

## ACTS CHAPTER NINE

Read vs. 1-16 and 26:8-18

1. How does verse 1 describe Saul's attitude toward the Christians?

*Paul was a Roman citizen, but also a Jew from Tarsus, which was known as a very intellectual city. Paul had the best of educations under Gamaliel and lived by the strictest Hebrew traditions. In Phil. 3:4-9 Paul says if anyone could put confidence in his heritage and his good works, it would certainly be him. He was circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, just as God had directed the Jewish nation. He was descended from Benjamin. He was a Pharisee and thus knew the law completely. He was zealous for God and as far as he was concerned, he was faultless.*

*But Paul wasn't faultless. He was lost in sin. He was self-righteous, but he did not have the righteousness of God. When Paul penned the book of Romans a few years later, he said in Ro. 3:10, "There is no one righteous, not even one." When he came to know Christ, he realized the truth of Ephesians 2:8 & 9. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." God had his hand on Paul and He had plans to take this zealous, self-righteous persecutor of Christians and use him as an instrument for righteousness.*

2. Saul wanted permission to go to Damascus to do what?

*Damascus is 140 miles from Jerusalem, nearly a week's travel in those days. He was almost there when he saw the vision. Paul's reputation was well known. (verse 13) Do you think the Christians might have been praying for help and deliverance when God interceded by appearing to Paul?*

3. Describe what Paul saw on his way to Damascus. Consider verse 3 and also Acts 26:13.

*God had a plan and a purpose for Paul. He was chosen by God for salvation and service. Can you imagine the terror and awe that Paul must have felt when he heard a voice coming from this light? Acts 22:9 says that his traveling companions also saw the light but didn't understand the words that were spoken. Paul would share his conversion experience many times during his lifetime. Do you remember a time when God spoke to you about your need for repentance? How did you respond?*

4. From Acts 9:4, why is it significant that the Lord says Saul has been persecuting Him, when in fact it was the believers that Saul had been harassing? Compare Matt.25:35-45

*In Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-23 He asks the Father to make His children one with each other and one with Him. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus is our high priest and that He*

*sympathizes with our problems. It is true that Christ suffers with His children. He is never unaware of what is happening in the lives of any believer. He identified with the Christians that Paul had been persecuting.*

5. According to Acts 26:15-18, Saul was to be both a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_.

*Notice that Paul was going to be working with both Jews and Gentiles. Paul loved his nation and constantly tried to reach them with the gospel, but he knew that he had a special charge to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Compare Romans 11:13. In his former life as a self-righteous Pharisee it would have been an obnoxious thought for him to be associating with Gentiles for any reason. But Paul became a new person when he met Christ on the road to Damascus and he embraced his new ministry with a passion. He knew that there was no longer any difference between Jews and Gentiles and that God had opened the door for all nations to come to Him.*

6. Acts 26:18 summarizes God's idea of a faithful minister. What should a minister do for his people?
- A. \_\_\_\_\_ their eyes
  - B. Turn them from \_\_\_\_\_.
  - C. Turn them from the power of \_\_\_\_\_ so that they can receive \_\_\_\_\_ and inheritance among them who are \_\_\_\_\_

*According to Acts 26:20, how did Paul carry out this command? God hasn't changed His mind or His plan for reaching people with the gospel. First Corinthians 1:18-21 reminds us that God uses preaching to draw people to salvation. To the unbeliever, preaching seems like foolishness, but God uses it to save people. The message hasn't changed and the plan hasn't changed. People still need to hear that they are sinners and that Christ died to purchase their salvation.*

7. What physical problem resulted from the encounter with the Lord? Acts 9:8 & 9

*According to Acts 9:12, how did God encourage Paul during those three days of blindness?*

*Although Paul did receive his sight back, he may have suffered some residual damage. Compare 2 Cor. 12:7 and Gal. 4:15. We know that Paul dealt with physical problems his whole life. Because of his discussion about eyes in Gal. 4:15, it is conjectured that his eyes may have been afflicted. Notice also in Gal. 6:11 where he says he is writing to them with such big letters. Often he mentions that he is "writing with his own hand" as if that wasn't always the case. Possibly he was so challenged with his eyes that he dictated letters while others did the actual writing.*

8. Why was Ananias hesitant about seeking out Saul? vs. 11-14

*Naturally, he had some reservations about seeking out this man who was known to be dangerous to believers. It is commendable, however, that as soon as God confirmed His directions to Ananias, he went immediately.*

9. *God told Ananias that Saul was a chosen vessel. What three groups of people was Saul going to reach with the Gospel?*

*We see this fulfilled later in the book of Acts. In every city that Paul visited, he went first to seek out the Jews and shared the gospel with them. Then he preached to the Gentiles. Paul was often arrested and in jail. During those times, he was bold to share his testimony and the gospel message with kings and authorities. God's words about Saul were fulfilled.*

