

# EARNING THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD / Sunday, October 11, 2015

## Unifying Topic: SAUL EARNS CREDIBILITY

I. Saul, The Convert (Acts 9:19-22)

II. Barnabas, The Connector (Acts 9:23-28)

III. Saul, The Champion (Acts 9:29-31)

**The Main Thought:** And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God (Acts 9:20, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Effective advocates boldly tell others about their deepest convictions. What impact does a strong and bold testimony have on the lives of others? The Scripture claims that Saul's bold preaching of the Gospel was powerful, amazed the people, gave peace to many churches, and caused an increase in the number of followers.

**Lesson Aim:** To examine the process by which Saul changed from being a persecutor of Christians into a champion of the faith.

**Life Aim:** To recognize the need to react carefully but openly to those who claim to have had sudden, dramatic conversions.

### HISTORY:

**9:1-9** <sup>1</sup>Not content with persecuting Christians in Jerusalem, Saul received permission from the high priest to seek out those of the Way in Damascus and bring them bound to Jerusalem. It was near Damascus that Saul was blinded by a vision of the risen Jesus. Told to go into Damascus for further instructions, Saul was led blind into the city where he waited for three days, neither eating nor drinking.

**9:10-18** The Lord then appeared to a disciple named Ananias and sent him to restore Saul's sight and tell him what he would do as a chosen vessel for Christ. Ananias did as he was commanded by the Lord God Almighty; laid hands on him and called him "*Brother Saul, saying, the Lord sent me*" Just like that, he was saved and is now a brother in the body of Christ; called by God. You have to remember that Saul had been fasting and praying for three days, indicating he had believed in the Lord and was calling on Him. Saul was filled with the Holy Ghost. After three days of temporary blindness, "*Immediately*" meaning instant and quickly, the scales that had covered his eyes have fallen off, and Saul has now instantly regained his sight. He arose and was baptized with water as an outward expression of his conviction; different from verse 17, filled with the Holy Spirit to be empowered for service. My question to you: "*Was Saul (Paul) saved on the Damascus Road, or when he was infilled with the Holy Spirit?*" The question is debated by various scholars. I'll let you discuss it. And does the Spirit enter in before He fills you with power?

### LESSON:

#### Acts 9:19-22 Saul, The Convert

**9:19** **And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.** Fasting was over, but prayer is never over. Saul tended to his physical need and ate meat, so he could be strengthened because of the last three days, he was without food. He was in new surroundings and a new convert. He had to get acquainted with his new brethren. So, he joined and became associated and identified with other believers. You can imagine how stunned the other believers were, because they remembered his past. However, his old nature and old man had truly died on the Damascus Road, and now he has the new nature shared by all believers.

I want to bring up one point— <sup>2</sup>There is a common misconception among Christians that the name Saul of Tarsus was changed to Paul by Jesus after Saul's life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. On

<sup>1</sup> [http://executableoutlines.com/acts/acts\\_09.htm](http://executableoutlines.com/acts/acts_09.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://graceandknowledge.faithweb.com/saul2paul.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

the contrary, Acts 13:9 tells us that Saul "*was also called Paul*" (NIV). In other words, he had both names before and after he became an apostle of Jesus. He apparently used the Hebrew name Shaul (Saul) in Jewish settings, as when he was addressing a crowd in Jerusalem after his arrest there (Acts 22); and the Roman name Paulus (Paul) in a Greco-Roman environment, as in his epistles. It seems to have been fairly typical for first-century Jews to have more than one name. Other New Testament examples include:

- "Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus)" (Acts 1:23);
- "Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas)" (Acts 9:36);
- "John, also called Mark" (Acts 12:12);
- Paul's companion Silas (Acts 15-18), who is also known as Silvanus (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1).

This information raises an interesting question about the use of Saul's two names in the book of Acts. Luke, the author of Acts, refers to Saul of Tarsus as "*Saul*" until Acts 13:9, then shifts to "*Paul*" for the remainder of the book.

**9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.** It didn't take him long. You know how it is with new convert—all gong-ho about Jesus! He immediately began to preach Christ in the synagogues whether they wanted to hear him or not. He now had a new belief. He was no longer talking about religion, tradition, ceremony rituals or, trying to round up the Christians. No, he preached that Christ is the Son of God!

**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?—**

Yes, all that heard him; the public and leaders of the synagogue were amazed. They began to question as to if this was the same man that destroyed those that called on that name in Jerusalem? And wasn't it his intent to bring the Christians back bound to the chief priests? Well, now he's preaching what the Christians are preaching. It was hard to believe.

**9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.** Saul increased the more in strength, meaning he grew spiritually; he increased in spiritual strength. He dealt with the subject of Christ faithfully and steadfastly. He was proving a point; his conversion was for real. The more he grew in the Lord, the more he was able to confound (confuse) those Damascus Jews who opposed and rebelled against the gospel. They really looked for him to quench the Christians spreading that flame, but he continued to preach that Jesus is the Messiah, there in Damascus. He was able to prove (affirm and confirm) it with more and more power as he grew in the Lord.

