

## **Acts 9:1-9**

April 15, 1976

### **The Way:**

**Acts 18:25-26** - “and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” - So it’s possible to be a follower or instructed in the way of the Lord and still not be instructed as much as you ought to be; it’s possible to learn more about God or the way of God more perfectly.

**Acts 19:9, 23**

**Acts 22:4**

**Acts 24:14, 22**

**John 14:6**

**Acts 11:25-26** - Before they were called Christians they were called the way. So the name of our ministry belongs to us rightly as sons of God (I guess); but I never knew (years and years ago when we called ourselves, “The Way”) the integrity and the greatness of the word and the beautiful magnanimous thing about the word. The followers of the Lord Jesus Christ were first called the way. Later on, according to **Acts 11**, they were first called Christians because they were walking like ‘Christ in them’, manifesting the greatness of the power of God. And that’s why in Antioch of Syria they were called Christians first.

On this Thursday night of “Holy Week” I think it’s significant that we are in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts, because this man who persecuted the way unto the death is a man whose life was changed by the resurrected Christ. This Jesus, whom people persecuted and crucified, whom God raised from the dead, is the one who also touched the life of this man called Saul, or Paul, and changed him so completely that I assume from my knowledge of the Word and the great outreach of God’s Word, that his life cannot be compared to any other apostle of that day and time and hour. Men came upon the scene with great ability like Peter, John, Barnabas, Silas, a lot of great men, Timothy. But I think the apostle Paul outshines them all because the same amount of discipline that he had in persecution, when he was born again he now transferred to the greatness of the power of the true God and used that ability of his to hold it forth. Being in Acts chapter 9 tonight is absolutely electrifying to me. There are only four records in the Word of God that basically deal with this man called Saul in the light in which we are concerned about covering it tonight.

**Acts 22:2-16**

**vs. 2** - “Hebrew” – Aramaic

**vs. 9** - “and were afraid” - omit

**Acts 26:4-20**

**vs. 10** - “voice” – vote

**vs. 11** - “strange” – foreign

**vs. 14** - “Hebrew” – Aramaic

**vs. 18** - “forgiveness” – remission

- “that is” - omit

## **Galatians 1:13-18**

**Vs. 13** – “conversation” – manner of life

In **Acts 9** we have the only other record remaining in the whole Bible that tells us about the rebirth of Saul and parts of his subsequent ministry. And about everything you can know (and there’s very little more to know) is written in those records I have read, or will read with you from **Acts 9**. You can, of course, enlarge your vision and knowledge of God’s Word by reading comparable history of that period--the cities, the areas--becoming knowledgeable. For instance, Paul was from Tarsus in Cilicia. It was his home. It was perhaps the third most influential city of that day; Athens in Greece, Alexandria in Egypt, Tarsus, then Ephesus.

Twenty-one points of Paul’s life:

1. Birth – **Acts 22:3**
2. Religious education and manner of life – **Acts 22:3; 26:4, 5 (Philippians 3:6)**
3. A Pharisee – **Acts 26:5-7 (Philippians 3:5)**
4. Persecution of Christians – **Acts 22:4; 26:9-11; I Timothy 1:13 (Philippians 3:6)**
5. Letters from Sanhedrin to Damascus – **Acts 9:1-2; 22:5; 26:11-12**
6. The mid-day light – **Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13**
7. All fall to the earth – **Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14**
8. The voice, etc. – **Acts 9:4; 22: 7; 26:14**
9. “Who art thou, Lord?” – **Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15**
10. Jesus, the one persecuted – **Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15**
11. God’s intention concerning Saul – **Acts 26:16-18**
12. Companions speechless – **Acts 9:7; 22:9**
13. Saul’s question - What shall I do Lord? – **Acts 22:10**
14. Go to Damascus and be told – **Acts 9:6; 22:10**
15. Led into Damascus – **Acts 9:8; 22:11**
16. Without sight and food for three days – **Acts 9:9**
17. Ananias directed to visit Saul – **Acts 9:10-16; 22:12**
18. Sight restored and future mission – **Acts 9:17-18; 22:13-15**
19. Baptized – **Acts 9:18; 22:16**
20. Remains in Damascus preaching – **Acts 9:19-21; 26:19-20**
21. Increases in powerful believing – **Acts 9:22**

I would like to see a very comprehensive and detailed work done sometime by our Corps people, if not now, at sometime at least. I’ve got twenty-one; maybe we could end up having fifty or sixty just pin-pointing every segment of this man’s life and the things in here that we’re concerned about.

