharon") with the Greek and the Hebrew noun proves that a whole district- 'the level country' is meant.

**Jack Andrews** on **they saw him** (Aeneas) - His **walk** gave evidence to the people that God can heal, raise up, and restore the

fallen. Our **walk** in this world should be evidence to the lost that Jesus saves. (ED: IS THAT TRUE OF YOUR WALK BELOVED?) In verse 35 the Bible tells us the result of Aeneas' healing, the lost were saved. God is more interested in the salvation of a man's soul more than He is in the healing of a man's body. Our bodies will not last, but our soul is eternal....Peter's life and witness and work touched the life of Aeneas whose life in turn touched the lives of the people of Lydda and Sharon. The people turned to the Lord. When we have a **kingdom mindset** we will be actively engaged in ministry (ED: EVERY BELIEVER IS IN "MINISTRY" OF SOME SORT!). We will find opportunities to serve Jesus and we will see the Lord Jesus work through us in the lives of individuals and in the lives of the multitudes. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Kistemaker** notes that "Whenever we read in the New Testament about a miracle performed by either Jesus or the apostles and evangelists, we see that these miracles are designed to create and strengthen faith." (BNTC - Acts)

**And they turned to the Lord** - They not only saw with their eyes the healed man, but they heard with their ears the Master's message. They saw a walking miracle who said it was Jesus Christ Who had healed him. They turn to Jesus and became followers of the Messiah.

**John Phillips** - The healing of the sick man was not an **end** in itself, but a **means** to another end— the salvation of many. Had healing been intended to be an end in itself, Peter would have healed all the sick people in town. That he did not do so shows that the healing was selective and of far wider purpose than the mere relief of physical suffering. And certainly the healing was not for the purpose of promoting Peter and enriching his coffers. The primary purpose of the healing was to open a door for the gospel, to lead to the salvation of souls, and to spread abroad the name of the Lord Jesus. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Turned to** implies they turned away from something else and **to the Lord**. This is a picture of **repentance** ([metanoia](#)). We see the idea of repentance clearly in Paul's description of the new believers in Thessalonica using the same verb [epistrepho](#) which Peter uses in this verse...

For they themselves (those in Macedonia and Achaia, etc) report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you **turned to** ([epistrepho](#)) God **from idols** to serve a living and true God, 10 (NOTE THE CHANGE IN THEIR MINDSET FROM EARTHLY TO SUPERNATURAL THINGS! = THIS IS A PERFECT PICTURE OF THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE) and to **wait** (anameno - expectantly waiting in present tense = this was their habitual mindset! HOW ABOUT YOU BELOVED?) for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who rescues us from the wrath to come.(1 Th 1:9-10+).

**Turned** (1994)([epistrepho](#) from **epi** = motion toward + **strepho** = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to revert, to turn about, to turn around, to turn toward, to return and figuratively to convert. The idea is a definite turn to God in conduct as well as in one's mind. The meaning of **epistrepho** is associated with the picture of repentance, a change of heart and mind leading to a change of conduct.

- Here is a video of from a Jewish man who turned to the Lord -[How a Jewish man met Messiah](#)

Here are Luke's other uses of **epistrepho** in Acts and most are in the context of spiritual conversion (regeneration, new birth)...

Acts 3:19 "Therefore repent and **return**, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 9:35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they **turned** to the Lord.

Acts 9:40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and **turning** to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed **turned** to the Lord.

Acts 14:15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should **turn** from these vain things (IDOLS) to a living God (cf 1 Th 1:9), WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.

Acts 15:19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are **turning** to God from among the Gentiles,

Acts 15:36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us **return** and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

Acts 16:18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and **turned** and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

Acts 26:18 (GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES) to open their eyes so that they **may turn** from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

**Jack Arnold** aptly applies this passage - The unbelievers saw this man no longer helpless but delivered and free and they could not dispute what had happened. There was an amazing revival because it says "**ALL**" in these two cities (ED: AS NOTED ABOVE SHARON IS PROBABLY MORE OF A "DISTRICT" THAN A CITY) believed in Christ. **When we carry this over into the spiritual realm, nothing has more of an impact for Jesus Christ than a changed life.** Unsaved men can mock at their false image of Christ, fight the whole concept of the supernatural, argue about the rightness or wrongness of Christianity, but **they cannot deny the fact that when men claim to know Christ their lives are changed. Changed lives, more than any other thing, will cause unsaved men to seek after Christ.** ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**THOUGHT** - Arnold's cogent comment begs a vitally important question for all of us -- Did those who knew me see a distinct change in my behavior after I made a profession of Christ. Beloved, our church pews are literally filled with folks who have made a profession, but who have shown little to no change in their lifestyle. This is a deadly deception which can take a person straight to Hell. We all need to heed Paul's exhortation to "**Test** (present imperative - as a lifestyle) yourselves to see if you are in the faith; **Examine** (present imperative - as a lifestyle) yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test ([adokimos](#))?." (2 Cor 13:5+), lest we hear those fearful words from the Judge of all souls "And then I will declare to them, 'I never (strongest negative) knew you; **DEPART** (aorist imperative - Do it now!) FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE (present tense - as one's lifestyle, not ever having demonstrated a true "changed life.") LAWLESSNESS.'" (Mt 7:23+ , cf Mt 7:21,22+).

Clearly we know that miracles per se save no one for Jesus did many miracles in Israel and yet most of the Jews rejected Him. On the other hand the healing of Aeneas (and Dorcas below) indicate that miracles may at times play a role in salvation. As noted above, undoubtedly Peter preached the Gospel in Lydda, and the miracle would have lent credence to the legitimacy of his message. The emphasis however should always be on the **message** of the Gospel and not **miracles**, for it is only the Gospel which saves souls. In fact at times the **miracles** can even be misunderstood (cf Lk 11:15 and Acts 14:8-18), so again the emphasis should always be on the Christ and His Gospel.

**Jack Andrews** - God is still in the saving business. Our God still heals, but we must realize no man has the power to heal when and how he wants to. Even the apostles did heal everyone that was sick. It is not God's will that everyone that is physically sick to be made well. It is His will that everyone that is spiritually sick should be made whole. God is far more concerned about our eternal destiny than we are. If we have a kingdom mindset then we must have a compassion for and concern for the lost. Do you have a kingdom mindset? Are you going about in the name of Jesus serving Him in this community? Are you ashamed of the Lord Jesus or do you bring honor to His name? We need to love of Christ, the eyes of Christ, the tongue of Christ, and hands and feet of Christ, and the power of Christ to minister for His in this world. Let us be people that have a kingdom mindset. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Acts 9:36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did.

- **Joppa** Acts 10:5; 2 Chr 2:16; Ezra 3:7; Jonah 1:3
- **Dorcas** Pr 5:19; Song 2:9; 3:5; 8:14
- **was abounding with** John 15:5,8; Eph 2:10; Php 1:11; Col 1:10; 1 Th 4:10; 1 Ti 2:9,10; 5:10; Titus 2:7,14; 3:8; Hebrews 13:21; James 1:27
- **charity which she continually did** Acts 10:4,31
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DORCAS' DRESSMAKING MINISTRY IN JOPPA**

When a Christian lady gives herself to real work for those who are in trouble, there springs up a rare, new, unconscious beauty even in her features, which spreads over her whole life like sweet, bright sunshine. Dorcas was "full of good works," and not of good

wishes alone. So her needle was as noble as Moses' rod, or David's sling, or Shamgar's ox goad; for it was her answer to the Lord's question (Exodus 4:2). All these works were done by, not the "Dorcas Society of Joppa," but by Dorcas. (C. S. Robinson)

**Now in Joppa** ([See map](#)) - Joppa is infamous in the OT for it was here that the Prophet Jonah came to and boarded a ship heading to Tarshish to run away from the will of the Lord. **Joppa** is known today as **Jaffa** (see [Wikipedia article](#)). Most writers agree that the church plant in Joppa was the fruit of Phillip's ministry as he returned to Caesarea by the Sea after ministering to the Ethiopian eunuch. Luke records "Philip found himself at Azotus; and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities ([see map showing Lydda and Joppa which would surely be among all the cities](#)), until he came to Caesarea." (Lk 8:38+)

**Swindoll on Joppa** - Throughout its history, Joppa became the possession of one conqueror after another until Caesar finally granted it to Herod. Unfortunately, Herod hated the people of Joppa, so he built a state-of-the-art seaport about 30 miles north and called it Caesarea Maritima. Consequently, Joppa enjoyed some sea trade, but none compared to its newer rival. Still, when people came via the sea to visit Jerusalem, they frequently used the Joppa port. (Ibid)

**Hastings Bible Dictionary** - Joppa is a maritime town of Palestine, 33 miles S.W. of Jerusalem. Built on an eminence visible far out at sea-whence its name **'the conspicuous'** (See [picture of elevation](#)), - it owes its existence to a ridge of low and partly sunken rocks running out in a N.W. direction from the S. side of the town, and forming a harbor which, though small and insecure, is yet the best on the whole coast of Palestine.

Down to the time of the Maccabees, Joppa was a heathen town, which the Jews sometimes used but never possessed. Jonah's ship of Joppa was manned by a heathen crew (Jonah 1:5). One of the strongest proofs of the political sagacity of the three famous Maccabean brothers lay in their resolve to make Judaea a maritime power. Each of them attempted to capture Joppa, and Simon succeeded. On the family memorial at Modin, meant for the eyes of 'all that sail on the sea,' he caused carved ships to be represented (1 Maccabees 13:29). The historian, in eulogizing his career, says: 'And amid all his glory he took Joppa for a haven, and made it an entrance for the isles of the sea' (14:5). From that time, with but few interruptions, Joppa remained in the possession of the Jews for more than two centuries. When Pompey (66 b.c.) included Judaea in the province of Syria, Joppa was one of the cities which 'he left in a state of freedom' (Jos. Ant. xiv. iv. 4); and Julius Caesar decreed 'that the city of Joppa, which the Jews had originally when they made a league of friendship with the Romans, shall belong to them as it formerly did' (x. 6).

