

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 12: CHAPTER 9

14 August 2015

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

- Vss. 1-2** Saul continues to be a danger to Christians, believing **“that he doeth God service”** (John 16:2). Saul was a strict Jew who obeyed the Law of Moses (Acts 21:39, Phil. 3:5). He was a Pharisee who studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). According to the Jew’s religion, he was righteous (Gal. 1:14, Phil 3:6-9), but his loyalty to Judaism made him an enemy of the early church (1 Cor. 15:9, 1 Tim. 1:13, Gal. 1:13).
- Saul was doing what any faithful Jew should do. He was obeying the word of the Lord and proving his love for the Lord (Deut. 13:1-11)
- Vss. 3-6** Jesus Christ, the **“light from heaven”** appears as Saul nears Damascus. The Lord asks Saul **“Why persecutes thou me?”** This is yet another proof that the Body of Christ was established before Paul’s conversion. Saul persecuted believers who were IN Christ, thereby persecuting Jesus, who is the head of the Church. (Eph. 5:23, Col. 1:18).
- Jesus’ words **“It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”** (vs. 5) indicates that He has been dealing with Saul, causing Saul’s conscience to be pricked. This is God’s way of getting a man to go a certain direction. Saul’s two questions are set forth as an example for any new believer. **“Who art thou Lord”** (find out who He is), then **“What wilt thou have me to do?”** (be ready and willing to obey Him).
- Vs. 7** The men with Saul heard a voice, but saw no man. This supposedly contradicts Acts 22:9 which says **“they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.”** The men heard **“A”** voice, but did not hear **“THE”** voice. They don’t know who is speaking and they don’t know what is being spoken. (see John 12:28-29).
- Vss. 8-12** Saul is blind for three days. He fasts and prays during those three days. The Lord shows him a man named Ananias in a vision coming to restore his sight. Then the Lord speaks to Ananias after already telling Saul to wait for him. God knew Ananias was a faithful man.
- Vss. 13-16** Ananias had heard about the evil that Saul had done in Jerusalem, so he is a little reluctant to help him. The Lord assures him that Saul is a **“chosen vessel unto me”** and **“He must suffer for my name’s sake.”** Saul is designated as the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), but he is not restricted from preaching to Jews and Kings (vs. 15). Peter, the apostle to the Jews, also preached to Gentiles (Acts 10:45). Paul’s suffering for Jesus’ sake is described in 1 Cor. 4:9-13, 2 Cor. 11:22-33, and Acts 14:19.
- Vss. 17-21** Ananias obeys God, restores Saul’s sight, and accepts him as **“Brother Saul.”** Saul is baptized, breaks his fast, and while in Damascus, **“straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”** Those who heard him preach were amazed because of his reputation as a Christian killer.

- Vs. 22** The Holy Spirit has obviously enabled Saul to receive truth concerning Christ that he could not have learned by natural methods. He preaches Christ to the Jews in Damascus.
- Vs. 23-25** After many days (3 years, according to Gal. 1:17-18), the Jews plotted to kill Saul, but he knew about it and got out of town by being lowered down by the wall in a basket.
- Vss. 26-30** Paul went to Jerusalem to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe such a man could have become a disciple. Barnabas testified on Saul's behalf and convinced the disciples that Saul loved the Lord Jesus Christ and preached boldly in His name. The disciples received him and he served the Lord with them in Jerusalem and Greece. The Grecians wanted to kill him, so the disciples helped him escape to Tarsus. Jesus instructs believers to flee persecution (Matt. 10:23).
- Vs. 31** The churches enjoy a period of rest from the persecution. This doesn't mean they stopped preaching, witnessing, and serving the Lord. They're all being edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, comforted by the Holy Ghost, and multiplying. Persecution strengthens the church and God uses it to fulfill His purposes, but He grants these times of rest by His grace.

PETER PERFORMS TWO MIRACLES

- Vss. 32-35** Peter heals a man with palsy in Lydda (near Joppa). This resulted in the people of Lydda and Saron (a coastal area) turning to the Lord. God gets all the glory with true miracles of healing.
- Vss. 36-43** At Joppa Peter raises a disciple named Tabitha from the dead. He first sent the people out of the room because he wanted all the glory to go to the Lord, but also, he was following the example of Jesus (Mark 6:35-43).

Notice how this act of raising the dead (Eph. 2:1) pictures the salvation of a sinner:

1. There is prayer: because God must do it.
2. There is a call: "Tabitha, arise." To the sinner: "come out of death into life."
3. There is a turning: to the one in need.
4. New life.
5. Lift them up by your hand. Help them to stand and walk in their new life.
6. Present them alive. The hand of fellowship. (See Eph. 5:27)

The results of this miracle: "**Many believed in the Lord**" (vs. 42).

Peter stayed many days with "Simon a tanner." A tanner is one who prepares animal skins to be used for making clothing, bottles, sandals, etc. It's interesting that Peter is lodging with a man of this occupation. Jews were forbidden to touch dead animals (Leviticus 5:2, 11:39-40).