It is interesting to remember that Philip ends up at a city called Caesarea (**Acts 8:40**). When we get to the tenth chapter we’ll talk about Caesarea. But in between the eighth and the tenth chapter sets this record of a man just like a diamond. A man who was so utterly committed to the Adversary that if you’d looked at it sense-knowledge wise, you would have said he was born of the seed of the serpent, because nobody could be any crueller than he was. No one could be more dynamic in deprogramming than he was; totally vicious, real adamant, real cruel. Man, he must have just gotten pleasure out of seeing Christians murdered and he thought he was right and he was sincere.

Every time you hear me say that underneath are the everlasting arms, on the outside and on top, that no man can get outside of the everlasting arms of God, that they are always there, it’s always Paul, among others, that flip into my mind. First of all, I always think of myself and secondly, I always

think of Paul. Then I get Peter and a few others involved. In my mind, I see these because He's able to save to the uttermost. He's able to take man's sin from them as far as the east is from the west and as deep as the deepest sea and He'll remember them no more. He did that for this man called Saul.

And as Philip had arrived at Caesarea, God by divine providence had Luke to insert at this point the record that begins with the word "but." Philip had done such a fantastic job. He arrived at Caesarea, but Saul, in spite of what Philip had done at Samaria, how the whole city had been changed; how God had allowed him to minister to the Ethiopian eunuch (it was interesting today that Mrs. Wierwille talked to you about the German translations; Martin Luther and all the German translations delete the word, "eunuch" and yet the word appears in every critical Greek text and in Estrangelo Aramaic. The introduction to the Luther Bible and the rest of them say that they translated them from the original Greek. If they did, they should've translated it "eunuch," or they translated from a manuscript which is no longer in extant, which is not true because we know the manuscripts that they used to translate from, or the Greek text that he used to translate from. It's interesting that Mrs. Wierwille brought that up today).

### **Acts 9:1**

"And" - but

"slaughter" – it says 'murder' in the text. I can see how he became increasingly more ferocious, more tenaciously adherent to what he thought was his call and ministry to God. He really thought he was doing God a favor, I believe. The increase of the believers in Samaria must've gotten back to his ears, plus the tremendous increase of believers in Jerusalem. He saw the persecution and yet with the persecution and in the seeds of the blood of the martyrs, it seemed like there were constantly other people springing up; one killed, ten rise up. And he just increased every effort he had, drove himself to be the greatest persecutor it's possible to be. "breathing out" - like when you see pictures of serpents spitting fire, breathing out. Saul had it so deeply within, wherever he went he was just breathing out threatenings and murder; that's all he did. He ate and slept and drank murder. "Kill the Christians, kill the Christians, kill the Christians; kill them; kill the followers of the way; kill them; kill them." That's all he did. That's what it means.

"unto" – to

### **Acts 9:2**

The letters were sent to Damascus to the synagogues to give him that standing and that recognition among the priests there in the synagogues, to get their cooperation to go out after those Christians in Damascus. This is a unique time in the history of Damascus because Damascus was a Roman city and for the Jews to have this amount of control in Damascus; there's a period of perhaps two or three years there where it was given to them. I'm not sure. You guys can figure it out someday. But I do know that Damascus is the oldest continuing city in the world today. He got these letters from the high priest in Jerusalem to the synagogues in Damascus. If the high priest told the rabbi in the synagogue on 'John Street' to do something, what do you think all the rabbis of all the synagogues in Damascus did when Paul got there with the letters from the high priest? They dropped everything and they went to work with Saul. That's what it was all about.