**No city was more completely judaized than this late possession.** Joppa became as zealous for the Law, as patriotic, as impatient of Gentile control and culture, as Jerusalem herself. Herod the Great, who did much to hellenize Palestine, left the **Pharisaic purity of Joppa** untainted. **Yet this stronghold of Jewish legalism was the city in which St. Peter received the vision which taught him that Jew and Gentile, as spiritually equal before God, must be impartially welcomed into the Church of Christ** (Acts 10:9-16). **Nowhere was the contrast between the clean and the unclean-the devoutly scrupulous observers of the Law and the jostling crowd of foreigners-more marked.** St. Peter probably never realized so intensely the need of ceremonial purification before his midday meal as when he brought into the tanner's house the defilement of contact with so many lawless and profane people. To his Jewish instincts such contamination was intolerable. But he experienced a swift and mysterious reaction, which was probably the result of much past brooding as well as of present prayer. While he lingered upon the housetop (Acts 10), waiting the call to eat, he became unconscious of the sights and sounds of the harbor beneath, and fell into a trance, in which he learned how different are God's thoughts of religious purity from man's. He became convinced that all manner of meats-and, inferentially, all manner of men-that were commonly counted unclean, were clean in God's sight. **It is as the birthplace of this revolutionary principle, which virtually gave the deathblow to Judaism, that the old town of Joppa has a place in the history of human thought.** St. Peter, always impulsive and uncalculating, went straight to pagan Caesarea, and delivered a speech which opened the gates of Christ's Church to 'every nation' (Acts 10:35). Joppa has also a place in the history of Christian beneficence. It is remembered as the home of a gentlewoman who was believed to have been raised from death to life, and whose example has in all ages been an incentive to 'good works and almsdeeds' (Acts 9:36-42). ([Reference](#))

**Joppa** in the Bible - Jos. 19:46; 2 Chr. 2:16; Ezr. 3:7; Jon. 1:3; Acts 9:36; Acts 9:38; Acts 9:42; Acts 9:43; Acts 10:5; Acts 10:8; Acts 10:23; Acts 10:32; Acts 11:5; Acts 11:13

#### Related Resources:

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Joppa](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Joppa](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Joppa](#)

- Hitchcock Bible Names [Joppa](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Joppa](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Joppa](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Joppa](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Joppa](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Joppa](#)

**There was a disciple** - KJV = "a certain disciple." **Disciple** was Luke's the most common designation for **believers** (Acts 5:14, 10:45, 16:1) in the book of Acts.

**Disciple** in this verse is not the more common word **mathetes** but is the noun **mathetria** (feminine form of **mathetes**) and means a female disciple (used only in this verse) and equivalent to a Christian woman. The **TDNT** makes the point that "This feminine form is rare, for women are outside organized education, both in Greece and among the rabbis." In other words **disciple** was in common use in Israel and one could be a "disciple" of a rabbi, of John, etc. Even Jesus had "disciples" who were only disciples in name, but not in heart, as recorded in John 6:66 which says "as a result (OF JESUS' TEACHING THAT HE WAS THE BREAD OF LIFE - SEE Jn 6:53-58) many of His **disciples** withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." They were false disciples, looking for material bread, not the Bread of Life! Are you a genuine disciple of Jesus or only a disciple in name? (cf Jesus' "definition" of a disciple as one who continues in His word or continue to follow His teaching - Jn 8:31-32)

**Brian Bill** notes that **Tabitha** is "the only woman in the New Testament explicitly identified as a **disciple**. That's pretty amazing when you think that this title was not given to Mary or Martha or Priscilla or any other woman. She stood out as a very faithful follower of Christ. She was so devoted that only the disciple description is used to define her. A disciple was a learner, a follower and one who was determined to be like his or her teacher. Luke 6:40: "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." One of the highest compliments someone could pay you is to say, "You act just like Jesus." That could be said of Tabitha." Doer of deeds. The needs of people not only moved her; she moved in response to the needs she saw. She served and people knew it was because of her Savior. That's her identity. She was saved to serve. In fact, a devoted disciple is a doer of good deeds. She was not lazy by any means but was quick to respond when someone needed help. When she saw a need she jumped to meet it! Miss Gazelle was a devoted disciple who used her gifts and abilities to further the kingdom. ([Sermon](#))

**Disciple** (3101) (**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil.

**John Calvin** makes the astute observation that the name **disciple** "warns us that Christianity does not exist without teaching."

**THOUGHT** - Calvin's warning begs the question if you call yourself **adisciple** of Jesus, are you truly continuing in His Word, are you involved in serious study of His Word, or are you just listening to a sermon once a week and thinking that is enough "learning?" Jesus made it very clear that a disciple needs to be in the Word (Jn 8:31) and the Word in Him declaring "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" (Mt 4:4, Luke 4:4+) Peter echoed Jesus' words when he exhorted his readers "like newborn babies (GENUINE BELIEVERS), long for (YEARN FOR, PANT FOR) the pure milk of the word (NOT CHRISTIAN NOVELS, NOT EVEN DEVOTIONALS, BUT THE LIVING AND ACTIVE WORD OF GOD - Heb 4:12-13+), so that (PURPOSE STATEMENT) by it you may grow in respect to salvation," (1 Pe 2:2+) The upshot is "not intake" = "no growth!" In fact, if one claims to be a **disciple** of Jesus and has no intake of the Living Word, then either they are (1) malnourished spiritually and will not grow in Christ-likeness (2 Pe 3:18+, 2 Cor 3:18+) or (2) they are false disciples (Mt 7:21-23+), who have no hunger for the Word, because they have never really genuinely believed in the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear reader, if you are not seeking truth in Bible, the Word of God, then you need to seriously examine yourself so you are not deceived and take your last breath and step off into a Christless eternity! (cf 2 Cor 13:5+). You may think this is a harsh statement, but ultimately it motivated by the love of Christ and His love for you (Ro 5:8+, Jn 3:16).

**Ralph Earle** - As **followers** of Jesus we are to be, first of all, **learners**. We are to learn from Him by listening to Him, learn the truth that will set us free (John 8:32) and keep us from error. But we are also to learn from Him by looking at Him- learn how to live a life of beauty and blessing. (Word Meanings in the New Testament)

**William Barclay** writes this regarding a **disciple** - "All his life a Christian should be learning more and more about Jesus. The shut mind is the end of discipleship!" (Matthew 5 Commentary - Daily Study Bible)

**Named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas)**- **Tabitha** is transliterated from the [Aramaic](#); Tabitha, feminine

proper noun, interpreted in Acts 9.36 as meaning Dorkas (Greek) (gazelle), a small antelope or deer, certainly very descriptive of her life as Spirit filled and superbly skilled disciple.

**Translated** (1329) ([diemeneuo](#) from **d i á** = an intensifier + [hermeneuo](#) = to interpret, translate which some say is from [Hermes](#) the pagan god of language - our English [Hermeneutics - study or science of interpretation of Scripture](#)) means to explain clearly, exactly, thoroughly. To translate, [expound](#), interpret, explain from one language into another. This verb is used of interpreting a foreign language. **Louw-Nida** - "to explain on a more extensive and formal level the meaning of something which is particularly obscure or difficult to comprehend."

**Dorkas** (Dorkas) means "the female of a roebuck," or [gazelle](#) which is any of numerous small to medium graceful and swift African and Asian antelopes. Lechler in Lange's commentary adds "The gazelle is distinguished for its slender and beautiful form, its graceful movements and its soft but brilliant eyes; it is frequently introduced by the Hebrews and other Oriental nations as an image of female loveliness, and the name was often employed as a proper name, in the case of females." It is interesting that Dorkas is the first Greek name of a female in the New Testament (cf Sapphira a Hebrew name in Acts 5:1).

**Herbert Lockyer** - The Hebrew equivalent (of Dorkas) being *Tabitha* which is the Syro-Chaldaic form of the Hebrew *Zibiah*, or *Tsibiah*, the name of a princess of Judah, the mother of King Joash. Wilkinson says that "the Greek equivalent for her Syriac name may be accounted for by her residence at Joppa, a seaport much frequented, and no doubt partially inhabited by foreigners speaking chiefly the Greek language....In the seaport town of Joppa she became known for her acts of charity and is the namesake for a charitable group named the [Dorkas Society](#)....In our churches and also in commendable societies there are many public-spirited women who, with humanitarian ideals, are engaged in various relief activities, and whose sole object is to do good. But they are not actuated by Christ. Trying to emulate Dorkas, they lack her Christian disciple-ship, forgetting that caring for widows and others in need springs from "pure religion" which also reveals itself in keeping oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:26, 27). When Luke says that Dorkas was full of good works, he meant the word "full" to refer primarily to her inward grace, which prompted the outward deeds. "Good works are only genuine and Christian when the soul of the performer is imbued with them." The cup of cold water to be acceptable must be given in His name. With Dorkas, then, being good meant doing good. Her manifold good works flowed from a heart grateful to God for His saving grace."

#### **Related Resource:**

- [Dorkas - All the Women in the Bible](#) - Herbert Lockyer

**This woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did - Continually did** is in the imperfect tense which pictures Dorkas as doing these things over and over, again and again. **John G. Butler** said, "Oh, that we had more of the faithfulness of Dorkas in our church members. It is so hard to get church members to do anything for an extended period of time, to be faithful day in and day out at their task. They will serve for a short period of time; they will serve in spurts; but seldom will they serve faithfully. That is why so little gets done in the church when much needs to be done."

**Dorkas** speaks of the social side of the Church of Jesus Christ. Some evangelicals downplay the social aspect which is a mistake as Dorkas' ministry clearly demonstrates. On the other hand if the Church engages in social activities without in some form offering the Gospel, this is misguided and even disobedient to Jesus' Great Commission. A balanced Christian ministry is always the best Christian ministry!

**Reputation** is what others think about you. **Character** is what God knows about you! Dorkas had both **agood reputation** and **good character**! In fact so revered is the name "**Dorkas**" and its association with good (God) works and charitable deeds that there are a number of organizations known by the name [Dorkas Society](#). This wonderful woman's name was immortalized not only in the Bible and eternity but in the world and in time. As someone has said here is a woman "who with her needle embroidered her name ineffaceably into the beneficence of the world."

**Dorkas** is the living example of the truth of Jesus' words that believers "**may have life, and have it abundantly.**" (Jn 10:10) Dorkas had life in Christ and lived it abundantly for Christ. She reminds me of the exhortation by the writer of Hebrews

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence (DORCAS WAS DILIGENT!) so as to realize the full assurance of hope (ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY OF FUTURE GOOD. NOT "HOPE SO" BUT "HOPE SURE!") until the end, so that (PURPOSE CLAUSE) you will not be sluggish, but (DRAMATIC CONTRAST) imitators of those (LIKE DORCAS) who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Heb 6:11-12+)

**Brian Bill** - Wouldn't you agree that there are more people filled with words than there are people filled with works? It was her holy habit to always abound and overflow with good deeds. Galatians 6:10+ says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Tabitha reminds me of 1 Timothy 2:9-10: "I also want women to

dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." What she did is what made her beautiful; it wasn't her fancy clothes, it was her fruit of compassion. Incidentally, it is very important for women to dress modestly. While our culture doesn't think so, our Christianity must demand so. Women, this is for your sake and for the sake of the men in this church who are striving to be pure. In the Civil War there was a Union Nurse who labored among the wounded troops. Her face had been disfigured in a fire when she was younger. When asked why she volunteered to work among so much death and carnage, she replied, "The wounded soldiers don't notice my scars as much as the others. To them, I'm beautiful." Tabitha did not do anything heroic like Deborah or risky like Rahab. She simply served her Savior by ministering to the marginalized. Tabitha is the model of a devoted disciple who did good deeds in quiet, sacrificial and unassuming ways. ([sermon](#))

**Abounding** (4134)([pleres](#)) means full or filled with and thus rich or abounding in this case with good deeds. Her good deeds did not save her but substantiated the authenticity of her faith. A genuine faith will (supernaturally) issue in good deeds.

