

## Chapter 3

# Paul's Conversion

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## Acts 9

### A. 1<sup>st</sup> recording: Paul's Conversion is Recorded Three Times in the Bible

1. **As it occurred.** **Acts 9:1-18** - Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 And 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?" And 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?" And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 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.

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

12 "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

2. **2<sup>nd</sup> recording: Recounted in the stairway address in Jerusalem. Acts 22:6-16** - "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

7 "And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

8 "So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

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.

10 "So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'

11 "And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 "Then one, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,

13 "came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

14 "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

15 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

3. **3<sup>rd</sup> Recording: Recounted before Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus in Caesarea. Acts 26:12-20** - "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 "at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.

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.'

15 "So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'

16 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.'

17 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,

18 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

19 "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

20 "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

## B. Events On the Road to Damascus

1. The events on the road to Damascus are recorded in two places:
  - a. Acts 9:3-8
  - b. Acts 22:6-11
2. The Lord appears to Saul. Acts 9:3-7
  - a. Near Damascus with the journey almost over. Acts 9:3-7
  - b. A great light shined about him at about noon. Acts 9:3; Acts 22:6
  - c. Saul fell to the earth. Acts 9:3
  - d. He heard a voice saying, ". . . Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Acts 9:4
  - e. Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?" **Acts 9:5**
  - f. The Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." **Acts 9:5**
  - g. Trembling and astonished, Paul asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" **Acts 9:6**
  - h. The Lord answered, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." **Acts 9:6**
  - i. The men with Saul stood speechless. They heard a voice but saw no man. Acts 9:8
  - j. Saul stood up, opened his eyes, but was unable to see. Acts 9:8
  - k. The men took Saul by the hand and led him into Damascus. Acts 9:8
  - l. Saul was without his sight for three days during which time he neither ate or drank. Acts 9:9

3. The Lord sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus. Acts 9:10-11
  - a. The Lord appeared to Ananias in a vision. Acts 9:10
  - b. The Lord called Ananias by name, and Ananias answered, "Here I am, Lord." **Acts 9:10**
  - c. The Lord instructed Ananias to:
    1. "Arise and go to the street called Straight." **Acts 9:11**
    2. "Inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying." **Acts 9:11**
  - d. Saul was praying. Acts 9:11
  - e. Saul had seen a vision of Ananias coming to restore his sight. Acts 9:12
  - f. Ananias told the Lord of Saul's reputation among them, "How much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem." **Acts 9:13**
  - g. Jesus further instructed Ananias to: "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." **Acts 9:15-16**
4. Ananias obeyed the Lord and went to Saul.
  - a. **Acts 9:17-18** - "And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized."
  - b. **Acts 22:12-16** – "Then one, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,
    - 13 came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.
    - 14 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.
    - 15 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.
    - 17 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
5. Damascus
  - a. The ancient capital city of Syria.
  - b. One of the ten cities originally forming the Decapolis.
  - c. An important trade city where three main trade routes met.
    1. One led southwestward to the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt.
    2. One led to Arabia.
    3. One led across the desert to Baghdad.
  - d. Old Testament references to Damascus.

1. Abraham pursued Lot's captors to a town near Damascus. Genesis 14:15
2. Eliezer fortified it and made the people his servants. 2 Samuel 8:5-6
3. Rezon gathered an army and made Damascus his headquarters and reigned over Syria. 1 Kings 11:23-24
4. When Solomon was king he was often in conflict with Syria.
5. It was the capital for King Benhadad. 1 Kings 15:18; 20:34  
1 Kings 11:23-25
6. Was conquered by the Assyrians and the people led away as captives. Amos 1:5
7. The city was rebuilt and grew prosperous. Ezekiel 17:18
- e. In 64 B.C. Damascus was taken by the Romans and became a province.
- f. The longest street known in any Bible city was (and still is) located in Damascus—the street called "Straight."

### C. Paul's Conversion as Referred to in the Epistles

1. **1 Corinthians 1:1** – "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God . . ."
2. **1 Corinthians 9:1** – "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? . . ."
3. **1 Corinthians 15:7-9** – "After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.  
8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.  
9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."
4. **Galatians 1:1** – ", an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)."
6. **Galatians 1:11-12** – "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.  
12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ."
7. **Romans 1:1** – "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God."
8. **1 Timothy 1:12-16** – "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry,  
13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.  
14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

#### D. Paul was Baptized into Christ

1. **Acts 9:6** – “. . . And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
  - Jesus said that in Damascus Saul would be told what he **MUST** do.
2. **Acts 22:16** – “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
  - Ananias told him to arise and be baptized in order to wash away his sins.
  - This is the “**MUST**” of Acts 9:6
  - How do we know that Saul was indeed baptized? Acts 9:18 tell us us that he did.
3. **Acts 9:18** – “Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.”
  - Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus.
  - He was still in his sins when Ananias came to him.
  - Ananias told him what he “**MUST**” do.
  - Saul obeyed the gospel in the same manner we are to obey the gospel today.