We get concerned today about a little thing called deprogramming or somebody doesn't like The Way Ministry or they yell at us or some father writes and says, "Well, I hate for my daughter to be in there," or "...my son to be in there." Then other fathers turn around and praise God that you're there; followers of the way. How strong would we be to bear this tonight in the United States, in the Way Corps at Emporia? This is the top echelon, the high priest, the Sanhedrin, the ruling body, all seventy

of them, backing each other up right at the top level. In that culture it would mean the same as if today the government passed word from the President saying, “Kill every follower of The Way Ministry. Get them in if you can find them; bring them in.”; breathe out threatenings and murder. They must not have gotten all of them because we’re still here today. Down through the centuries other believers have lived. Our God is still able to deliver. Here was Saul breathing it out. He got letters to Damascus to the synagogues.

“this way” - the way. “The way” may be in your center reference. In all the texts it’s “the way.”

“whether they were” – both Boy, look at that persecution. Ordinarily, persecution was only for men. Women’s lib; you got the liberty to get persecuted right there. That’s something, because the women weren’t allowed to do the teaching in that day like you are in the Way Corps now. They didn’t even allow the women to sit like you sit. The women all had to sit in their corner; the men were all up in front. This is the early Church, because of culture. Both men and women--they were not only concerned about cutting off the people who did the talking, the men; but the women, who produced the children. They were after the women so there could be no more children born. Sounds almost like Egypt, doesn’t it; the times of Pharaoh? They did not murder the women because they were doing the teaching of the Word of God; they murdered them because they were bringing forth the babies that would be born in a Christian family, because in the oriental culture, if daddy’s a Christian, everybody in the family’s a Christian. We’ll see it come up in chapter 10 with the household of Cornelius. There’s no commentary written that’ll tell you what I’ve just told you. I didn’t know it either until I just told you.

“bound” – He didn’t drive them in a limousine. It was approximately 144 miles northeast of Jerusalem to the city of Damascus. They would rope them and tie them together and if any would drag, they kept right on dragging them.

### Acts 9:3

“as he journeyed” - in the journeying

“he came near” - it came to pass that he drew near

“from” - out of

You ought to check [The Jewish Encyclopedia](#); maybe the [Encyclopedia Britannica](#). But this light that shined round about him out of heaven is that same shekinah glory that you read about in the Old Testament. So you ought to check shekinah glory in [The Jewish Encyclopedia](#) or the other one I mentioned or any other source and bring yourself up a little bit about the shekinah glory in the Word. Many believe that the pillar of fire by night was the shekinah glory. So do I. That guarded and protected the children of Israel from all their enemies as they were wandering in the wilderness. God led them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and no one could touch the children of Israel as long as the pillar of fire was there because they couldn’t see them; couldn’t get through to them. It’s a light so bright. Well, you work it.

### Acts 9:4

“voice” – *phōnē* – we get our word phone from this Greek word. This is in the accusative case.

### Acts 9:5

“Who art thou, Lord?” - It’s remarkable he would say this. This light was so fantastic that they just fell to the ground, and the thing that he heard to the end that he understood it was the saying, “Saul,

Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He had not been persecuting Jesus. Jesus was ascended in the heavens, but he was persecuting, murdering followers of the way and the followers of the way according to the Word were the same as if it had been Jesus himself. “Why persecutest thou me?” Saul recognized this because, having been trained as a leader under Gamaliel, he was knowledgeable of the reality that God did talk to people. He had read the story of Samuel, the calling of Samuel, and a lot of other things he knew about the Old Testament. Therefore, it wasn’t something that would freak him if he heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” If he heard something like that, immediately he’d know it would have to be from God. That’s why he said, “Who art thou, Lord?”

“And the Lord said” - And he said

“I am Jesus” - he didn’t say I am the Messiah, Christ, the messianic one; he said, “I am Jesus,” the humiliated one, the one who walked upon earth; and it is that Jesus that was being persecuted when the followers of the way were being persecuted.

