

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Saul's Ministry Begins
Acts 9:17-31

Last time...Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus

Saul was going to Damascus with official papers from the High Priest to arrest believers in Jesus Christ and return them to Jerusalem for punishment

Near Damascus, Jesus stopped Saul in his tracks with a light brighter than the midday sun

Jesus takes Personally the persecution of His Body, the Church

Blinded, terrified, and confused, Saul has no doubt that Jesus is Lord and is radically converted...and chosen by Jesus to be His 12th Apostle

Jesus then appeared to Ananias in vision about Saul and sends him to anoint Saul

This time...Saul's ministry begins...the beginning of his Adventure in Faith

Saul's ministry will be characterized by

- great boldness
- zeal, but with knowledge
- great resistance and trouble
- abundant fruit

We will again be in Acts 9

v17 Ananias went his way...Brother Saul:

Ananias received/believed what the Lord Jesus told him in v15-16

- he obeyed, going by faith, the Lord's will be done
- he did not doubt the Lord, he knew Jesus was mightier than this menace named Saul

Ananias laid hands on...Brother Saul

Matt 12:46-50

Heb 2:11-12, 16-17

The Lord used an ordinary disciple as His vessel to

1. confirm to Saul
 - the Lord he saw on the road near Damascus was Jesus
 - Jesus is Lord
 - the vision the Lord Jesus gave Saul in v12
2. restore Saul's eyesight
3. baptize Saul with His baptism...of the Holy Ghost in and upon, the power of God from on High to be a witness of Jesus (Acts 1:8)

Jesus exceedingly blesses the one who had been cursing Him

Once an enemy of God (Eph 2:1-4) and believers, Saul is now a child of God

(John 1:12-13) and the disciples' brother (Ps 103:12)

v18 fell...scales...received...arose...baptized:

Immediately, Saul's sight was restored...as if cataracts fell out of his eyes
Seeing spiritually and now seeing again physically, Saul got up and went to get baptized

He was already baptized with the Holy Spirit so he is also baptized with water

Acts 22:12-16

Rom 6:3-4

Notice

- 2 distinctly different baptisms
- the sequence...God cannot be captured in a formula
- Saul is saved before both baptisms...neither save, only Jesus saves

v19 strengthened...days with the disciples:

Saul breaks his 3 day fast (v9)

He is still not told by the Lord what he must do (v6) so, in keeping with
"Your will be done Lord, not my will", Saul waits...
with the disciples in Damascus

How the grace of God changed everything!

Saul is blessed with the fellowship of those he (the old man) had intended
to arrest and drag away to Jerusalem for severe punishment

Now he is hanging out with the very folks he wanted to see hang!

John 13:34-35

Is God awesome and powerful?

At this point in the Scripture, between v19 and v20, there is a gap of time of

3 years

Gal 1:11-12, 15-19

During the white space between v19 and v20, Saul receives personal instruction
from Jesus Himself...as had the other apostles Jesus had chosen
(John 15:16)

Jesus pours His heart and mind into this very zealous man and teaches him
the spirit of the Law

Thru Saul will come much of the inspired words of God
aka New Testament

v20 he preached Christ...Son of God:

Having re-learned everything he thought he knew, Saul immediately,
upon his return to Damascus,
sets out preaching to the Jews that Jesus Christ is the Son of God

Note: “is”

Always was, is now, always will be...is

A doctrine he had thought to be blasphemy worthy of death is now preached with
passion by Saul

Acts 26:20...Saul declared

- Repent
- Turn to God
- “Prove” your repentance”

v21-22 amazed...Saul increased...proving:

The Jews who heard Saul give the clear sense of the Scriptures (the “OT”) that
Jesus of Nazareth is

1. The Son of God
2. The Messiah (i.e. the Messiah is God Himself)

were amazed

What happened?

This man hunted and wasted those who believed this in Jerusalem
He came here with the power and authority of the High Priest to do the
same here

He who was determined to destroy this doctrine is now preaching it
himself!

A man of zeal given understanding by faith is on fire

Saul’s conversion is a radical one (as is every genuine conversion)

From persecutor to preacher!

He is not rounding up “apostates”, he is preaching to apostates!

An agent of destruction is now an agent of Life

Saul is getting stronger...because he is eating well at the church picnics?

No, because he is gorging himself with the Word of God,
the Bread of Life.

The Word is increasing in Saul’s heart so Saul is increasing in
spiritual strength; the Lord is the strength of the righteous

i.e. v22 is NOT as v19

Saul proved, using the Final Authority, that Jesus Christ is Lord.
Leaving the Jews' completely unable to contradict him using Scriptures
(Word of God)
Try as they may, the Jews could not refute Saul...any more than the Jews
(including him?) could refute Stephen in Acts 6:8-10
The Jews were no match for his mind and his revelation of truth

v23 took counsel to kill him:

The unbelieving Jews (they would understand Saul's message if Acts 17:11),
perhaps painted into a theological corner by Saul, eventually give up and
resort to Plan B – kill him!

They could not “beat” Saul so they decided to beat Saul...to death

And...v16 starts

And so does

Ps 34:19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the
LORD delivereth him out of them all

2Tim 4:17-18 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and
strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be
fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear:
and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.
And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,
and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to
whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God is always good to His Word and He always gets the last word!

