

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter Nine The Conversion of Saul

Focus Verse: **Acts 9:20**

“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”

I. Study Introduction

- A. We now turn our attention to watch how God deals with the heart of a religious fanatic, who is set only on the destruction of New Testament Christianity. His name is Saul of Tarsus.
- B. As you will see, once Saul realises that He has been fighting against the Lord of both the Old and New Testaments, he quickly repents, and devotes his energies to saving souls instead of torturing them!

II. Background - Acts has so far presented the following events:

- A. Chapter:
 1. The Church was Commissioned
 2. The Church was Empowered
 3. Christianity Reaches out and Meets The Need - not elitist
 4. The Church Learned How To Stand-Up For Christ - face persecution
 5. The Church Learned to Stay True when under attack & in temptation
 6. The Church Began to Delegate the Work - involvement
 7. Christians Focused on Presenting the Lessons of Biblical History
 8. The Church Expanding - How It Grows
 - a. NT Christianity Expands By _____
 - b. NT Christianity Expands by the Right Response to _____
 - c. NT Christianity Expands by _____ - Miracles
 - d. NT Christianity Expands by Right _____ - Discernment
 - e. Christianity Expands by _____ - Soul-Winning
 9. We now turn to examine this young man named Saul, and watch as the Lord Jesus is working him over until he either goes crazy, or surrenders to Christ. This same process is going on all over this world!

III. Study Outline

- A. **Saul's Conversion (9:1-31)**
 1. Occurs to a most unlikely person (9:1) Saul of Tarsus
 - a. Super educated (Acts 22:3)
 - 1) Of Tarsus - very powerful family in very important city
 - 2) Educated at the feet of _____ - prominent teacher
 - 3) Able to fluently speak at least 5 languages (Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Iconium, Latin, etc.).
 - b. Super-dedicated - zealous, enthusiastic, fanatical
 - 1) A Jew - already very religious; very devout
 - 2) A _____ - not just a Jew, but a leader of the Jewish religion - like a Bishop would be in the Catholic Church
 - 3) Single-focused: all he talked about (“breathing out threatenings”), thought about, worked for, was the extermination of this “cult” and heresy (Acts 24:14)!
 - c. Super _____ - willful ignorance (1 Tim 1:12,13)
 - d. Super _____ (1 Tim 1:15)
 2. Occurs at a most unlikely time - as he sought to destroy Biblical Christianity (9:1,2) - He was not the least “curious” - not looking
 - a. He was expanding his realm of control - legally
 - b. He was coordinating a religious _____ - *in God's name*
 - c. He was forcing people's submission to a central power - Jerusalem, and the council at Jerusalem (not to the Scriptures)
 3. Occurs in a most unlikely manner (9:3-9; 26:12-19)
 - a. A blinding _____ from heaven - brighter than the sun
 - b. A _____ from heaven speaking directly to him
 - c. A sneaking suspicion - the work of the Holy Spirit to convince people that God's word is true (Mk 16:19,20)
 - d. A revelation from God (Gal 1:11,12,16)

- 1) That you are fighting God - not another religion, with all your good works, and ignorant zealotry for God
 - 2) That you are _____
 - 3) That Jesus is who He claimed to be - God in the flesh!
 - 4) There is a distinct danger in thinking that this is how anyone normally gets saved - Paul was the exception.
- e. A fear of God - “astonished and trembling”
- f. A complete **surrender** (9:6)
- 1) Didn't run; hide; or shun the work of the Holy Spirit
 - 2) Dealt directly with the One putting the pressure on him - spoke right back - the first prayer in his life that made it to heaven!
 - 3) Gave in to God's way of doing things - even though it didn't fit the way Saul had thought God should work (the same ideas ruined the Israelites in the wilderness)
 - 4) Requires simple _____ - one step at a time. Salvation is simply obeying the gospel (John 3:3; Ro 6:17; 10:16; 2 Thes 1:8; 1 Pet 4:17). Jesus did not explain all the details of what was happening, nor of what was going to happen to him, but just to follow His word.
 - 5) Produced _____ - blind now; helpless, just waiting; and alone (the other men did not hear the instructions)
 - 6) Produced the right kind of hunger - for God more than any food or fellowship from anyone else!
4. Involves using the most unlikely people (9:10-14) - a soul winner
 - a. God chose to use Ananias - a “nobody” - not an apostle
 - b. God chose to use someone who had doubts, but was willing to follow orders
 - c. God has this “nobody” deal with Saul (who was a VIP)!
 - d. *Oh that God would be allowed to use all of us* (Jam 5:20)
 5. Initiates the most incredible of plans (9:15,16)
 - a. God launches the greatest Christian life ever lived
 - b. Produces the greatest impact this world has yet to see
 - 1) Both on the world then - through preaching and setting up churches all over the then-known world (Acts 17:6)!
 - 2) And throughout all time - by preaching the _____!
 - c. Pays the greatest cost - it is not going to be easy - there will be great _____ (Cf Rom 1:14; Acts 20:26)
 - 1) The Christian got eternal life at great cost
 - 2) The Christian lives his life for Christ at great cost (Philp 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12; 2 Cor 11:23-29)
 - 3) The Christian looks forward to an eternal pay-back (Rom 8:16-18)
 6. Begins in the most humble of ways (9:17-20)
 - a. As a _____, with other nobodies - no longer “Dr.” Saul, or “Professor” or even “Mr.” Saul - just brother (Cf Mt 23:8)
 - b. As being in the dark - not knowing it all - starting empty! Ananias knew about Saul, and what God was doing - humiliating for you to not be able to tell people what you know!
 - c. As being dependent upon other Christians. God made Saul have to wait for Ananias to show up before he got his eyesight back, and the assurance of his salvation (8:17,18).
 - d. Saul had to publicly declare by baptism that he no longer was Jewish, but Christian - he was a follower of Jesus Christ!
 - e. Saul at first had to humbly sit and learn about Christ second-hand from the other disciples, because when Jesus had been around, Saul had been too proud to sit and listen for himself.
 - f. Saul starts right off making a fool out of himself (1 Cor 1:18,21) by going back to his old neighbourhood and _____! Saul did not try and sit next to the Apostles - he went to where the sinners were!
 7. Confounds both Jews (unbelievers), and Christians (9:20-26)
 - a. To Confound means to frustrate, embarrass, confuse.
 - b. Saul confused people about their own beliefs - to get them to see that they had missed Jesus! Bring shame to them!
 - c. Saul did this by preaching - not sharing, or pleading!
 - d. Saul confused people about assumptions - they thought Saul would never convert! What a testimony his life made!
 - e. Saul got people mad enough to want to kill him (John 15:20), so much so that he had to leave Damascus in a basket over a wall (9:23-26).
 - f. Saul then comes to Jerusalem, and thinks he will be welcomed with open arms, but is rejected by the Christians.

