

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Nine – The Conversion of Saul

ACTS 9:26-31:

Let us review this first journey of Saul of Tarsus, thus far:

He received warrants to arrest Christians in Damascus from the high priest in Jerusalem (**Acts 9:1-2**).

From Jerusalem, he travels towards Damascus and during this journey the Lord appeared to him, gave him instruction, and caused him to be blind (**Acts 9:3-9; Galatians 1:15-16**).

Saul was taken to Damascus, to the house of Judas. The Lord appeared to Ananias and commanded him to go to Saul. They were brought together, and Saul's conversion was completed, and his sight returned to him. He was introduced to the brethren in Damascus (**Acts 9:11-19**).

Saul then went into Arabia (the area east of Damascus), for a time to receive the revelation of Jesus Christ directly from the Lord (**Galatians 1:11-17**).

He then returned to Damascus and began to preach Jesus as the Christ in the synagogues of Damascus; amazing and confounding the Jews who knew the reason the high priest had sent him there (**Acts 9:20-22**).

Finally, at the end of three years-time (**Galatians 1:18**), and because of a plot by the Jews to kill Saul; he is going to have to flee Damascus in secret (**Acts 9:23-25**).

In this lesson, we will conclude this first journey of Saul of Tarsus, and see the results of the power of the doctrine of Christ when **“His body”** trusts and abides in it!



Text #1:

Acts 9:26-30 “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. ²⁹ And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. ³⁰ When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.”

Tried to Join the Disciples: Once Saul would finally come to Jerusalem for the first time since he left there with warrants for saints in Damascus; he would attempt to practice something we all should take notice of, which is that he tried to join with the saints there.

The church universal is made up of obedient saints in every location, and it is God who adds them to “**The Body of Christ**”; and in this action there is absolutely no error, as God knows the hearts of all men (**Acts 2:47; 5:14**).

Local bodies of Christ (specific locations such as the saints in Philippi – **Philippians 1:1**; the saints in Rome – **Romans 1:7**; etc.), are charged to accomplish worship and collective work in fellowship (joint participation). Since these local “**Bodies of Christ**” have also been charged to guard against those who would be divisive, disorderly, or immoral among them (**Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, 11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11, Titus 3:10**); in order to accomplish this task and still receive brethren in love, we see a pattern given here that needs our attention in order to avoid error on our part; not knowing the hearts of men.

The disciples of Jerusalem, being unaware of Saul’s conversion, did not believe that he was one of them, and were going to reject him from their fellowship. Barnabas: however, took him to the Apostles and offered his testimony of approval. This becomes a pattern of approval that will be practiced often in the New Testament (**Romans 16:3-16; 1 Corinthians 16:10-12; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7-15**; etc.). Later in the history of the early church, we would also find a pattern of disapproval for those who would come from within “**The Body**” and become enemies of Christ Jesus (**1 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 4:9-16; 3 John 9-12**).

The **second** important pattern to notice from this incident is that Saul knew that he was expected to join with saints in order to fulfill worship and the work that the Lord gave “**The Body of Christ**” to accomplish (it is to be done collectively). In the very beginning, those who obeyed the Gospel’s call continued in the Apostle’s doctrine, fellowship (joint participation to a common goal), breaking bread, and prayer (**Acts 2:42**); and the first day of the week is when the disciples of Christ “**Came together**” (collective – **Acts 20:7**).

The authorized work of “**The Body of Christ**” (**Ephesians 4:12**), is something that is also to be done collectively (**Ephesians 4:16**).

Coming In and Going Out: Unity was achieved with the brethren in Jerusalem, because of the pattern of approval demonstrated by Barnabas. This now allowed the unity necessary to promote the preeminence of Christ Jesus; demonstrated by Saul as he spoke boldly in His name (**Vs. 29**).

Of course, just as in Damascus, we see that when the enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot dispute the truth, they resort to attacking the messenger (here the Hellenists – Greek speaking Jews; the same group responsible for Stephen’s death, **Chapter 7**).

This will force the brethren to take Saul to Caesarea for his safety; then from there they would send him to Tarsus (this was his home – **Acts 22:18**). This will conclude the first journey of Saul

of Tarsus. It began in Jerusalem, then on to Damascus, Arabia, back to Damascus, to Jerusalem, to Caesarea, and finally to his home of Tarsus.

Text #2:

Acts 9:31 “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”

Edified: This is the building up of the brethren that make up these specific “**Bodies of Christ**” by the knowledge of His will in all wisdom, note:

Colossians 1:9-12 “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

Walking in the Fear of the Lord: The term “**Walking**”, or “**Walk**” is used to describe the lives of Christians as they live and work in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ; it becomes our vocation (**1 John 1:7**). Here Luke describes this walk as moving through life “**in the fear of the Lord**” (something the Apostles of the Lord would continue to instruct – **Romans 11:20; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:12; 1 Peter 1:17**; etc.).

We need to appreciate that this fear of the Lord is not a state of mind that prevents us from functioning due to an elevated level of anxiety, or terror. This is something that God has trained man from the very beginning to comprehend and use as a method to constantly evaluate our relationship with Him. The fear of the Lord as God has trained consists of:

A profound awe of His majesty and power.

An enthusiastic respect for His genuine interest in our relationship as children (Hebrews 12:5-11).

An intense awareness of God’s hatred for sin (Hebrews 10:26, 31).

A complete awareness towards the certainty of facing Him and giving an answer (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

An understanding that the fear of the Lord produces wisdom to His will and trust in His promises.

See these passages: **Job 28:28; Psalms 19:9; 110:10; Proverbs 1:7; 8:13; 10:27; 14:26-27; 19:23; 22:4; Isaiah 33:6.**

Comfort of the Holy Spirit: The Lord promised to His chosen before His arrest and subsequent death, that He would send the Spirit back to them, and the Spirit would act for them as a comforter (helper – **John 14:26**).

For these brethren and for you and me, this takes place through the process of edification (the building up by the word – **Colossians 1:9-12**); which has been revealed through the Apostles of Christ by the Spirit.

It is by faith that we receive the Spirit of God and His comfort (**Galatians 3:2, 5**); and faith comes by hearing the word of God (**Romans 10:17**).

The three attributes mentioned here make up the concept of abiding in Christ's doctrine (**1 John 2:6; 3:10, 24; 2 John 9**), and shows the success of "**The Body of Christ**" when it trusts every aspect of the Lord's instruction! Not only were they strengthened, but they grew and multiplied! This is trust in the Gospel of Christ!

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

This is what every joint supplies for the growth of the body in love, note:

Ephesians 4:13-16 "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."