**Abounding** is translated "full of good works" in the KJV and Plumptre notes that "The form of the expression may be noticed as characteristic of St. Luke, and his favourite formula for conveying the thought of a quality being possessed in the highest degree possible. So we have "full of leprosy" in Luke 5:12KJV, "full of grace" and "full of faith" in Acts 6:5; Acts 6:8. (Comp. also Acts 13:10; Acts 19:28.) (Ed: Also "full of the Holy Spirit" = Jesus in Lk 4:1, Stephen Acts 7:55, Barnabas in Acts 11:24; "full of the Spirit and of wisdom"=Lk 6:3; Acts 13:10 = full of all deceit and fraud, Acts 19:28 = filled with rage.)

**Kindness** (18)([agathos](#))([click](#) discussion of **good deeds**) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good). **Agathos** is one whose goodness and works of goodness are transferred to others. Good and doing good is the idea. Agathos describes that which is beneficial in addition to being good. **Agathos** is that which is good in its character, beneficial in its effects and/or useful in its action. **Agathos** is used in the New Testament primarily of spiritual and moral excellence.

**Charity** (alms) (1654)([eleemosune](#) from **eleemon** = merciful from [eleos](#) = mercy, kindness, compassion) signifies sympathy, charitableness, compassion; and is manifest in the NT, as benevolent activity toward the poor, including charitable giving and giving alms. **BDAG** says it describes "that which is benevolently given to meet a need with focus on material."

**Gotquestions - What are alms?** Alms are money or goods given to those in need as an act of charity. The word alms is used many times in the King James Version of the Bible. It comes from the Old English word *ælmesse* and ultimately from a Greek word meaning "pity, mercy." In its original sense, when you give alms, you are dispensing mercy. Almsgiving is a long-standing practice within the Judeo-Christian tradition. "Whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Proverbs 14:31; see also Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; and 29:7). Jesus and His disciples gave money to the poor (John 12:6), and believers are to "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10+). The godly Tabitha was eulogized as one who was continually "helping the poor" (Acts 9:36). The word alms is used nine times in five chapters of the King James Version of the New Testament. Matthew 6:1-4 contains four occurrences: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." Here, Jesus taught that almsgiving is for God to see, not to show off before others. Those giving out of their love for God are not to announce their giving or draw attention to it. In Luke 11:40-42+, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for giving alms but "neglect[ing] justice and the love of God." In other words, these religious leaders gave to charity, yet they did not have true charity in their hearts. Giving to the needy does not necessarily prove a right relationship with God. In Luke 12:32+, Jesus tells a rich young ruler to sell all he had, give alms to the poor, and follow Him. Jesus' challenge was meant to reveal where the young man's devotion lay: did he love money more than the Lord? The man turned and walked away from Jesus, unwilling to part with his fortune. Doing so showed that he was not ready to become a disciple. In Acts 3+, a crippled man asks Peter and John for money. The apostles explain that they had no money, and they heal him instead. This miracle was much greater than any alms they could have given! Biblically, giving financially to those in need is an important expression of the Christian faith. However, we should make sure our giving is done out of a true love for God, without drawing attention to ourselves. When we invest what God has given us to impact the lives of others, we can trust that the results will make a difference both now and for eternity.

**Christian Herald** - A Christian lady, who was engaged in work for the poor and degraded, was once spoken to by one who was well acquainted with both the worker and those whom she sought to reach, and remonstrated with for going among such a class of people. "It does seem wonderful to me that you can do such work," her



friend said. "You sit beside these people, and talk with them in a way that I do not think you would do if you knew all about them, just what they are, and from what places they come." Her answer was, "Well, I suppose they are dreadful people; but if the Lord Jesus were now on earth, are they not the very sort of people that He would strive to teach? And am I better than my Master? Would He feel Himself too good to go among them?" A poor, illiterate person, who stood listening to this conversation, said with great earnestness and simplicity, "Why, I always thought that was what Christians were for." The objector was silenced, and what wonder? Is not that what Christians are for? If not, then what in the name of all that is good are they for?

**Great Thoughts** - We have seen many beautiful tributes to lovely woman, but the following (Acts 9:36-43) is the finest we ever read: Place her among the flowers, foster her as a tender plant, and she is a thing of fancy, waywardness, and folly — annoyed by a dewdrop, fretted by the touch of a butterfly's wing, ready to faint at the sound of a beetle or the rattling of a window pane at night, and she is overpowered by the perfume of a rosebud. But let real calamity come, rouse her affections, enkindle the fires of her heart, and mark her then! How strong is her heart! Place her in the heart of the battle; give her a child, a bird, or anything to protect, and see her in a relative instance, lifting her white arms as a shield, as her own blood crimsoned her upturned forehead, praying for her life to protect the helpless. Transplant her in the dark places of the earth, call forth the energies to action, and her breath becomes a healing value, her presence a blessing. She disputes, inch by inch, the stride of stalking pestilence, when man — the strong and brave — pale and affrighted, shrinks away. Misfortune haunts her not. She wears away a life of silent endurance, and goes forward with less timidity than to her bridal. In prosperity she is a bud full of odours, waiting but for the winds of adversity to scatter them abroad — pure gold, valuable, but untried in the furnace. In short, woman is a miracle, a mystery, the centre from which radiates the charm of existence.

**Spurgeon** on The Poor Should be Cared For - Charity should be warmest when the season is coldest. That is the time for coals and blankets. It will warm your heart to warm poor people's bodies.

Her **deeds of kindness and charity** gave unequivocal evidence of the genuineness of her conversion. **Dorcas** dies, but her **deeds** remains "alive" for as Jesus' taught her "**fruit would remain**" throughout eternity (Jn 15:16, Mt 6:19-20+) Dorcas' treasure was in **heaven** which is where her **heart** was also (Mt 6:21+). And in fact at this moment she herself was in Heaven for a short time!

**Dorcas** would have shouted an "Amen" to Paul's words in Titus 2:14+

(CHRIST) gave Himself for (Huper = in our place = [substitutionary sacrifice](#)) us to redeem (lutroo pay the price to buy us from slavery to sin, Satan, system of the world) us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession (cf 1 Cor 6:19,20+), **zealous (zelotes) for good deeds**.

**James** wrote that "just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:26+). Dorcas had a living faith and living works. Her *practice* as a follower of Christ was proof of her *profession* of faith in Christ. Paul after describing salvation by grace through faith and not by works in Eph 2:8-9+, describes the purpose of our salvation -

For we are His **workmanship** ([poiema](#)), created in Christ Jesus for (EXPLAINS OUR REASON FOR HAVING BEEN BORN AGAIN) **good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them . (Eph 2:10+).

**Comment** - See God's Masterpiece. If you are a believer this is your description. God don't make no junk! **Good works** are the inevitable issue of a living faith. If they were prepared by God beforehand, we need to learn to wait on God and listen to God's Spirit (cf abide in the Vine - Jn 15:5), so that we do **HIS** works and not **OUR** works! Are you confident that the works you are doing in ministry are HIS works, prepared even before you were born again?

We are not saved BY our good works.

We are saved FOR His good works.

**J Vernon McGee** - Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone. It will produce something. After a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he (or she) will want to "continue in His Word." The proof of faith is continuing with the Savior. As the pastor of a church, I learned to watch out for the person who is active in the church but is not interested in the study of the Word of God. Such a one is dangerous to a church. ([Thru the Bible Commentary](#))

**Jack Arnold** - Her name actually means Gazelle or Antelope and these animals are characterized by grace and charm. Dorcas was a Christian woman who displayed much grace and charm. She was not only a beautiful person on the inside but she was a woman constantly doing good deeds of kindness and charity. She displayed a life of ministry in selfless love, for she was always thinking

about others and not herself. Apparently her main gift was helping the poor and needy. Dorcas was involved in a social service to her fellow Christians and her community. She made garments for the needy. Her natural talent was sewing and her spiritual gift was helps. Her gift, in comparison, seems so insignificant when compared to the gifts of Peter. He could preach, teach, lead, heal and even raise the dead, but Dorcas was given ten deft fingers with which to make garments for the poor. Yet, her gift was as important to the body of Christ as was Peter's gifts. Dorcas probably never spoke at a missionary meeting or taught a home Bible class, but she did a lot of wonderful things for people. Dorcas was a true disciple of Christ and she proved it by her good works. The true Christian will have good works flowing from the life. ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**John Phillips** - There is a tendency in evangelical circles to be suspicious of good works. We have reacted against the social gospel of good works so forcefully that we have sometimes gone to the other extreme. Good works are an essential part of Christianity. They do not earn salvation, but they evidence salvation. Jesus "went about doing good" (10:38). A truly saved person ought to have compassion for the sick, the poor, the oppressed, the weak. (See [Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Jack Andrews** applies Dorcas' legacy to us at our death - When you die will others be able to testify of your good works? Will friends and family members be able to say that you were a Christian and that you were prepared to die? Could they say, "He was faithful to the Lord Jesus and His church!"? Could they say that he lived his life for others? He did many good works! What kind of memories will you leave in the lives of others?

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In his book called, "The Conspiracy of Kindness," Steve Sjogren states that while less than 10% of Christians have the spiritual gift of evangelism, 90% have the gift of serving. His church in Cincinnati is involved in what they call "servant evangelism," where they have washed cars, cleaned toilets, shined shoes and grilled hot dogs in parks – all for free with no strings attached. During these explosions of kindness, they have seen many people so moved that they eventually come to church and get saved.

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People naturally thought James Fraser was headed for fame and success. An extremely gifted musician, it was no surprise that he decided to pursue music, although he graduated from London University in engineering. Yet Fraser eventually felt called to bring the gospel to the wild border region between China and Burma. "What a waste of talent and training!" exclaimed many. Little did people know that the Lisu language is one of the world's most tonal, using about 20 different tones. Only someone with Fraser's background could ever have succeeded in learning Lisu well enough both to share the gospel and to devise a Lisu writing system. It's easy to think that highly gifted people should have high profile ministries, but today's passage records a gifted woman whose ministry was devoted to unnamed, needy individuals. We also see Peter engaged in the "hands-on" pastoral work of "visiting the Lord's people," giving us a glimpse into his day-to-day ministry.

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A CHRISTIAN businessman picked up a young man who was hitchhiking in lightweight clothing on a very cold day. This small kindness eventually led to the salvation of the young man, his family, and some of his friends.

A twelve-year-old boy named Cliff Miller went daily to the fence surrounding the athletic field at Georgia State Penitentiary to talk with and witness to inmate Harold Morris. These contacts played a large part in Harold's eventual conversion. Since receiving a pardon, Harold has spoken to thousands of young people around the country about Jesus Christ.