Rom 10:17...but they did not hear with faith

Rom 9:6, 31-32

Rom 10:1-4, 11-12, 21

v24-25 laying await...to kill him...in a basket:

Darkness always tries to silence Truth
The hunter becomes the hunted
Once a friend, Saul is now a foe

Lawbreakers break the Law, it's what they do
Taking counsel to kill someone is breaking the Law
Laying in wait to kill someone is breaking the Law

The Jews of Damascus posted murderous sentries around the clock at all the gates
of the city, ready to pounce on and kill Saul
Their plot was known by Saul, probably revealed by the Lord in some unrecorded
way

The man of God in the will of God is immortal until his work is done...
and Saul's work has just started!

Saul has ordained things to do in many appointed places

Damascus would not be one the prisons in which Saul would be incarcerated
Because Family takes care of family

Saul's brothers (v17) get him safely out of town under the cover of
darkness by lowering him over the city wall in a basket

Jesus had made a way of escape

Saul is living Ps 37

v23a The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD

v32-33a The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay
him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand

v39-40 the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD: *he is* their
strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help
them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the
wicked, and save them, because they trust in him

v26 Jerusalem...join...disciples...afraid...believed not:

With Damascus and the murderous Jews there in his rear view mirror,

Saul returns to Jerusalem (after 3 years per Gal 1:18)

Now looking for the fellowship of like-minded believers, Saul attempts to
join/cleave to the disciples

But...

"We're not falling for that old trick!"

"You have to wake up pretty early in the morning to pull one over on us!"

The disciples figured Saul to be a wolf in sheep's clothing, just as Jesus had
warned them

The disciples were afraid of him...with good reason (Acts 8:1-4, Acts 9:1-2)

Fear blinds

But...2 Tim 1:7

v27-28 Barnabas...declared:

The Lord used Barnabas (Acts 4:36) to relieve the fear of Saul
He took Saul to the apostles and declared what happened in Saul's life since the last time he was in Jerusalem

- Jesus appeared to him Personally on the road to Damascus
- Jesus spoke Personally and directly to him
- anointed with the Holy Spirit, Saul boldly preached the Gospel (ala Acts 4:31) to the Jews in Damascus (who tried to kill him)

The Lord thru Barnabas strengthened the faith of the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem to believe what Saul said because it harmonized perfectly with what Saul did after his radical conversion of faith

(Hard lesson: believe what people do before you believe what they say!)

Saul was welcomed by the family of God in Jerusalem

v29 spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus:

As he did in Damascus and as he did everywhere he went, Saul spoke boldly of the Lord Jesus Christ, making Him known and inviting people in the darkness to come into the light of the kingdom of God

Following Jesus...living the Word of God

Ps 40:10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy
truth from the great congregation

In particular, it seems, Saul preached to the Hellenized Jews (Acts 6:1)

- Jews from Roman provinces living in the midst of the Greek culture
- of which he was one (from Tarsus)

They did not respond with soft hearts but with stiff necks and hard hearts
They, like the Jews of Damascus, could not counter his Biblical doctrine
so they decided to kill him

Jerusalem is Saul's 2nd stop

The Jews want to kill him both places...v16 is playing out

Persecution against the Church seems to have cooled off in Jerusalem since Saul headed to Damascus

But now the persecuted is the preacher, and persecution against the Church starts to simmer again

Persecution follows the bold preaching in the name of Jesus Christ

v30 brethren...sent him forth to Tarsus:

Family takes care of family

When the brethren...the believers...learned of the Grecian Jews plot to kill Saul,
they hustled him down to Caesarea

(man-made port built by Herod the Great)

and put Saul on a boat bound for home

Saul was in Tarsus for 7 years, a time of study and preparation for what would be
happening in his ministry

Don't be impatient during times of preparation

and

Don't say you need more preparation when the Lord says, Arise and go

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem...

v31 churches rest...edified...comfort...multiplied:

With Saul out of town, "peace" returns to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria...
things "simmer down" again

The Lord used this time to build His Church (Matt 16:18)

- edification...encouraging, strengthening
- teaching...to live the Word of God (Ps 19), their lives governed by the Spirit of God and the Word of God, being doers of the Word not just hearers
- comforting by the Comforter Who is guiding and teaching them
- multiplying...God's work

Application/Lessons

Saul increased the more in strength:

Hanging out with like-minded believers in Damascus and Jerusalem, Saul was
encouraged and strengthened

We need each other...we strengthen each other...we are all in this together

Heb 10:22-25...the value and importance of in-person worship, isolation can be
harmful habit (just as it is important to send our children back to school – for their
health)

Equipped with the Sword of the Spirit and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are to
“prove Jesus is the Christ/Savior”

And we should expect resistance, even some hostility – both directed at Jesus Personally
God is our Helper, Refuge, Strength, Fortress, Deliverer

Jesus sends us to blind people He loves...
devoutly religious and moral people as well as idol worshippers

He always goes before us (Heb 13:5b-6)
Be available to do “whatever” He asks...it will always be a step of faith
Do you trust Jesus with your life?
Do you trust your life with Jesus?

If so...live the Word of God in the comfort of the Comforter,
Spirit-filled and Spirit-led
A powerful witness of the Lord Jesus Christ