10. *Saul would also be called upon to \_\_\_\_\_ for Christ's name.*

11. *From II Cor. 11:23-28, list at least 5 things that Saul suffered for Christ.*

*Certainly God could have spared and rescued Paul from all of these things, but notice II Cor. 12:9 & 10. God explained to Paul that His grace would be sufficient for him, enabling him to endure. He also tells Paul that His power is made perfect in weakness. It seems to be a principle in God's word that when people suffer physically, they are made strong spiritually. Paul realized that if he could have more power by suffering, then it was worth it. He gladly accepted all of his suffering if it meant that he would have more of Christ's power.*

Read vs. 9:17-31

12. *Notice how Ananias addresses Saul in vs. 17.*

*Why is this significant in view of Saul's previous reputation?*

*This is very commendable. He might have taken a "wait and see" attitude instead. Ananias immediately accepts Saul as a new brother in Christ. He accepts him as part of the family.*

13. *What was Saul ready to do as soon as he received his sight?*

*Baptism is a public acknowledgement of our faith in Christ. Throughout the ages baptism has been the way to identify oneself as a Christian. It is often the thing that triggers persecution. Paul was not ashamed of his new faith. He wanted the world to know that he was now a believer. Jesus still asks us to be baptized as a step of obedience. Matt. 28:19-21*

14. *Who did Saul want to preach to first?*

*Saul was as zealous as a new Christian as he had been as a persecutor. His basic personality didn't change. God just redirected it!*

15. *What was the theme of his preaching? (vs. 20-22)*

*Verse 22 says that he baffled the Jews by proving that Jesus is the Christ. Since he was Jewish himself and had been in their situation, he knew just what proof they would need! He also had many rich resources to use because of his education and his knowledge of the Old Testament. Suddenly he understood the scriptures in a new light.*

*Verse 23 says that after many days the Jews conspired to kill him. Compare Gal 1:10-19 where Paul says he went to Arabia before he went to Jerusalem. There was likely a period of more than three years between verses 22 and 23.*

16. *What was the Jewish response to Saul's preaching? (vs. 23 & 24)*

17. *Describe the reception that Saul got from the believers in Jerusalem. (vs. 26)*

*They might have thought that this was just his newest tactic for finding out who the believers were. We can understand their caution! Verse 21 says that they were astonished by him. They could hardly believe the change that had occurred in Paul's life.*

18. *Who believed and helped Saul get established in the Jerusalem ministry? Vs. 27*

*How did Barnabas show friendship to Paul? Look up these additional verses that talk about Barnabas. What kind of person was he? He seems to have the gift of encouragement and helps. Acts 4:36 & 37, Acts 11:22-26, Acts 15:36-38 and Gal 2:1*

19. *How did God later use Saul and Barnabas together? see Acts 13:2-5*

*Paul & Barnabas made a great team. Their personalities and gifts complimented each other. Paul was a zealous preacher. Barnabas was an encourager. He was tuned into people and their needs. They both loved the Lord and were fully devoted to serving Him.*

*In verses 30 & 31 we see that the believers learn about an assassination plot and help Paul escape to Tarsus. Tarsus was Paul's hometown. He no doubt still had family living there and they thought that he would be safer there, at least until things cooled off a little. The church has a time of peace. They grew both in numbers and in strength.*

*Now the focus will shift back to Peter's ministry again.....*

*Read vs. 32-43*

20. *What resulted from the miraculous healing of Aeneas?*

*Peter was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He apparently was doing some traveling at this time as he visited in other towns where there were new churches starting. God continued to bless Peter by using him to perform various miracles. God used the*

*miracles to draw attention to Peter and to give credibility to his preaching. We see in this passage how God uses Peter to bring people to faith in Christ.*

21. *What sort of life-style did Dorcas lead?*

*Peter was close to the town of Joppa when a well-loved citizen died. The disciples knew about Peter's miracles and pleaded with him to come immediately. Peter does come and is told all about Dorcas and what a good person she was. The whole town is grieving for her. Peter is given the power to raise Dorcas back from the dead. Notice what happens as a result of this miracle in verse 42. Many more people believe in Christ. This is why Peter was given this power. God is building His church in a mighty way.*

*Why might Peter have stayed "many days" in Joppa?*

*Think back over this chapter and the people that have been introduced. What a great chapter for role models. Consider:*

*Paul – He's converted and immediately asks "What do you want me to do, Lord?" He is zealous, fearless and glad to suffer for Christ.*

*Aeneas – He's just a common person, but he's obedient and quick to accept Paul as a brother.*

*Barnabas – He generous, compassionate, tuned in to the people-side of ministering, willing to play second fiddle and exalt others before himself.*

*Dorcas – She was quiet, generous, working for others, knowing where the needs were and sharing herself to meet those needs. She was dearly loved and respected by the whole town.*