



## “The Power of Saul’s Conversion”

### Acts 9:1-31

Study Guide #13 for the week of  
April 3, 2022

### Saul's Conversion - [Acts 9:1-19](#)

#### Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. If you could have a surprise visit from someone, whom would you want to visit you?
2. What did the Lord instruct Ananias to do? ([9:10-12](#))
3. Why was Ananias reluctant to do as the Lord asked? ([9:13-14](#))
4. How did God persuade Ananias that it was all right to go to Saul? ([9:15-16](#))
5. What do older, more mature Christians have to offer younger, less mature Christians?
6. How can you be a guide and help to younger Christians in your church?
7. What is one thing you could do this week to help a younger Christian grow in his or her faith?

#### Life Application Bible Notes

[9:2](#) Saul (later called Paul) was so zealous for his Jewish beliefs that he began a persecution campaign against anyone who believed in Christ ("followers of the Way"). Why would the Jews in Jerusalem want to persecute Christians as faraway as Damascus? There are several possibilities: (1) to seize the Christians who had fled, (2) to prevent the spread of Christianity to other major cities, (3) to keep the Christians from causing any trouble with Rome, (4) to advance Saul's career and build his reputation as a true Pharisee, zealous for the law, (5) to unify the factions of Judaism by giving them a common enemy.

[9:2-5](#) As Saul traveled to Damascus, pursuing Christians, he was confronted by the risen Christ and brought face to face with the truth of the Good News. Sometimes God breaks into a life in a spectacular manner, and sometimes conversion is a quiet experience. Beware of people who insist that you must have a particular type of conversion experience. The right way to come to faith in Jesus is whatever way God brings *you*.

[9:3](#) Damascus, a key commercial city, was located about 150 miles northeast of Jerusalem in the Roman province of Syria. Several trade routes linked Damascus to other cities throughout the Roman world. Saul may have thought that by stamping out Christianity in Damascus, he could prevent its spread to other areas.

[9:3-5](#) Paul refers to this experience as the start of his new life in Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:1](#); [15:8](#); [Galatians 1:15, 16](#)). At the center of this wonderful experience was Jesus Christ. Paul did not

see a vision; he saw the risen Christ himself ([9:17](#)). Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord, confessed his own sin, surrendered his life to Christ, and resolved to obey him. True conversion comes from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and leads to a new life in relationship with him.

[9:5](#) Saul thought he was pursuing heretics, but he was persecuting Jesus himself. Anyone who persecutes believers today is also guilty of persecuting Jesus (see [Matthew 25:40, 45](#)) because believers are the body of Christ on earth.

[9:13, 14](#) "Not him, Lord; that's impossible. He could never become a Christian!" In essence, that's what Ananias said when God told him of Saul's conversion. After all, Saul had pursued believers to their death. Despite these understandable feelings, Ananias obeyed God and ministered to Saul. We must not limit God—he can do anything. We must obey and follow God's leading, even when he leads us to difficult people and places.

[9:15, 16](#) Faith in Christ brings great blessings but often great suffering, too. Paul would suffer for his faith (see [2 Corinthians 11:23-27](#)). God calls us to commitment, not to comfort. He promises to be with us *through* suffering and hardship, not to spare us from them.

[9:17](#) Ananias found Saul, as he had been instructed, and greeted him as "Brother Saul." Ananias feared this meeting because Saul had come to Damascus to capture the believers and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem ([9:2](#)). In obedience to the Holy Spirit, however, Ananias greeted Saul lovingly. It is not always easy to love others, especially when we are afraid of them or doubt their motives. Nevertheless we must follow Jesus' command ([John 13:34](#)) and Ananias's example, showing loving acceptance to other believers.

[9:17, 18](#) Although Acts makes no mention of a special filling of the Holy Spirit for Saul, his changed life and subsequent accomplishments bear strong witness to the Holy Spirit's presence and power in him. Evidently, the Holy Spirit had filled Saul when he received his sight and was baptized. See the second note on [8:15-17](#) for more on the filling of the Holy Spirit.

### **Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem - [Acts 9:20-31](#)**

1. If you were constantly harassed on your job, what would you most likely do about it?
2. What did the Jews plan for Saul? Why? ([9:23](#))
3. How did Saul outwit his enemies? ([9:24-25](#))
4. What did Saul do while he was with the apostles? ([9:28-29](#))
5. Why do unbelievers sometimes oppose those who tell others about Christ?
6. In what ways can a new Christian have a unique witness to friends and associates?
7. This week, how can you prepare for discussions about God with your coworkers or non-Christian friends?

### **Life Application Bible Notes**

[9:20](#) Immediately after receiving his sight and spending some time with the believers in Damascus, Saul went to the synagogue to tell the Jews about Jesus Christ. Some Christians counsel new believers to wait until they are thoroughly grounded in their faith before attempting to share the Good News. Saul spent time with other believers to learn about Jesus before beginning his worldwide ministry, but he did not wait to witness. Although we should

not rush into a ministry unprepared, we do not need to wait before telling others what has happened to us.

[9:21, 22](#) Saul's arguments were powerful because he was a brilliant scholar. Even more convincing, however, was his changed life. People knew that what Saul taught was real because they could see the evidence in the way he lived. It is important to know what the Bible teaches and how to defend the faith, but your life should back up your words.

[9:23](#) According to [Galatians 1:17, 18](#), Paul left Damascus and traveled to Arabia, the desert region just southeast of Damascus, where he lived for three years. It is unclear whether his three-year stay occurred between [verses 22](#) and [23](#) or between [verses 25](#) and [26](#). Some commentators say that "after a while" could mean a long period of time. They suggest that when Paul returned to Damascus, the governor under Aretas ordered his arrest ([2 Corinthians 11:32](#)) in an effort to keep peace with influential Jews. The other possibility is that Paul's night escape occurred during his first stay in Damascus, just after his conversion, when the Pharisees were especially upset over his defection from their ranks. He would have fled to Arabia to spend time alone with God and to let the Jewish religious leaders cool down. Regardless of which theory is correct, there was a period of at least three years between Paul's conversion ([9:3-6](#)) and his trip to Jerusalem ([9:26](#)).

[9:26, 27](#) It is difficult to change your reputation, and Saul had a terrible reputation with the Christians. But Barnabas, a Jewish convert (mentioned in [4:36](#)), became the bridge between Saul and the apostles. New Christians (especially those with tarnished reputations) need sponsors, people who will come alongside, encourage, teach, and introduce them to other believers. In what ways can you become a Barnabas to new believers?

[9:27](#) [Galatians 1:18, 19](#) explains that Paul was in Jerusalem only 15 days and that he met only with Peter and James.

[9:29, 30](#) In these short sentences we can see two characteristics of Paul, even as a new believer in Christ: He was bold, and he stirred up controversy. These would characterize Paul's ministry the rest of his life.

[9:30](#) Saul's visit to Tarsus helped quiet conflicts with the Jews and allowed him time to prove his commitment. After Saul, the most zealous persecutor, was converted, the church enjoyed a brief time of peace.

*Acts Study Guide questions and notes are from*