- 1) Question: Didn't all the Christians have the gift of discernment? Should they have been able to tell?
- 2) Question: Why did Saul have to run? Wasn't Jesus greater than the enemies of the cross?
- g. No amount of confusion or disagreement could discourage Saul - he was "on a roll" and only grew with the pressure!
- 8. Develops into Great Relationships (9:27-30)
 - a. Because of people who are willing to take risks - _____. His name means consolation, comfort, encourager. We miss so much when we won't take a risk for others!
 - b. Because of Saul's _____ (9:27) of salvation
 - 1) He had a changed life (9:27) - had fruit!
 - 2) He had proven himself to be faithful & consistent (9:28)
 - c. Because Saul went ahead and served God in spite of how he was treated by other Christians, and not caring whether the Apostles accepted him or not - Saul was serving ____ (9:29)!
 - d. Because Saul was content to serve _____ - he didn't have to be in Jerusalem for him to feel important (9:30).
- 9. Produced Godly results - good fruits (9:31)
 - a. The Churches had _____ for a while. Rest from persecution, but NOT rest from soul-winning! With the head man behind the persecution converted, the churches could go about their ministry free and basically unhindered (1 Tim 2:1,2).
 - b. Christians were edified: strengthened in the word - _____.
 - c. Christians learned not to fear any person, but only the Lord!
 - d. Christians learned that you can find comfort in the Holy Ghost - they realised that everything Christ said would happen, did, and that they were all the stronger for it!
 - e. People kept getting saved!

B. Peter's Continuing Ministry (9:32-43) - Last saw him in Chapter 5

- 1. His Miracle at **Lydda** and **Saron** (9:32-35)
 - a. Lydda is a town about 30 miles NW of **Jerusalem** in an area called Saron (**Sharon**)
 - b. Peter is going systematically throughout all the regions of Israel, preaching and healing so that _____ get saved
 - c. Peter meets *Christians* in Lydda - called "saints" while on earth - all Christians are saints - "holy ones" - **better live it!**
 - d. Peter heals **Aeneas**
 - 1) An _____ Jew
 - 2) Diseased with the palsy - a paralysis
 - 3) Bed-ridden for the past eight years
 - 4) Healed instantly by Peter without Aeneas's faith
 - 5) Causes the entire city to turn to Christ - just as in Acts 2
- 2. His Miracle at **Joppa** (9:36-43)
 - a. At the request of some people in Joppa, Peter leaves Lydda and heads 30 miles further NW to this important coastal town of Joppa - the same city where Jonah ran to find a ship away from God's will
 - b. He comes to Joppa to specifically heal Tabitha - Known as Dorcas (her name means: *a young _____*)
 - 1) A saved _____
 - 2) A hard-working _____ (Eph 2:8-10; Jam 2:17) like _____ (Luke 10:41)
 - 3) The Christians in Joppa sent for Peter - Why? No other Christian there was able to heal Tabitha - only Peter had that kind of a gift (as an Apostle)
 - 4) Peter heals without Tabitha's faith
 - 5) Results in many _____ getting saved (9:42)
 - c. Peter stays in Joppa for a break (9:43)
- 3. The Difference Between Peter's and Paul's Ministry:

Peter	Paul
Primarily to the Jew (Gal 2:9)	Primarily to the Gentile
Ministers mainly in Israel	Ministers mainly outside Israel
Emphasises Signs, Wonders and Miracles in reaching the Jews	Emphasises Preaching (1 Cor 2:1-5) to win all peoples
Does some work with Gentiles - Cornelius (Acts 10)	Does some work with the Jews (Acts 19:1-20)
Heads Southeast to Babylon (1Pe 5:13)	Heads Northwest to Rome (Act 28:14)

IV. Conclusion and Study Questions