

May 28, 2023

“Saul of Tarsus”  
Lesson 5

Acts 9:9-17

**Intro**

Saul (later the apostle Paul) was heading to Damascus to arrest Christians for their faith in Jesus, according to the first verses in chapter 9. There were many Jews there, whether as a result of the Day of Pentecost, or those who fled as Saul’s persecutions began. By the beginning to chapter 9, it has been a few years since Pentecost and Stephen’s stoning.

Saul (Paul) was an ambitious and intelligent person who began by persecuting Christians in Jerusalem. As our text begins, he has headed to Damascus with the high priest’s approval to bring Christians back to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. This story is told three times in Acts: first here in chapter 9 by Luke, and twice more by Paul in chapters 22 and 26. Just before our text for today begins, Saul has been blinded and led into the city.

**Read Acts 9:9-17**

1. vs. 9: Saul spend three days blind, and he eats and drinks nothing

This could be a fast to gain spiritual insight

It could be nerves and concern where Saul just doesn’t feel like eating

2. vs. 10: A disciple named Ananias was in Damascus, where Saul was heading

A disciple is a committed follower of Jesus Christ

He is like committed Christians today

In Acts 22, Paul says of Ananias that he was “a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.”

This is someone who “walks the walk”

Ananias has a vision, unusual then as well as now

A vision implies seeing something unusual; he also hears God speak to him

He recognizes the voice as coming from God, showing he was attentive

3. vs. 11: Ananias receives very specific instructions about what to do

First it is Jesus Himself who talks to him (see vs. 17)

The specific street and the specific homeowner are both given

There is nothing vague or in doubt about where he is to go

Straight Street is the main street in Damascus

4. vs. 12: Jesus tells Ananias that Saul also has had a vision

His vision specifically had Ananias coming to restore his sight

God can do things in whatever way he chooses

He frequently uses His people to participate in accomplishing His will

5. vs. 13-14: Ananias brings up some concerns to the Lord

Saul's reputation for persecution is well-known to Ananias

He has come to Damascus with the chief priests' authority

He has come to arrest all who recognize Jesus as Lord

The term "Christians" hadn't come into being at this time

Ananias calls believers "holy people" and those who "call on your name"

6. vs. 15: God does not rebuke Ananias for presenting these concerns

Instead, He reveals His plans for Saul to Ananias

Saul will be "my chosen instrument"

He will now be under God's authority rather than the chief priests'

Saul will preach to two groups

To the Gentiles (non-Jews) and to their kings

To the people of Israel (Jews)

7. vs. 16: Jesus finishes by noting that Saul will "suffer for my name"

The details given to Ananias are very specific

Why God chose to reveal so much to him isn't stated, but it's interesting to ponder

Perhaps these details are verification that the message is genuine

8. vs. 17: Ananias obeys the directives given to him

He goes to the house and lays his hands on Saul

Two things are revealed to us here

This verse confirms it was Jesus who spoke to Ananias

This same Jesus spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus

Saul is to be filled with the Holy Spirit

In following verses, Saul is immediately baptized and then has his life threatened

Application: Saul was already well-prepared to be a disciple of Jesus' by the time of his conversion. He was already passionate and filled with zeal. He already had a great knowledge of Scripture. He already had an obedient spirit.

Our text asks a good question here: which is easier—to create zeal in an apathetic person, or to take an already zealous person and redirect that zeal for Christ? The implied answer is the second choice. We as believers are called to be people "zealous of good works" and to be looking for people whose life experiences, education, and character could help them be influential in serving Jesus.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for knowing us completely, and calling us to serve You. Help us to have zeal like Paul to study Your word and to follow You in obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.