

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Nine – The Conversion of Saul

ACTS 9:3-9:

In our previous lesson, we noted that Saul obtained letters (warrants) to go to Damascus and bring back Christians in chains to Jerusalem. We also introduced a good biography of Saul of Tarsus (also known as Paul – Acts 13:9). In this lesson, we will look into the events that will cause the unique turn around in the life of this devout Jew!



Text #1:

Acts 9:3-6 “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

⁵ And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”

Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It *is* hard for you to kick against the goads.”

⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Then the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.””

Saul, Saul: As Saul journeyed on his way in fulfillment of his mission, the miraculous presentation of the Lord to Saul takes place. The Lord initiates the confrontation and uses this emphatic exclamation of his name to state the following, “**Why are you persecuting Me?**”

We know that Saul was persecuting Christians (those of the Way); yet the Lord extolls the fact that persecuting them was in fact persecuting Him!

This speaks volumes concerning the true nature of the church (the **Body of Christ!**). It is not an organization, it is not a denomination, but it is organic and living; being made up of those who have been inducted into the Body of Christ – **Galatians 2:26-29**.

Who are You Lord? This statement of Saul explains that Saul did not know who was speaking to him as yet. This also lets us know that the use of the term “**Lord**” is used here by Saul as a title of respect.

Goads: The response of the Lord to Saul is a statement demanding that Saul recognize that his efforts are futile and detrimental to him.

A goad was a long pole, sharpened at one end that was placed behind an ox as they worked pulling a plow. It was designed to prod the ox forward by poking him and causing him pain if he balked at moving forward.

What do You want Me to Do? Saul’s response is indicative of his understanding of Who this is now, and that he was guilty of fighting against God in his violence against the Way.

Paul would later tell the Governor Felix that he “**always strived to have a conscience without offense toward God and men**” – **Acts 24:16**.

This helps us understand that Saul was the kind of man that knew that he must serve God to the best of his ability. This he did with an uneducated conscience (at first), and is now going to begin to serve God with an educated conscience.

The Lord’s response was not unique to the Gospel and the intended method that God chose for it to be distributed; in fact, it supports the universal method that the Gospel was to come to the

world, through preaching (**1 Corinthians 1:21**). Saul was simply told to go into Damascus, and it would be told to him, “**what he must do**”.

Text #2:

Acts 9:7-9 “**And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**”

Hearing a Voice: There has been much controversy over this portion of the text, claiming discrepancy, when in fact none exists. Everything we need to know about this is defined here and in the other two accounts of these events given by Paul.

First, in this account given by Luke, the word hearing comes from the Greek founding word, “*Phonas*”, which means ‘heard a sound without comprehension’.

Second, let’s look at Paul’s first account of these events:

Acts 22:9 “**And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.**”

In Paul’s account he uses the founding Greek word, “*Phonan*”, which means to hear and understand; however, he precedes this word by the fact that **they “did not”** “*phanan*” (hear to understand).

Third, let’s look at Paul’s second account of these events:

Acts 26:14 “**And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*’”**

Once again Paul uses, “*Phonan*”; but here describes that even though all had fallen down, only he heard and understood what was said. He includes that it was probably because of the language that was being spoken.

We learn in this exercise that all heard sounds, but only Paul understood the Lord’s words to him. We also learn that only Paul was witness to Who it was that spoke to him.

Blind: We also learn that at the conclusion of these events, Saul was unable to see at all! He will have to be led into Damascus. The issue of his blindness is given by Luke the physician in **verse 18**, in that something like scales would fall off his eyes.

We also learn at the conclusion of this encounter, that Saul demonstrates a penitent attitude, as he neither eats nor drinks during the interlude before the coming of Ananias.