



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

## **Study 15: THE CONVERSION AND COMMISSION OF A CHOSEN VESSEL** **Acts 9:1-31**

The chapter begins with the name of a unique personality, Saul. He was the great persecutor who became the greatest Apostle. By birth, he was a Jew; by citizenship, a Roman; by education, a Greek; by religion, a Pharisee; by conversion, a Christian; by calling, an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He became a transformed follower, disciple of Christ, an evangelist, a teacher, a preacher, a pastor, a missionary, a prophet, an Apostle, a leader, a theologian, a defender of the faith once delivered unto the saints. There was never a man like him and there has never been a man like him in the history of the Church.

The dramatic story of Saul's conversion and commission is recorded in this chapter. He was a blood-thirsty persecutor, "***breathing out threatenings and slaughter against***" the Church. The thought of Christians excited rage, violent anger, fury and irresistible desire to destroy. He secured letters of authority from the high Priest to arrest, bind, and imprison Christian men and women in Damascus. Damascus was about 120 miles from Jerusalem. "***And as he journeyed,***" the Lord Jesus Christ, confronted him and the divine encounter convicted and converted him. The course of his life was changed and the account of gospel proclamation was changed for the better. Before the end of the chapter, we read, "***Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied***" (Acts 9:31).

### **THE SUDDEN CONVERSION OF AN UNCOMMON ADVERSARY**

Acts 9:1-9; 22:3-16; 26:9-20; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Acts 2:37-42; 16:30-34; Galatians 1:15,16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Ephesians 2:12-20; 1 Peter 1:18-23.

***"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."*** Saul pursued the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem zealously and without relenting. His goal was to root out Christianity from every city in the nation. Having received letters of authority to bring Christians bound to Jerusalem, he journeyed to Damascus. And the Lord was gracious. The Lord could have removed the wheels of his chariot (Exodus 14:24,25). He could have rained hails and fire on him (Exodus 9:23-25). He could have opened the ground to swallow him up alive (Numbers 16:31-33). He could have dried up his hands and limbs (1 Kings 13:4). He could have sent an angel to destroy him (Isaiah 37:38; Acts 12:23). He could have reduced him to a senseless animal (Daniel 4:33-35). He could have withdrawn his breath and made him drop dead (Acts 5:5,10). Instead, He confronted him, convicted him, brought him to repentance and submission to the divine will. This is grace! 'Marvellous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt; Marvellous, infinite, matchless grace, Freely bestowed' on the chief of sinners. His sin was like the sin of Haman, who wanted to exterminate all Jews from the face of the earth. Haman was hanged on his own gallows; Saul was saved by the death of a Substitute, the Saviour and Sin-bearer, Jesus Christ.

There, on the road, not in a synagogue, temple or cathedral, he moved rapidly from confrontation to conviction to conversion to consecration. Confrontation: "***Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?***" What injury had Christ caused him to provoke such cruel, violent, murderous, unrelenting attacks? Christ and His people are one – attacks against believers are direct blows to Christ. Conviction: "***Who art Thou, Lord? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.***" He trembled as he realized the height and the depth of his sin – the sin of striking, beating, kicking against, fighting God. Conversion: "***And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?***" What a change! From Moses to Christ. From Judaism to Christianity. From the High Priest to Jesus, Lord and Saviour. From kicking against the pricks to kneeling before the Prince. From stubborn opposition to submissive obedience. He received Jesus as Lord and final Authority over his life. Consecration: "***Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? "Lord, have me." "Lord, what wilt Thou?" "Lord, have me do."***" He was now willing and ready to do, only and always whatever the Lord commanded and demanded of him. For the rest of his life, he did nothing more, nothing less, nothing else – he did only the will of God. You, too, can.

## THE SUPREME COMMISSION OF AN UNCONQUERABLE AMBASSADOR

Acts 9:10-19; 22:12-15; 26:16-20; John 15:16; Romans 1:5,13-16; Ephesians 3:7,8; Colossians 1:25-29; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11; 2:4,19-21; Acts 20:22-24; 2 Corinthians 4:6,16-18.

**“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”** Saul was so overwhelmed by the appearance of Jesus (Acts 9:17,27), the declaration of the Lord (Acts 9:4,5), the realization of past ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13-15), the wonder of God’s grace (1 Timothy 1:14), the expectation of God’s plan for his future career (Acts 9:6), the burden of being well-equipped for his new career in Christ’s Kingdom (1 Corinthians 3:10; 15:10), the challenge of living by faith, living like, living for, living with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Everything changed in and around Saul – religion, friends, ambition, lifestyle, purpose, duties and responsibilities, worldview, source of joy and hope – everything changed.

**“The Lord said, he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel ”** (Acts 9:15). A vessel is a container, cup or basin used to convey something to someone. This chosen vessel will convey and communicate the gospel, salvation, Calvary’s provision of eternal life to sinful, lost and dying humanity. Saul had now been chosen, selected, appointed as an instrument or agent to be employed by God to convey and reveal His saving grace to mankind. Paul was called and chosen by Christ to be a guide of the blind, a light to them which are in darkness, an evangelist to the world, a teacher of the Gentiles, an Apostle of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

## THE SPECTACULAR COMMITMENT OF AN UNCOMPROMISING APOSTLE

Acts 9:20-31; Galatians 1:15,16, 23,24; 2 Corinthians 11:32,33; Acts 13:16,26-39; 14:1-3; 17:1-4; 18:4,5; 28:23-31; Romans 15:18-21; 2 Corinthians 11:22-27; Philippians 3:7-17; 2 Timothy 3:10-14.

**“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”** Straightway means immediately. There was no delay, hesitation, drawing back, procrastination or consultation with flesh and blood. He began to preach and to prove from the Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth is Christ, the Son of God. A few days before this time, any Christian publicly declaring that Jesus Christ was the Son of God **“in the synagogue”** would have been arrested and bound by Saul. He went from synagogue to synagogue, **“proving that this is very Christ”** (Acts 9:22). His conviction of the message of the saving gospel became stronger every day and he convinced and **“confounded”** the Jews. He was so effective that **“the Jews took counsel to kill him”**. Till the end of his life, his consecration never decreased. He surrendered his life to the Lord and served faithfully until he finished what God had called and chosen him to do.

Paul said and practised in his lifetime commitment, **“what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ”** (Philippians 3:7,8). Paul’s gifts, talents and zeal brought him much recognition and profit in the Jewish religion, yet he laid everything down at the Saviour’s feet. He renounced position, wealth, prestige and ecclesiastical status and counted them loss for Christ. When the glory of Christ shone and blazed on his sight and his heart became enlightened, earthly things faded away into passing shadows. These things vanished and lost their former value and significance when he enthroned Christ in his heart. When our hearts are set on things above, earthly things will grow strangely dim in the light of Christ’s glory and splendour.

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