We sometimes think that if we can't do something big for Christ we might as well do nothing. But even a smile can make someone's day go better. In the name of Jesus we can say an encouraging word, run an errand, mow a lawn, take a meal, care for a baby, or do a variety of other small favors. They will make an impact. Even if they do not produce immediate and spectacular results, God takes note of them.

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ONE day while driving down a country road, a woman named Ruth passed a small, wooden house with a sign outside that read "Quilts for Sale." She stopped, knocked on the door, and was greeted by a little old woman in a faded gingham dress.

"Hello, my name is Ruth. I'm here to see your quilts," the visitor said.

The woman smiled and answered, "You and I both have Bible names. Mine is Martha."

Martha led Ruth to a large cupboard and showed her beautiful quilts of every color and pattern imaginable. Pinned on each one was a blue ribbon.

"I make quilts, too," Ruth said, "but I've never been able to win a blue ribbon."

Martha replied, "My child, maybe your quilts don't have heart. Do you only want the blue ribbon? Every one of mine was made with someone special in mind."

We live in a day of shallow superlatives. Entertainers and athletes perform feats hailed "the greatest" by the world. But truly great human endeavors are those done for Jesus with some needy person in mind. And they bear the mark of eternal excellence. Such was the labor of Dorcas of Joppa. Her loving, charitable heart was seen in the clothes she had made for the poor (Acts 9:39). When we give our best out of love for Christ and others, our efforts become blue-ribbon service.—D A D (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

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## Heartprints

Read: Acts 9:36-43

Dorcas . . . was full of good works and charitable deeds. —Acts 9:36

We leave fingerprints on doorknobs, on books, on walls, on keyboards. Each person's fingerprints are unique, so we leave our identity on everything we touch. Some supermarkets are even testing a technology that allows customers to pay by fingerprint. Each customer's unique print and bank account number are kept on file so that the only thing needed to pay a bill is a scan of their finger.

A woman in the early church left another kind of print—a "heartprint." Dorcas touched many people's lives through her unique gift of sewing and giving away garments. She's described as "full of good works and charitable deeds" (Acts 9:36). We too are to be "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14). We each have a unique heartprint that can touch another.

An unknown author wrote this prayer about encouraging others: "O God, wherever I go today, help me leave heartprints! Heartprints of compassion, understanding, and love. Heartprints of kindness and genuine concern. May my heart touch a lonely neighbor or runaway daughter or anxious mother or even an aged grandfather. Send me out today to leave heartprints. And if someone should say, 'I felt your touch,' may that one sense Your love touching through me."

Will you make this your prayer today?

Just what do Christians look like?

What sets their lives apart?

They're ordinary people

Who love God from the heart. —D. De Haan

People with a heart for God have a heart for people.

By Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 9:37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV 9:37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

- **she fell sick and died** John 11:3,4,36,37
- **in an upper room** Acts 1:13; 20:8; Mark 14:15
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SUDDEN DEATH OF DORCAS IN JOPPA

**And it happened at that time** - While on earth events seem to just happen, nothing happens outside of the providence of God. This event just happened to happened while Peter was only about a half days journey (see below) away from Joppa.

As an aside this introductory phrase **it happened** (in the Greek egeneto = "it happened that") is frequently used by Luke (69x in his Gospel and 54x in Acts).

**That she fell sick and died** - The timing of her death coincides with Peter's presence in a nearby town performing a miracle on a lame man. Once again we see the incredible providence of God at work, weaving variegated events in different live to achieve His will on earth as it is in Heaven.

- [Dorcas: the Lessons of Her Life and Death](#)

**Fell sick** (770)([astheneo](#) from [asthenes](#) = without strength, powerless) means to be feeble (in any sense), to be diseased, impotent, sick, to lack strength, to be infirm, to be weak. Literally to be sick, ill or diseased. Used also in Acts 9:37; Acts 19:12

**Die (death)** (599)([apothnesko](#) from **apo** = marker of dissociation implying a rupture from a former association + **thnesko** = die) literally means to die off, that is, to die and thus be *away from* this earthly realm.

**Arnold** applies her physical death to spiritual death - Dorcas is a picture of the hopelessness of spiritual death. The Bible says that all men before conversion are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Unsaved men are not just sick but dead; not just weak but dead, totally separated from God with no ability or desire to come to Christ. ([The Miracle Worker](#))

Sister, thou wast mild and lovely,  
Gentle as the summer breeze,  
Pleasant as the air of morning  
When it floats among the trees.

**And when they had washed her body they laid it in an upper room** - "The washing of the body was typical of the Jewish preparation for burial. In Jerusalem a body had to be buried the same day one died, but outside of Jerusalem, burial could be delayed for three days." ([Utley](#))

"When a Hebrew died the deceased's body was laid out – either on bare ground, or on sand or salt. The first duty was to close and secure the eyes and mouth of the corpse, after it was absolutely certain death had occurred. The body then was washed with warm water (cf. Acts 9:37). This custom, called the “**Purification of the dead**,” still prevails among the Jews. The nails and hair were trimmed, and the body was anointed with ointment in preparation for burial (cf. Mt. 26:12; Lk. 23:56; Jn. 19:39)." (Christian Courier)

[Utley](#) adds that in the NT "Burial quickly followed death, usually within twenty-four hours. The Jews often watched the grave for three days, believing that the soul could return to the body within that time frame (cf. John 11:39). Burial involved the cleaning and wrapping of the body with spices (cf. John 11:44; 19:39–40). There were not distinctive Jewish or Christian burial procedures or items placed in the grave in first century Palestine."

**Swindoll** - Rather than bury her immediately, as would be in keeping with Jewish custom, her friends cleansed her corpse and placed it in the room above the main living quarters (Acts 9:37). This was highly unusual for a couple of reasons. First, they had no means of preserving the body from decay, so the normal procedure would have directed them to apply an initial coating of spiced resin to the body and then place it in a burial cave. A day or so later, they would complete the burial by wrapping the body in strips of linen soaked in as much as 100 pounds of spiced resin to contain the smell during decomposition. But they didn't even complete the first stage of burial preparation; instead, they merely washed the body. Second, they placed the body in a space normally reserved for dining or for housing special guests. Deliberately placing a dead body where people sleep or eat simply wasn't done!...Luke's narrative thus sends a signal to the ancient reader. Tabitha's friends did none of the things people normally do in anticipation of a funeral. Instead, they seem to be preparing the woman for resurrection. That's remarkable because Luke's narrative gives no indication that anyone had been raised from the dead since Jesus. (Ibid)

**Jack Andrews** comments that "Christians are not exempt from sickness and death. Often strong Christians, faithful servants, and dear saints of God get sick and die. Sickness and death is part of life on earth after the curse. Adam and Eve's sin brought the curse into the world through their sin and we have perpetuated it with our sin. **We need to clearly state here though that it was not sin that caused her sickness and death.** Unlike **Ananias and Sapphira** who died as a direct result of their sins, Dorcas did not die because of some known rebellion against God. When she died she left a huge hole in the church at Joppa! There were not many Dorcas' running around to step us and do what she had done."

The events in Dorcas' death and restoration recall

In 1 Kings 17:17-24, Elijah carried the dead body of a widow's son to the upper room where he was staying, laid him on the bed, and then prayed.

He called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him." The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." (1 Ki 17:20-23)

In 2 Kings 4 Elisha was called on to restore the life of a woman's only son

Then she (Shunem, a prominent woman of Shunem who Elisha prophesied would bear a son 2 Ki 4:16-17) said, "Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?" 29 Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, do not salute him, and if anyone salutes you, do not answer him; and lay my staff on the lad's face." 30 The mother of the lad said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." And he arose and followed her. 31 Then Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff on the lad's face, but there was no sound or response. So he returned to meet him and told him, "The lad has not awakened." 32 When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed. 33 So he entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to the LORD. 34 And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the child became warm. 35 Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes. 36 He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son." (2 Ki 4:28-35)

In Jesus' ministry, the Lord and His disciples came upon a funeral in Nain. The deceased was the only son of a widow.

When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. (Luke 7:13-15)

See Jesus restoration of Jairus' daughter below ([note](#))

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**Ray Stedman** applies this passage - Something can interrupt the progress of a spiritual life which is beginning to blossom, to flourish and bear fruit, to grow and minister to others. Some circumstance, some event or experience, can interrupt and change it and cause it to die. The person loses that zeal, earnestness, and eagerness, and becomes cold and hard, indifferent and unconcerned, bitter of spirit. He literally is like someone dead.

A lot of people are like that. Some have been dead for years and are still walking around. (**ED:** cf spiritual death of non-believers Eph 2:1+) That reminds me of the famous comment by Dorothy Thompson, the newspaper reporter, when she heard of the death of Calvin Coolidge. She said, "*How could they tell?*" Many are like that. Their life of service has been interrupted by some incident which has been like the hand of death laid upon a zealous and earnest ministry. They have grown cold and indifferent, the very picture of death.

This can go on for years. [Edwin Markham](#), the great Christian poet, once knew a banker whom he entrusted with the settlement of an estate. The banker betrayed him, and Markham lost all his money and was rendered penniless by the deed. It made him bitter and for several years he could write no poetry. Then one day as he was trying to write he was sitting at his desk aimlessly scrawling circles. As he doodled, making these circles, suddenly the thought struck him of the great circle of God's love, of how it takes us in. He was struck with inspiration and wrote these words:

I drew a circle and shut him out;  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in.

He forgave the banker and was able to resume his ministry. After that came some of his greatest poems. This is what Jesus Christ can do. He can heal a dead spirit, raise it to life and restore it. He can heal the bitterness that may be in your life, rendering you cold and indifferent to the needs of others. ([Acts 9:32-10:23 The Cure For Death](#))

**Acts 9:38** Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us." ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV 9:38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

- **Lydda** Acts 9:32,36
- **imploring him** 2 Ki 4:28-30
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PETER'S PROFITABLE JOURNEY TO JOPPA

**Since Lydda was near Joppa** (Josh 19:46, 2 Chr 2:16; Ezra 3:7; Jonah 1:3) - See [map](#) showing **Lydda** which lies from 9-11 miles inland from **Joppa** which is on the coast, and about half a day's journey on foot.

**The disciples, having heard that Peter was there** - How did they hear? Since the distance was only 9-11 miles, a healthy person could have walked to Joppa in less than half a day. Presumably a disciple conveyed the news of Peter's presence and the miracle. You can count on it -- when God is at work in a place among a people, the work will spread of His presence and power! Remember also that **all in Sharon** turned to the Lord (Acts 9:35) and Sharon was not a city but described a large region ([see note](#)), so some of these new believers may have spread the news to Joppa.