## **Acts 9:23-28 Barnabas, The Connector**

**9:23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:—** Saul had apparently been witnessing in Damascus for some time, preaching Christ and proving that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior promised by God. He was so convincing that the Jews plotted to kill him. They became disturbed; full of anger, bitterness, and enmity arose. Why?

- They considered him a traitor to their religion and nation and cause.
- Saul was sharper than they were in debate. He out-argued them and they felt ashamed and embarrassed. They were unable to get the best of him mentally or spiritually, so they set out to retaliate physically.
- The message of the gospel convicted and threatened them. The gospel demanded self-denial, the sacrifice of all they were and had to the Lord Jesus.

**9:24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.** The Jews

watched the gates day and night; they laid in wait for Saul, but he already knew of their plan (2Corin.12:32-33). The Jews were so convincing that the governor of Damascus (under king Aretas) sent patrols out, posted guards around the city to prevent his escape.

**9:25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.** Saul escaped as the disciples lowered him down the wall in a basket by night. Verse 23 "*After many days were fulfilled*" also refers to when Saul had to leave Damascus because of the Jews' plot to kill him. He left Damascus, and just like Moses of old who sought the Lord for years in the desert, Saul went into the desert of Arabia to spend 3yrs. learning from the Lord Himself. It was in the quietness of the desert that he communed and learned of his Lord.

- He did not confer with flesh and blood to learn about Jesus (Gal.1:16).
- He did not go up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles about Jesus (Gal.1:17).
- He went into Arabia where he stayed for about three years (Gal.1:17).
- After Arabia, he returned to Damascus (Gal.1:17).

**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.** After coming from Damascus (the second time), Saul has now come to Jerusalem and tried repeatedly to join himself with the other disciples, but they were all afraid of him; suspicious, thinking he was an imposter trying to work into their circle to spy upon them, and or identify all the disciples so he could arrest them. They rejected him, believing that he was not a disciple; not one of them. They did not believe his testimony, and would not accept him.

**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.** But, there was one who befriended Saul, by the name of Barnabas. Apparently, he sat down with Saul and listened to him relate his experiences with Christ. He took Saul to the apostles and declared three things:

- Saul's conversion—that he had actually seen the Lord on the Road to Damascus.
- The Lord had actually spoken to Saul.
- Saul had been preaching boldly in Damascus of Christ.

You never know who God will use to connect you with others.

**9:28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.** So, Saul was finally accepted. Peter was convinced and invited him to stay with him. Saul stayed fifteen glorious days, fellowshiping and going all over Jerusalem with him (Gal.1:18).

## **Acts 9:29-31 Saul, The Champion**

**9:29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.** Saul preached boldly in the Lord's name in Jerusalem, disputing against the Greek speaking Jews; Jews who had been born and brought up in Greece. The opposition was fierce, because he had previously aroused and joined the Grecian Jews to murder Stephen. Saul was in complete agreement with the stoning of Stephen. They refused to surrender to the One called Jesus. They rebelled, arguing with Saul and became so infuriated with him that they determined to assassinate him.

**9:30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.** The believers heard about the plot, and then took Saul to Caesarea and instructed him to flee to his hometown of Tarsus. It was there that Paul was to begin reaching the Gentiles of the world.

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

**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.** In this verse there are essentials to church growth.

- They were at rest and peace. They had peace inwardly, although there was persecution outwardly. One great period of persecution had ended and the church had weathered its first great storm; withstood its first great critics, and won its first great adversary, Saul of Tarsus. The churches throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria were in a continuous state of peace and rest.
- They were edifying and building each other up.
- They were walking in the fear of the Lord. Thus, the local assembly of God's people lived in reverence; stood in awe, worship, and obedience before the Lord.
- They were walking under the control of the Spirit; ("*in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*"), thus, they multiplied by leaps and bounds.

### **SUMMARY:**

<sup>3</sup>With Saul's sight restored, he was baptized and resumed eating. For some days Saul remained in Damascus and began immediately preaching Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God in the synagogues, to the amazement of those who knew he had come to the city to arrest Christians (**vv.18-22**).

After many days had passed, during which Saul apparently spent about 3 years in Arabia. But now, Saul barely escapes a plot to kill him by the Jews in Damascus. The disciples lowered him down the wall in a basket. He went to Jerusalem and tried to join himself to the apostles there, yet they feared him. But afterwards, Barnabas spoke in his behalf. Saul was accepted by the brethren (**vv.23-28**).

Saul spoke boldly of the name of Christ and disputed with the Grecians. Therefore, another plot by the Jews to kill Saul prompted the brethren to bring him to Caesarea and send him on to Tarsus, his hometown. The churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria then enjoyed peace and grew as they walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit (**vv.29-31**).