“*it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*” - deleted from all the basic foundational texts

#### Acts 9:6

“ ‘And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ And the Lord *said* unto him,” - deleted from all the basic foundational texts

“Arise, and go...” - Immediately, he gave him instructions. God could have told him right then and there, but why didn’t He? Don’t ask me. He didn’t. He just said, “Arise, go into the city of Damascus. Then later on, when you’re in the city, I’ll tell you.”

#### Acts 9:7

“journeyed with” - accompanied

“voice” - This is in the genitive case. The difference is to show you that the men that were accompanying Paul heard a voice but they couldn’t understand what they heard; like you could be standing somewhere and you hear some people talking; you hear their voice but you’re not close enough to understand what is being said. These fellows were close enough but they still didn’t understand it. They heard the voice but they didn’t understand what God through Jesus told Saul.

“no man” – no one

#### Acts 9:8

“arose” - was raised up. I believe that tells me that the men who stood there speechless are the ones who gathered him in their arms and picked him up. I worked this ‘stood’ and the ‘falling down’ and now I can’t remember it. Because in **verse 7** it says they “stood.”

“no man” - nothing

**Verse 7** - That “stood” is in the essence of ‘remained’ speechless.

I believe all of this occurred while they were flat on the ground. That’s why when they raised Saul up they took him by the arms and lifted him up and they looked at him and his eyes were opened. When he opened his eyes he couldn’t see a thing; so they led him by the hand into the city of Damascus.

### Acts 9:9

This record along with the records I read previously basically gives you all the knowledge regarding the salvation of a man that, according to the senses world is just about as bad as he could be. I've often wondered what happened to the companions in travel. I don't know. The Word doesn't say. But I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it intrigued them as to what really happened. It's sort of neat that they are the ones that led him into Damascus. Maybe they all stayed right there. I would like to believe they were all born again because I know Saul was.

Here's a man totally committed, as you and I would say, to working for the Adversary and yet God in His mercy and grace, because He had called him before the foundations of the world and He knew. Now you can make all kinds of conjectures as to what he heard when Stephen was stoned and others that were murdered. How that affected Saul, I don't know; all I know is that on the road to Damascus he met the Master of all life. On the road to Damascus he ran into Jesus of Nazareth in a very remarkable way and it changed the man's life.

Now, I happen to know that you can't be born again except you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe God raised him from the dead. I know that in order to believe someone has to teach. Maybe all that teaching he'd learned long before, but he'd rejected it. It says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest me?" I know that's what God through Jesus Christ said, but I do not know how much more he said. The record does not say that that is all he said to him. It does not say that this is all that Jesus said to him, but it does say that that is what he said to him. How much more did he say? I don't know, but again I'd like to believe that he and Saul went 'round and 'round with the Word for a minute or two. Before he said, "Arise" what else did he say? I don't know. It's his business what he said but I feel pretty confident that he really laid some beautiful things on Saul so he could bring him to the place where he would say, "Arise and go..."

I believe in the innermost depths of my heart, without the proof of the Word for it, but just the whole tone of the greatness of the Word, that Saul was the one who replaced Judas Iscariot in all of its greatness. The twelve apostles were originally chosen, according to **Luke 6**, by the Lord Jesus Christ; and here, as far as I know the Word, is the only other apostle unto whom Jesus appeared like this and called him. I don't know, but I know he called him. If it's true what I think in the innermost part of my being, it is wonderful how to have a Judas replaced by someone as dynamically great as Paul will be. A Judas who was so flippy that he could deny the lord and betray him; a Saul who was so committed to destruction that when God saved him he was so dynamically committed to the Word and to God, that the abundance of the revelation kept secret from before the foundations of the world could be entrusted to this man.

When I put all this together, I just sit in utter amazement of the greatness of our God, His love, His mercy, His grace and His foreknowledge. I wouldn't have let Saul within a mile of me if I would've known he was coming; would you? And yet God wasn't scared of him. A little light flipping out, talked to him, and it hit, and the man believed. When you get to great records in the Word like these, you can work with all of your ability and when you're all through, you've just barely begun to see how great it really is. This record of the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus is one of the greats in the Word. But all you can do is just read it. Let it sit, believe it, move on, see the greatness of it as the years roll by in your spiritual growth.