**Steven Ger** - Yet again, this is unmistakable confirmation that in the first decades of the church age, only the apostles and their immediate associates were enabled to perform signs and wonders. The community of believers in Joppa was simply not equipped by God for miracles. It was not that they lacked faith that God could raise the dead; they exhibited their faith by summoning Peter. They knew that if there were any chance of such a miracle, they would need an apostle. The ability to perform signs, wonders and miracles was the divine validation of those with genuine apostolic authority, "the signs of a true apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12). **Time was of the essence.** According to Jewish law, a dead body outside of the confines of Jerusalem may remain unburied at most for three days and nights. Once Tabitha had died, it would have taken half a day's journey to reach Peter and then another half-day's journey back (**ED: LYDDA WAS ABOUT 10 MILES AWAY - ON FOOT ONE COULD TRAVEL THAT DISTANCE IN HALF A DAY**). This would allow for Peter to get from Lydda to Joppa, but with no margin for delay. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us** - This was an urgent matter that needed immediate response, but Luke gives us no record that the disciples actually asked Peter to perform a miracle. Perhaps they did but that is conjecture. What is fascinating is that the disciples express a sense of urgency, and yet Dorcas was already dead. While we have no records of the apostles restoring a dead person, clearly the disciples at Joppa must have believed Peter might be able to perform a miracle in the case of Dorcas. As disciples, they would have been aware that Jesus had restored Lazarus from the dead, and since Peter was His disciple, he might do the same. **Jack Arnold** adds that "it took great faith for the Christians to send for Peter. They could have said, "What is the use for Dorcas is already dead." Yet, they believed that Peter could raise Dorcas from the dead (**ED: POSSIBLY THIS IS WHAT THEY BELIEVED - WE CANNOT BE DOGMATIC**)." ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**Imploring** (present tense)([3870](#))([parakaleo](#) from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** = call) means literally to call one alongside, to call someone to oneself, to call for, to summon. **Parakaleo** can include the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical course of action. Sometimes the word means convey the idea of comfort, sometimes of exhortation but always at the root there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry. Clearly in this context **parakaleo** conveys the urging of the the two disciples to take the action of following them back to Joppa.

**Delay** ([3635](#))(**okneo**) means to hesitate, to be slow to respond, to hold back from doing something. Liddell-Scott says "to shrink from doing, to scruple, hesitate to do a thing, I shrink from being called, fear to be called, Soph.; I shrink from naming, hesitate to name, Dem.; to shrink, hesitate, hang back, Hdt., Soph., etc." **Okneo** is only here in the NT, but is found in Nu 22:16 and Jdg 18:9.

**Samuel Rutherford** - The Useful are Sometimes Snatched Unexpectedly Away - With many it is ebb water before the tide be at full. The lamps of their lives are wasted almost as soon as they are lighted. The sand of their hourglass is run out when they think it is but newly turned. But success before God depends not on the duration of one's life. The husbandman may pluck his roses and gather his lilies at midsummer, and he may transplant young trees out of the lower ground to the higher, where they have more of the sun. The goods are his own. The heavenly Husbandman makes no mistakes.

**Acts 9:39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. (NASB: Lockman)**

KJV 9:39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

- **and all the widows stood beside him** Acts 9:41; 8:2; 2 Sa 1:24; Pr 10:7; 1 Th 4:13

- **weeping and showing all the tunics and garments** Acts 9:36; 20:35; Job 31:19,20; Pr 31:30,31; Mt 25:36-39; 26:11; Mark 14:8; John 12:8; 2 Cor 8:12; Eph 4:28; 1 Th 1:3; James 2:15-17; 1 John 3:18
- **Dorcas used to make while she was with them** Eccl 9:10; Mt 17:17; Luke 24:44; John 17:12
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PETER FINDS A WASHED CORPSE AND WEeping CHRISTIANS

**So Peter arose and went with them** - **Arose** is the same verb [anistemi](#) used of Aeneas' arising, the same verb used of Jesus rising from the dead (Lk 24:7, 46+, Jn 20:9, Acts 2:32). In fact [anistemi](#) is used 7x in Acts 9 (Acts 9:6, 11, 18, 34, 39, 40, 41)

As an aside [anistemi](#) is used by far most often in the book of Acts...

Acts 1:15; Acts 2:24; Acts 2:32; Acts 3:22; Acts 3:26; Acts 5:6; Acts 5:17; Acts 5:34; Acts 5:36; Acts 5:37; Acts 6:9; Acts 7:18; Acts 7:37; Acts 8:26; Acts 8:27; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:18; Acts 9:34; Acts 9:39; Acts 9:40; Acts 9:41; Acts 10:13; Acts 10:20; Acts 10:23; Acts 10:26; Acts 10:41; Acts 11:7; Acts 11:28; Acts 12:7; Acts 13:16; Acts 13:33; Acts 13:34; Acts 14:10; Acts 14:20; Acts 15:7; Acts 17:3; Acts 17:31; Acts 20:30; Acts 22:10; Acts 22:16; Acts 23:9; Acts 26:16; Acts 26:30

**When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room** - Upper rooms are found three times in Acts. The first **upper room** was in Acts 1:13 where all the apostles were staying and continually devoting themselves to prayer with a gathering of about 120 persons (Acts 1:14-15). It was there that they selected Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26). In Acts 20:8-11 Paul was talking to a group in the **upper room** and Eutychus fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. Paul went down (Acts 20:10) fell upon him, embraced him and Eutychus returned to life. Paul went back up to the upper room and celebrated communion and talked with them until daybreak. In the OT Elijah (1Ki 17:19-24) took the woman's dead son to an **upper room** and the child was revived. In the Gospels Jesus shared the last supper with His disciples in the upper room (Lk 22:12+, Mk 14:15).

**And all the widows stood beside him, weeping** - The widows were not just silently weeping but were were wailing, mourning for the dead disciple Dorcas (cf Mt 2:18, Jn 11:31, 33). While professional mourners were often hired to "mourn" when a Jew died, there is little doubt that these women were professional mourners but mourning out of a sense of loss of this wonderful, grace filled woman.

**Kistemaker** - John Calvin observes that God could have kept Dorcas alive to care for the widows. But by raising her from the dead, God gave her two lives. At the same time, he showed the widows the power of his Son as the Author of life. (Ibid)

**Widows** (5503) ([chera](#) = feminine of **cheros** = bereft of one's spouse) means bereaved as would be a widow whose husband had died.

**Stood by** (3936) ([paristemi](#) from **para** = near, beside + **histemi** = place, set) literally means set beside and here means simply to physically stand by as were the two angels in Acts 1:10+ (cf Acts 23:2, 4). In Acts 9:41 it is used to describe Peter as he **'presented** her alive" to the disciples.

All Luke's uses of [paristemi](#) in Acts -

Acts 1:3; Acts 1:10; Acts 4:10; Acts 4:26; Acts 9:39; Acts 9:41; Acts 23:2; Acts 23:4; Acts 23:24; Acts 23:33;  
Acts 24:13; Acts 27:23; Acts 27:24

**Weeping** (2799) ([klaio](#)) means to mourn, to weep, to lament or to wail with emphasis upon noise accompanying weeping. The picture is of these widows lamenting with sobs or wailing aloud and was used to describe the wailing that took place when someone died. Weeping thus was a sign of the pain and grief for the entity or person being wept over. *Klaio* was a term frequently used to describe the actions of professional mourners, which these widows of course were not.

**And showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them** - **Used to make** is in the imperfect tense indicating Dorcas was making these articles of clothing again and again. The **tunics** were the close-fitting garments worn next the body, the **garments** indicate the looser outer cloaks that were worn over them. The fruit of Dorcas' ministry endured even though she was dead. Will the fruit of our ministry live on after our death?

Only one life

Twill soon pass

Only what's done for Christ

Will last.

This is a good ditty but it needs to be qualified and would be better stated "Only what's done **IN** Christ" will endure throughout eternity. Christian activity per se will not last, but only that which is borne by abiding in the Vine, relying on the Spirit of Christ's initiating and empowering effect (cf Jn 15:5)

**Brian Bill** - Interestingly, we don't know anything Tabitha **said** but we know a lot about what she **did**. We have no record of her words but we do know about her work because her life of servanthood spoke loudly. ([Sermon](#)) (**ED**: Corollary thought - Some Christians have a lot saying, but not a lot of doing. Doing that pleases God needs supernatural enablement from the Spirit but too much talking can end up quenching the Spirit necessary for "doing." - cf Eph 4:29, 30, Pr 10:19.)

**Showing** (1925) (**epideiknumi** from **epí** = upon + **deiknumi** = make known character of something by visual, etc means) literally means to cause to be seen (the sense in Acts 9:39) and figuratively means to prove to be true beyond a doubt and so to demonstrate convincingly (the sense in Acts 18:28).

**Tunics** (5509) (**chiton**) is a masculine noun. which refers to a close-fitting inner vest, an inner garment, an undergarment or in some contexts to any garment. At times two tunics seem to have been worn, probably of different materials for ornament or luxury (Mt. 10:10; Mk 6:9; Lu 3:11; 9:3).

**Garments** (2440) (**himation**) describes a garment of any sort, but especially an outer garment and in the plural (ta himatia) for clothes in general. In contrast the Greek word **chiton** refers to the garment worn under the outer cloak. The **himation** was something thrown over the inner tunic (chiton) and in secular Greek was sometimes used for the Roman toga.

**Brian Bill** - The phrase "robes and other clothing" in the original language refers to both their undergarments and their outerwear – **Tabitha** had made everything they were wearing. They were literally clothed in her compassion. And their custom clothing shows how Tabitha saw each one of them as individuals. ([Sermon](#))

**Jack Andrews** - Dorcas did what she could when she could. She made those tunics and garments when she was with them. Don't put off for tomorrow what you can and must do today. We need to get busy about serving Jesus now while we are alive. Good intentions will never be a blessing to anyone at anytime. The widows didn't just say a good word about Dorcas, but they showed the good works of Dorcas. My friend John McDaniel said, "The legacy that we leave depends on the life that we lived." Dorcas left a living testimony of her faithfulness and fruit for the Lord Jesus. What are you leaving behind? What can others say about you and show about your life and service?

**Punshon** - There are no trifles in the moral universe of God. God has placed you in a position in which you can be honest and excel. Do your duty in the present and God will take care of the future.... Don't live in the cloudland of some transcendental heaven; do your best to bring the glory of a real heaven down and ray it out upon your fellows in this work-day world.

**Dorcas** is a excellent example of Solomon's wise word in Ecclesiastes (and an excellent example to imitate)...

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

**Comment** - The use of **Sheol** should not be confused with a state of damnation, because in this context it signifies the "**grave**" (Eccl 9:10NET, Eccl 9:10NLT, Eccl 9:10NIV), so the idea is that when we enter the grave, our work for God ceases. One is reminded of the words of Jesus "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4)

**Criswell** - There is no attempt here to describe the nature of the existence of man in the "grave" (sheol, Heb.). Rather, the verse simply indicates that earthly activities cannot be continued beyond this life.

**Acts 9:40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

KJV 9:40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

- **But Peter sent them all out** Mark 5:40; 9:25; Luke 8:54
- **and knelt down** Acts 7:60; 20:36; 21:5
- **and prayed** 1 Ki 17:19-23; 2 Ki 4:28-36; Mt 9:25
- **And she opened her eyes** Mark 5:41,42; John 11:43,44



- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PETER DEPENDS ON THE LORD FOR DORCAS' REVIVAL

**But Peter sent them all out** - This verb ([ekbállō](#)) is a rather strong verb which literally means "to cast out." Perhaps they did not want to leave so Peter used some gentle pressure ! There was no auditorium full of people like the fake healers on television. This was not to be a "show!" While there is no record that Peter had ever raised someone from the dead, it is worth noting that Jesus at one time had given him the power to raise people from the dead declaring to His disciples ""Heal the sick, raise the dead..." (Mt. 10:8).

**Arnold** adds "notice how Peter raised Dorcas. He did not do it before a crowd. He sent everyone away. He sought no publicity and no personal glory. His only goal was to glorify Christ. How different was Peter than the so-called modern day faith healers who draw only attention to themselves and to these so-called miracles before thousands." ([The Miracle Worker](#))

Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter was also done after putting everyone out...

**Mark 5:40** They began laughing at Him. But **putting them all out**, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and \*entered the room where the child was.

**Jack Andrews** - Everything we do should be preceded by and permeated with prayer. Without prayer we'll have no power in ministry. Our serving and singing will be lifeless and fruitless. Our preaching and teaching will be ineffective. Our witness and work will be null and void! Our meetings and music will be boring. Many years ago five young college students made their way to London to hear Charles Haddon Spurgeon preach. Arriving early at the Metropolitan Tabernacle they found the doors still locked. While they waited on the steps, a man approached them. He asked, "Would you like to see the heating apparatus of this church?" That is not what they had come for, but they agreed to go with him. He led them into the building, down a long flight of stairs, and into a hallway. At the end of the hallway he opened a door into a large room filled with seven hundred people on their knees praying. "That," said, their guide (who was none other than Spurgeon himself), "is the heating apparatus of this church." There is power in prayer! Do we really believe that? Peter was dependent on the Lord Jesus, are we? David Jeremiah said, "I think Peter wanted to be alone with the Lord, knowing that he had no ability in himself to raise Dorcas from the dead. There is a great temptation in this life after experiencing some successes to think we must really have it together. Trust me— we don't! If we don't live in dependency on the Lord, nothing is going to happen in the long run in our lives. If you want God's blessing, you have to be dependent on Him." **Prayer acknowledges dependence on God.** Peter bowed down before the Lord and depended on Him

**And knelt down and prayed** - Peter did not claim power to raise the dead and was not presumptuous (like many of the television evangelists!) Peter had seen Jesus raise the dead, but no apostle had yet performed such a miracle. While Luke does not record Peter's words, clearly his prayer showed his submission to and dependence on God the Giver and Taker of all life.

In the OT Elijah also prayed for the life of a child in an upper room. So after "he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child's life return to him. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah and the life of the child returned to him and he revived." (1 Ki 17:21, 22).

When Jesus raised **Lazarus** He prayed

So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."(John 11:41, 42).

**Related Resource** - [Apostolic and Other Resurrections](#)

**And turning to the body** - When he prayed he turned away from Dorcas' corpse, presumably so as not to be distracted in prayer. If I see a roach when I am praying it distracts me, so just imagine seeing a corpse. And keep in mind that Peter has never personally been used by God to revive a dead person, so this is new territory for him. Notice that Peter is still on his knees as he turns to Tabitha's corpse, still lifeless. Presumably he has heard from God's Spirit in prayer and so he turns around to issue a command with Spirit enabled confidence.

**He said, "Tabitha, arise"** - After hearing from the Lord, he spoke to the lady. Peter issues a command (aorist imperative) from Tabitha to rise ([anistemi](#)) from the dead, the command he had given to Aeneas to **get up** (see [anistemi](#)) from the paralysis (Acts 9:34).

**Kistemaker** notes that "Unlike the two prophets Elijah and Elisha, who raised children from the dead by touching them (1 Kings 17:19–23; 2 Kings 4:32–35), Peter spoke to the body of Dorcas."

**Steven Ger** - Peter had heard Jesus speaking to the dead girl in Aramaic, **Talitha cumi**, "little girl, arise." Peter, changing only one letter in His teacher's phrase, uttered the words, **Tabitha cumi**, "Tabitha, arise." The corpse immediately opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up in the bed. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** comments that "Jesus took the girl by the hand before He spoke to her (Mk 5:41), for He was not afraid of becoming ceremonially defiled (ORTHODOX JEWS BELIEVED TOUCHING A DEAD BODY WOULD RESULT IN CEREMONIAL DEFILEMENT); and Peter took Dorcas by the hand after she had come to life. In both instances, it was the power of God that raised the person from the dead, for the dead person certainly could not exercise faith. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Jack Andrews** - When God's at work in a person's life even dead people can hear. God can speak to dead people. When he speaks to the dead they do not stay dead. God used His servant to do a great miracle in Joppa.

You and I as believers were once dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1+), but when God's Spirit spoke to our dead spirit, we came alive. As Paul says "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." (Eph 2:4-5+) When God speaks to the spiritually dead they are able to hear the word of God and be saved and open up their spiritual eyes and see.

**Jack Arnold** - The Apostle Peter, as one who had the Apostolic sign gift of miracles, raised Dorcas from the dead. She was restored from the dead. This is a beautiful picture of how Christ takes a sinner who is in a hopeless spiritual condition of death and brings him alive. At the command of Christ, the sinner comes to spiritual life. God quickens and the sinner believes in Christ and is gloriously saved. Every time a person is saved a marvelous miracle takes place which is a greater miracle than raising the dead. ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up** - Enabled by the Holy Spirit Dorcas obeyed Peter's command. Luke does not record any words spoken by Dorcas which is interesting. Perhaps God wants us to wait to heaven to hear her description of the event. Heaven will be an exciting place for sure!

**Matthew Henry** pointed out that the first sign of life in the raising of dead souls to spiritual life is the opening of the eyes of the mind which is exactly what Jesus told Paul when He gave him his assignment to go to the Gentiles "**to open their eyes** so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18+, cf 2 Cor 4:3-6+).

**She opened** (455) ([anoigo](#) from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open, to open up, to open again, to give access to. [Anoigo](#) refers as here to literal opening of the eyes (Acts 9:8, 40) meaning to cause to see, restore sight (Mt. 9:30; 20:33; John 9:10, 14, 17, 21, 26, 30, 32; 10:21; 11:37; Sept.: In the Millennium = Isa. 35:5+). Figuratively it means to open the eyes or the understanding of the mind, to cause to perceive and understand, as in Acts 26:18.

**She sat up** (339) ([anakathizo](#) from **ana** = up + **kathizo** = to sit) is used only twice in the NT and both uses are [intransitive](#), and both refer to the action of someone who was raised from the dead (Luke 7:15 = "The dead man **sat up** and began to speak"; Acts 9:40; no uses in the Septuagint). This verb was often used by secular medical writings. **VGNT** has a use in an ancient letter "she seems ... to be in a more tolerable state in that she **has sat up**, but nevertheless she is still in a somewhat sickly state of body." Dorcas sat up in her own power.

We read a similar miracle performed by Jesus when Jairus' daughter died, an event witnessed by Peter, John and James...

Luke 8:41 And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house; 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him...49 While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." 50 But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, "Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well." 51 When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except **Peter and John and James**, and the girl's father and mother. 52 Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." 53 And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. 54 He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, "**Child, arise!**" 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up **immediately**; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat. 56 Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened. (Lk 8:41-43, 49-55+, cf Mk 5:35-43, Mt 9:23-25)

**Acts 9:41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.**

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KJV 9:41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

- **he gave** Acts 3:7; Mark 1:31
- **calling the saints and widows** Acts 6:1; Job 29:13; Ps 146:9; Luke 7:12
- **he presented her alive** 20:12; Ge 45:26; 1 Ki 17:23; Luke 7:15
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A REUNION AFTER REVIVAL

**And he gave her his hand and raised her up** - He could have let her arise on her own, but he reached out to assist her. On the other hand he did not touch her while she was dead, but only once she was alive. Was he fearful of becoming "unclean?" If so, it is surprising he would spend many days with a tanner who was considered unclean by most Jews (Acts 9:43).

**Raised her up** (450) see [anistemi](#). Same verb used to command Aeneas to Arise (Acts 9:34) and Tabitha to Arise (Acts 9:40).

As **Andrews** says "When we minister to others we need to be there for them and do what we can to get them back on their feet. Peter didn't just talk about ministry, but he was involved in ministry. You and I need to make sure that we are getting our hands involved in lifting others up. There are needs all around us and we must not be oblivious to them. Let us get involved in Jesus name."

**David Guzik** comments that "We should remind ourselves that Dorcas was not resurrected; she was resuscitated to her old life, where she would die again. The fact that the Lord raised Dorcas, yet Stephen (and later, James in Acts 12:2) remained dead, reflects on God's unknowable ways. After all, it certainly seemed that Stephen and James were more important to the church than Dorcas. Yet we must always trust God's greater wisdom and knowledge in all such things. Dorcas wasn't raised for her own sake. She would have enjoyed heaven better! She was raised for the sake of her ministry to others, which is the same reason we have passed from death into life (John 5:24)."

**And calling the saints** (set apart ones - [hagios](#)) **and widows** ([chera](#)) **he presented her alive** - Imagine the scene. Crying turned to celebrating. Tears gave way to giving of thanks. Mourning was turned to dancing, as gladness replaced sadness. Peter had sent them out weeping and wailing but calls them in to experience rejoicing and renewal of fellowship with dear Dorcas.

**Presented** (3936) ([paristemi](#) from **para** = near, beside + **histemi** = place, set) literally means to place or set beside or near and hence to place at someone's disposal (in a sense Dorcas was now at the saints and widows "disposal" ready to resume the will and work of the Lord!).

**Alive** (2198) ([zao](#)) means she had returned to physical life from the dead (cf Mt 9:18). Talk about a **'near death experience!'** Isn't it fascinating (and very instructive) that she did not describe her own "near death experience." Paul also almost certainly had a "near death experience" in Acts 14:19, 20 (compare his later description in 2 Cor 12:3, 4 which would have been about the same time as the event in Acts 14). The upshot is that neither Dorcas or Paul described their experiences! THE LESSON IS VERY CLEAR TO THE MODERN CHURCH YEARNING TO SEE THE SUPERNATURAL! BEWARE! Be very cautious when people begin to speak or write about Near Death Experiences! [What does the Bible say about near death experiences? \(What happens after death?\)](#)

**Jack Arnold** asks - The question still may be asked, "Do people get raised from the dead today?" Pentecostals and charismatics make these claims, but they can never be proven to my satisfaction. It is always something which happens in Indonesia, or South Korea or Haiti where it is almost impossible to authenticate. My personal conviction is that Christ does not raise the dead today because this was tied up with the sign-gifts which are no longer in existence. But this I know for sure. God does a far greater miracle than raising the physical dead every time he shoots spiritual life into an unregenerate sinner. Men come to life as they are quickened by the Spirit. Christ brings Christ-rejecting sinners to spiritual and eternal life through the supernatural new birth. When men and women, boys and girls pass from death to life this is a far greater miracle than what occurred in Dorcas. ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**Brian Bill** - We don't hear about what happens next but I don't think she went out on a speaking circuit to give her testimony. I'm convinced that after she regained her strength, she went right back to her quiet and unassuming service. Miracles always magnify God and work to spread the good news of His glory. When you hear of someone claiming a miracle and all they're doing is focusing on themselves, your guard should go up. Look at verse 42: "This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord." This is actually the greater miracle. ([Sermon](#))

## Acts 9:42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

KJV 9:42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

- **many believed in the Lord** Acts 9:35; 11:21; 19:17,18; John 11:4,45; 12:11,44
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### MIRACULOUS RESURRECTION AGAIN STIMULATES EVANGELISM

**It became known all over Joppa** - "It" of course is the resurrection of Dorcas from the dead. The good news spread throughout the city. How did it spread? They had no group text messaging. No, the disciples dispersed throughout the city with the good news of physical revival which would pave the way for the reception of the good news of spiritual rebirth to any of the souls in the city who were not believers.

We see a similar effect in both the OT and NT but sadly neither of these miracles has any record of conversions as a result...

1 Kings 17:24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

Luke 7:16-17 Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

**Jack Andrews** adds "The church, the saints, the widows told everyone, but Dorcas was living proof. She was a living testimony of the power of God. When dead men and women began to live around here word will spread through this town. We need God to do a resurrection miracle amongst His church today."

**Jack Arnold** comments that "When we Christians live like supernaturalists, this will be attractive to the unsaved, and as they see men whose lives are supernaturally changed by Christ, they will be drawn to Christ." ([The Miracle Worker](#))

**Brian Harbour** wrote, "Not only did the power in Peter's life come from Jesus, but also the manifestation of that power pointed people to Jesus."

**Steven Cole** comments that "when a sinner is raised from spiritual death to spiritual life, it will be evident to all who knew the person before and after. Just as these two miracles resulted in the salvation of many others who saw the evidence, so the evidence of our changed lives should attract many to our Savior." ([Faith in the God of All Power Acts 9:32-43](#))

**THOUGHT** - As testimony to the truth of Cole's statement, shortly after I came to faith in Christ at the late age of 39, my two oldest children came to faith and we had the joy of all three being baptized together, and were joined by my wife who had been saved several years earlier. About 30 years later my youngest son came to faith. My youngest daughter is still somewhat uncertain. The two miracles in Acts 9 beg the question "As far as you know (and you may not always know) has anyone come to faith in Christ as they witnessed your before and after behavior? This question is not meant to place you under any guilt and I am sure there have been many godly conversions where no family member followed. In fact Paul even speaks to this point in 2 Cor 2:14-16- *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"* (THERE IT IS - WHO IS ADEQUATE FOR THESE THINGS WHETHER OTHERS ARE SAVED OR TURNED OFF BY OUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST? OF COURSE THE ANSWER IS NO ONE EXCEPT CHRIST, TO WHOM BE ALL THE GLORY. AMEN.)

**Cole** adds this note - These two miracles must have taken everyone by surprise. There was no human hope in either situation. But where there was no human hope, God miraculously broke in with His power and accomplished in an instant what no one could ever do. Sometimes (my experience is, quite often) we view difficult situations and people from our human, horizontal perspective, forgetting that with God, nothing is impossible (Lu 1:37; Je 32:17). Sometimes we see a person who seems so far gone in sin that we despair, thinking, "There's no way that he will ever come to Christ!" It's true, there is no human way. But God is mighty to save sinners. Whether the corpse is washed and dressed in clean clothes or whether it is smelly and dirty, dressed in rags, it's still a corpse. It makes no difference to God what the corpse is wearing! He has the power to impart new life to dead sinners. So we should be encouraged boldly to share the gospel with others, knowing that it is not our power or the other person's will power that

will bring about the change. It is God's mighty power; if He raises the dead, the dead will be raised! ([Faith in the God of All Power Acts 9:32-43](#))

**Brian Bill** - Some of you really excel in expressions of servanthood because God has given you a special ability to serve. Perhaps you're a quiet practitioner of acts of kindness just like Tabitha was. You notice needs that others don't even see and you find joy in meeting them. This is one of the most important evangelistic methods because service-style evangelists touch people nobody else can reach. Serving breaks through cynicism and a helping hand can soften a hard heart. Whether it's making meals, sewing clothes, fixing cars, hanging drywall, or working in a Food Pantry, God can use you to point people to Christ. It was Francis of Assisi who said, "At all times preach the gospel. When necessary, use words."....The true measure of our effectiveness as a church is not defined by what happens "in here" but by what happens "out there." James 1:27 says: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." We've said this before but it's so true: No one can do everything but everyone can do something. ([Sermon](#))

**And many believed in the Lord** - Note that **believed in the Lord** is synonymous with **turned to the Lord** in Acts 9:35+. So the effect of the miracle resulted in "**many**" placing their faith in Jesus.

Notice Luke says they "**believed in the Lord.**" So while Luke does not give us any background, we can deduce with a high degree of confidence that Peter preached the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to those at Joppa (just as he would have done at Lydda). As he had clearly stated in Acts 4:12+ (CONTEXT - Acts 4:10-11) "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other Name (OTHER THAN JESUS) under heaven that has been given among men by which **we must be saved.**" And so they placed their faith in that Name, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, John records that the response of the Jews as "positive" writing...

Therefore **many of the Jews** who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, **believed** in Him. (Jn 11:45)

John later describes the negative effect of Jesus' miracle in Jn 12:10 and then the positive effect in Jn 12:11

But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; because on account of him **many** of the Jews were going away and **were believing in Jesus.** (Jn 12:10, 11)

**John MacArthur** said, "It may be affirmed that **turning to the Lord** (Acts 9:35+), a phrase commonly used in Acts, is synonymous with **believing in the Lord.** There is no saving faith without conversion, no true belief without repentance and transformation."

**Believed** (4100) (**pisteuo**) means to consider something (what the Bible says about Jesus) to be true and therefore worthy of trust. To have a firm conviction as to the efficacy and ability of Jesus' finished work on the Cross to save one's soul from eternal separation from God.

**Herbert Lockyer** - The miracle in that upper chamber, then, was not a miracle for the sake of a miracle. Dorcas raised from physical death became the cause of the resurrection of many from their graves of sin and unbelief. How the church at Joppa must have increased its membership through the many who were saved as the result of the return of Dorcas from the realm of death. After the resurrection of Lazarus we read that many of the Jews believed on Jesus. Is not the same true in a spiritual resurrection? A transformed life attracts others to the Saviour

**Swindoll** explains that "During what we call the apostolic era—the time between the Lord's ascension and the death of John, the last of the twelve apostles—the Holy Spirit gave preachers and teachers miraculous abilities. The purpose was to validate the message of the gospel as authentically from God. As I have stated before, the book of Acts documents an unusual time of transition in history. The new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) had come in sudden and dramatic power, and God spoke through apostles. But this time of transition came to an end.

**John Walvoord** in his book **The Holy Spirit** has a helpful chapter on **Temporary Spiritual Gifts.**

It is clear from a comparison of present-day Christian experience to that of the apostolic age that certain evident contrasts exist. While the Gospel remains unchanged, and many of God's methods of dealing with His own continue throughout the present dispensation, certain factors disappeared with the passing of the apostles and their generation. Different explanations have been offered to account for this. No doubt the church as a whole has drifted from its moorings and is unworthy of the same display of spiritual power. In every generation, however, there has been a faithful remnant of saints true to God, and to these God can continue to reveal Himself in fullness, but even those who have remained close to apostolic doctrine have failed to evidence the same outward phenomena.

The best explanation of the passing of certain gifts and their manifestation is found in the evident purpose of God in the apostolic age. During the lifetime of the apostles, it pleased God to perform many notable miracles,

in some cases quite apart from the question of whether the benefit was deserved. A period of miracles is always a time when special testimony is needed to the authenticity of God's prophets. Three notable periods of miracles are recorded in the Bible as history: (1) the period of Moses; (2) the period of Elijah and Elisha; (3) the period of Christ and the apostles. In each of these periods there was need of evidence to authenticate the message of God. In the case of Moses, the miracles performed witnessed to his office as prophet and leader, causing the people to accept his messages as from God. In the time of apostasy and declension under Elijah and Elisha, there was need for unusual witness to the power of God to call a people back to Himself, especially in lieu of priests who were true to God. In the time of Christ, again there is special need for miracles to witness to His Person, to give the proper credentials for the Messiah, and in the case of the apostles, to demonstrate that their Gospel was a message from God. An unusual display of miracles is, therefore, not an ordinary feature of each generation, to be called down at will even by the godly, but is rather articulated in the purpose of God for its value in promotion of His truth.

With the completion of the New Testament, and its almost universal acceptance by those true to God, the need for further unusual display of miraculous works ceased. The preacher of today does not need the outward evidence of ability to heal or speak with tongues to substantiate the validity of his Gospel. Rather, the written Word speaks for itself, and is attended by the convicting power of the Spirit. It is not a question of the power of God to perform miracles, but simply whether it is His purpose to continue the same form of manifestation of divine power as seen in the apostolic times. Certain sects have clung to the idea that the unusual features of the apostolic age will be reproduced in any age where people truly seek them in faith from God. It is evident, however, that some of the most godly people of recent generations have been entirely without the spiritual gifts which are here classed as temporary. It is evident, also, that some who have claimed these temporary gifts in the present day have evidenced a gross indifference to the Bible as a whole, to Christian morality, and to the higher claims of a spiritual life. The history of these sects is most convincing in demonstrating that the undue seeking of spiritual gifts results only in excesses of the most unholy kind.

It is impossible in the nature of the case for anyone to cover the whole realm of Christian experience. Not only in the realm of spiritual gifts but also in other fields of doctrine there has been a constant parade of those who justify doctrines on the basis of varied experiences. The final test must always be what the Scriptures actually teach. Experience may serve as a partial test of the conclusions, but in itself the Bible must be taken as the final authority. **Experience ever possesses two fatal grounds for error:** (1) a misapprehension of the experience itself in its content and divine origin; (2) a faulty conclusion as to the doctrinal meaning of the experience. Hence, on the one hand, an experience supposedly of divine origin may be purely psychological, or worse, a deceiving device of Satan himself. On the other hand, a genuine experience may be misunderstood and mislabeled, as the common denomination of the work of the filling of the Spirit as the baptism of the Spirit. The Christian seeking the truth must come in all humility and dependence on the Spirit to the Word of God, relying on its teachings implicitly, avoiding even by undue emphasis any warping of the truth. ([See Section 3. Temporary Spiritual Gifts](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S MIRACULOUS POWER TO HEAL A SIN SICK SOUL** - Evangelist Luis Palau answered the phone in Ecuador. On the other end, a woman requested an appointment with him the next morning at Ac 9:30. He had no idea that she was the secretary of the Communist party in Ecuador. She arrived promptly the next day, accompanied by two bodyguards who stood outside. After looking around for hidden recording devices, the woman sat down and without introduction, for 20 minutes poured out a barrage of verbal abuse, attacking the government, Christianity, and Mr. Palau's character. At first Palau was speechless. He had never seen such hatred unleashed from anyone.

When the woman finally paused for a moment, Palau snatched the silence and asked, "Madam, is there anything I can do for you? How can I help you?" She stared at him and then began to sob uncontrollably. Finally, when she was composed enough to speak, she said, "You know, in the 38 years that I have lived, you are the first person who has ever asked if he could help me."

Palau asked her name. Her face instantly hardened again. "Why do you want to know?" "Well, you've said a lot of things here, and I don't even know you." She gave him her name, Maria Benita-Perez, and for three hours she poured out her life story, which reeked with sin and guilt. Finally she paused and asked, "Palau, suppose there is a God—and I'm not saying there is—do you think He would receive a woman like me?"

"Look, Maria," Palau replied, "don't worry about what I think; look at what God says." He opened his Bible and turned it so she could see. "But I don't believe in the Bi—"

"But we're supposing there's a God, right?" Palau interjected. "Let's suppose the Bible is His Word. Listen to what God says: 'Their

sins and lawless acts I will remember no more” (Heb 10:17). She went on to tell him more of her sins: she had stabbed a man who later committed suicide. She had led riots where people had been killed. She had been married three times, committed adultery numerous times, and done all sorts of other terrible things. Each time she told him her past sins, 17 times in all, Palau responded by quoting, “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

Finally, after a long silence, she said softly, “If He could forgive me and change me, it would be the greatest miracle in the world.” Within ten minutes, Palau witnessed that miracle as she confessed her sins, asked for God’s forgiveness, and received the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior (told in tract, The American Tract Society).

God’s saving a sinner, whether a notorious sinner or a more respectable sinner, is always a miracle, no less than His healing a paralyzed man or raising a dead woman to life. He wants to use us to bring that miraculous cure to the sinners we meet. We need to remember that the gospel is nothing less than the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Ro 1:16). (Cited by Steven Cole [Faith in the God of All Power Acts 9:32-43](#))

## Acts 9:43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon

KJV 9:43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

- a tanner named Simon Acts 10:6,32
- Acts 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### PETER'S VISIT WAS NOT A ONE WEEK "TENT REVIVAL!"

**Bruce Barton** - The final verse of chapter 9 mentions Peter’s lodging with Simon, a leatherworker (also called a “tanner”). This is significant because under Jewish law, leatherworkers (people who made leather out of animal hides) were considered “unclean.” Like a trickle of water through a dike, this single sentence foreshadows the great and imminent flood of God’s mercy to the Gentiles. (Borrow [Life Application Commentary page 506](#))

**And Peter stayed many days in Joppa** - We can only surmise that he was discipling the new disciples of Jesus. How long is many days? We cannot be definitive but clearly Luke is conveying to us the fact that Peter remained in Joppa for a while and until he was called to go to Caesarea by the Sea in Acts 10.

**Many days** - It is interesting that only Dr Luke uses the phrase '**many days**' in the New Testament (10 times - Lk. 15:13; Acts 1:5; Acts 9:23; Acts 9:43; Acts 13:31; Acts 16:18; Acts 18:18; Acts 25:14; Acts 27:7; Acts 27:20). Note that Jesus used **many days** in Acts 1:5 to describe the disciples' coming baptism with the Spirit, which was **about 10 days** after His ascension (cf "forty days" in Acts 1:3 and the fact that Pentecost is fifty days after Passover).

**A T Robertson** on **many days** - Luke is fond of the phrase and uses it for time, number, size. It might be “ten days, ten months, or ten years” (Page). ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** comments that "During the "**many days**" that he tarried in Joppa, Peter took the opportunity to ground these new believers in the truth of the Word, for faith built on miracles alone is not substantial. It was a good thing Peter tarried in Joppa, because God met with him there in a thrilling new way. God's servants need not always be "on the go." They should take time to be alone with God, to reflect and meditate and pray, especially after experiencing great blessings. Yes, there were plenty of sick people Peter might have visited and healed, but God had other plans. He deliberately detained His servant in Joppa to prepare him for his third use of "the keys."...God was moving Peter a step at a time from Jewish legalism into the freedom of His wonderful grace. (Ibid)

**With a tanner named Simon** - "The use of [para](#) is usual for staying with one (by his side)." (Robertson) This is the amazing statement. According to the laws of that time, a tanner had to live at least 75 feet (25 meters) outside a village because of his constant ritual uncleanness. For a Jewish man to accept the hospitality of a tanner is unthinkable, for fear of being made "unclean." The fact that Peter was willing to stay with Simon and not just overnight but for many days suggests that the Spirit was beginning to work on his heart about the significance of clean and unclean to his Christian walk. Peter was about to have a supernatural show on what God considered clean and unclean!

**Ellicott** - The Rabbis held that if a tanner about to marry concealed his occupation from his intended wife, the concealment was of the nature of a fraud that invalidated the contract (Schöttgen, Hor. Heb., in loc.). In taking up his abode with one of this calling, Peter must accordingly have been taking one step in advance towards greater freedom. He had learnt, partially at least, the lesson which

his Master had taught as to that which alone can bring with it real defilement (Mark 7:17-23), and was thus being trained for a fuller illumination. We have no data for determining the length of time implied in the **"many days."** In Acts 9:23, as we have seen, the words covered a period of nearly three years.

**A T Robertson** on **tanner** - "The more scrupulous Jews regarded such an occupation as unclean, and avoided those who pursued it. The conduct of Peter here shows that he did not carry his prejudices to that extent" (Hackett). One of the rabbis said: "It is impossible for the world to do without tanners; but woe to him who is a tanner." A Jewess could sue for divorce if she discovered that her husband was a tanner. **And yet Peter will have scruples on the housetop in the tanner's house about eating food considered unclean. "The lodging with the tanner was a step on the road to eating with a Gentile"** (Furneaux). ([Acts 9 Commentary](#))

**Tanner** (1038)(**burseus** from **bursa** = skin or hide of a beast flayed off their body) describes a person who prepares animal skins for use, a **tanner**, a "leather dresser." **BDAG** has an interesting note that **burseus** is "tanner, **surname** of Simon, a Christian in Joppa." Three uses in the Bible - Acts 9:43; Acts 10:6; Acts 10:32. No uses in the Septuagint. It is notable that Simon's house is twice described as **"by the sea."** (Acts 10:6, 32), rather than in the city (see informative Wikipedia note below). Tanners were considered "unclean" by the Jewish rabbis (see Lev. 11:35-40+).

**NET Note** on **tanner** (literally "Simon tanner") - "with a certain Simon Berseus." Although most modern English translations treat **bursei/** (**bursei**) as Simon's profession ("Simon the tanner"), it is possible that the word is actually Simon's surname ("Simon Berseus" or "Simon Tanner").

**Wikipedia note** on **tanner** - Formerly, tanning was considered a **noxious or "odoriferous trade" and relegated to the outskirts of town, amongst the poor.** Indeed, tanning by ancient methods is so foul smelling, tanneries are still isolated from those towns today where the old methods are used. Skins typically arrived at the tannery dried stiff and dirty with soil and gore. First, the ancient tanners would soak the skins in water to clean and soften them. Then they would pound and scour the skin to remove any remaining flesh and fat. Next, the tanner needed to remove the hair from the skin. This was done by either soaking the skin in urine,[citation needed] painting it with an alkaline lime mixture, or simply allowing the skin to putrefy for several months then dipping it in a salt solution. After the hairs were loosened, the tanners scraped them off with a knife. Once the hair was removed, the tanners would "bate" (soften) the material by pounding dung into the skin, or soaking the skin in a solution of animal brains. Bating was a fermentative process which relied on enzymes produced by bacteria found in the dung. Among the kinds of dung commonly used were those of dogs or pigeons.[2] Sometimes, the dung was mixed with water in a large vat, and the prepared skins were kneaded in the dung water until they became supple from bacterial enzyme action, but not too soft. The ancient tanner might use his bare feet to knead the skins in the dung water, and the kneading could last two or three hours. This combination of urine, animal feces, and decaying flesh made ancient tanneries malodorous. Children employed as dung gatherers were a common sight in ancient cities. Also common were "piss-pots" located on street corners, where human urine could be collected for use in tanneries or by washerwomen.

**Dennis Gaertner** - Living with one who earned his living by handling dead animals was a radical step for a rigid observer of the laws of purity. (College Press NIV Commentary)

**Steven Ger** - According to the Torah, contact with dead animals made one ceremonially unclean (Lev. 11:40). Therefore, in Jewish society, tanning, which by necessity entails continuous contact with the dead bodies of animals, was considered an unclean occupation. Tanners usually worked in or near their homes, and primarily because of the associated odor, those employed as tanners had to live a minimum of twenty-five yards outside the borders of a city. Jews ranked the occupation of tanning alongside those of prostitution, dung collecting, gambling and driving donkeys. ([Twenty-First Century Commentary-Acts](#))

**Arnold** - Here is another miracle which took place in the heart of Peter. A tanner worked with leather and had to work with the skins of dead animals. A tanner was considered unclean according to Jewish law and he was to be avoided by religious Jews. A tanner was such a social outcast that if a woman found out she married a tanner she could get a divorce from him. A tanner was the lowest thing on the social scale. Yet we are told that Peter as a converted religious Jew stayed in the home of Simon the Tanner. Peter received the victory over an ingrained prejudice in his life. He was bigoted, intolerant and opinionated against tanners as an unsaved Jew but Christ changed his heart towards people, even social outcasts. If the healing of Aeneas was a miracle and the raising of Dorcas a supernatural phenomenon, then victory over prejudice by Peter was an incredible thing. God changed the heart of a man steeped in religion and tradition. It is a marvelous work of God to save a person deep in sin such as an adulterer, thief, drunkard or drug addict. It is even a more wonderful work of God to save a good man who is filled with pride, self-esteem and self-righteousness. But the greatest work of all is when God saves a religious man. A man who attends church, gives intellectual assent to Christianity and even gives regularly of his time and money to the church, is a man who is trusting in his religious works



and not Christ to save him. To save a religious man is almost an impossible task and only God can do it. There is nothing more exciting than to watch a man receive the new birth and then watch this man shed his religious prejudices, traditions and formalisms.  
([The Miracle Worker](#))