

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 66

The Conversion of Saul

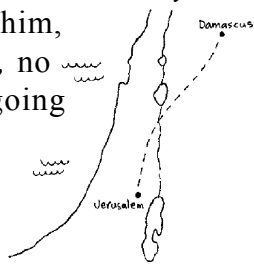
Acts 9:1-18

Saul was “yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.”

That sounds bad, doesn't it. It *was* bad. Saul hated Christianity. He hunted for Christians. He tried to force them to deny their Lord. If that didn't work, he hauled them off to prison. And if Christians fled to escape him, he would track them down — even to faraway places.

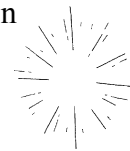


One of those faraway places was Damascus. A journey of five or six *days!* But Saul didn't mind. To him, no place was *too far away*, no work was *too hard*, if by going that far, and working that hard, he could put down forever the name of Jesus.



So, off he went, to Damascus. In his pocket he carried *official letters* from the Sanhedrin, giving him the right to arrest Christians. And he had with him a *police force* — strong men who could help him round up the Christians, bind them, and lead them back to Jerusalem.

He was nearly there. Damascus was probably in sight. And then, suddenly, a bright light! Brighter than the light of the sun! So bright that Saul and his companions are knocked right off their feet. And then a voice, saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”



Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

The voice came from ... *heaven*. Heaven — that's where the Christians said that *Jesus* was. Yes, the followers of Jesus all claimed that Jesus *arose from the dead*, and then *ascended to heaven*. Could it be ... could it *really* be ... that they were *right*? Could it be true that the *Man Jesus*, who was so heartily hated by Saul and the Sanhedrin, was really in heaven at *God's right hand*?

Perhaps it was at that instant that Saul *saw* Him — saw the glorified Jesus, in the midst of a heavenly light too dazzling for human eyes.

"Who art thou, Lord?" he asks. And the answer comes: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Yes, that's what Saul was doing. He was persecuting *Jesus*. And he *knew* it too. True, he was tracking down *Christians*. But *why*? Only because of their *doctrine*. Only because of what they *believed* and *taught*. Only because they taught that *Jesus* is the *Savior*. It was the name of Jesus that Saul hated. It was the name of Jesus that he wanted to blot out from the earth.

That is, until now ... on the Damascus road ... when he is *converted*.

Converted. Do you know what that means? It means that Saul was *turned* — turned, in a moment, from being a *hater* of Jesus, to being a *lover* of Jesus. Saul, the fiercest of the enemies of Christ and His church, became a *believer*.

Seems almost *impossible*, doesn't it? How could that ever have happened?

Was it maybe the bright light and the voice from heaven that made a believer out of Saul? No, that didn't do it. Faith, you see, doesn't come through the *eyes*. It comes by a power in the *heart*. The power of the *Holy Spirit*. *No one* will believe, ever, unless Jesus, by His Spirit, touches his *heart*.

That's what happened on the road to Damascus. A sinner, a *persecutor*, was *converted* — not by a bright light, not by a voice from heaven, not even by a vision of Jesus in glory, but by the transforming power of the Spirit in his *heart*.

That was amazing. And what makes it even *more* amazing is that Saul was being changed from a persecutor to an *apostle*. Christ will use *Saul*, in a special way, to *build His church*.

Saul didn't know, yet, what his great work would be. But he is ready now to *do* it. "Lord," he asks, "what wilt thou have me to do?" Such is the power of the Spirit — in the heart of *every* sinner.

"Arise," Jesus said to Saul, "and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Saul did arise — right away. But when he opened his eyes, he saw ... nothing. He was *blind*.

Saul's companions had not seen Jesus. Nor had they heard the words He spoke from heaven. But they had been knocked to the ground by the same bright light that Saul had seen. And they heard a sound from heaven. So, though they themselves were not blinded,

they knew that Saul's imagination was not playing tricks on him. Surely, whatever Saul had seen and heard had come from *heaven*. So they took their leader by the hand and led him into the city — to the house of a man by the name of Judas. There Saul stayed for three days, blind, neither eating nor drinking. Just thinking!



He had a lot to think about. He saw now that his whole religion had been ... *wrong*. Totally wrong! He had actually been a bitter enemy of *God*, and of *His* Christ, and of *His* people. And God, for His own good purpose, had stopped Saul in his tracks on the Damascus road. What a marvelous wonder of grace!

Meanwhile, the Christians in Damascus are still dreading the arrival of Saul. They expect that at any moment he and his men will arrive and start hunting down the Christians. You can imagine the surprise of Ananias, therefore, when the Lord appeared to him in a vision and told him to go to the house of Judas, on Straight Street, and to ask for ... *Saul*. And then to put his hands on Saul, so that Saul will be able again to *see*.

But ... but ... Saul is an *enemy*, said Ananias. He's here in Damascus to *bind Christians*.

"Go thy way," the Lord said, "for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

How astounding that must have

been to Ananias! Saul — a *chosen vessel*. An *apostle*. Counted worthy, even, to *suffer* for Jesus' name.

So Ananias goes to find Saul. He lays his hands on him and says, "Brother Saul..."

Can you believe that? "Brother Saul." What an astonishing turn of events! Who would ever have thought it possible?



But that's what Jesus does. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He makes ... brothers.

And immediately there fell from Saul's eyes what looked like scales. And he received his sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. To what city did Saul travel to hunt for Christians?
2. What made Saul and his companions fall to the ground, just before they reached Damascus?
3. When Saul asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" what answer did he hear from heaven?
4. Why did Saul need help finding his way to Damascus?

The Beginning of Opposition to Saul

Acts 9:19-30

"For he is a chosen vessel unto me."

Do you remember those words? That's what the Lord told Ananias, about

Saul. He is a “chosen vessel.”

That means that Saul is *especially picked* for a *special work*. Think about that. Whom does the Lord use for work in His kingdom? He uses whomever He wants, for whatever task He pleases. Even a man like *Saul*. Is Saul a *persecutor*? No matter. There is no heart, or head, too hard for the *Holy Spirit* to soften. Even a Saul can be changed, in a moment, to a man who is just right for special work in the Master’s hand.

Yes, a special work. What would that work be? Listen to Ananias: “The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest *know his will*, and *see* that Just One (Jesus), and shouldest *hear* the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his *witness* unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.”

Think of that! Saul is chosen to “know his (God’s) will.” That is, he will know *the Scriptures*. He will understand all the doctrine, the teachings, of the Bible. God will use him, even, to *write* Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians — half of the books of the New Testament. Never could Saul have *done* that, if he had not been chosen to “*know God’s will*.”

Saul is chosen, also, to be a *witness* of the risen Lord. A witness, you know, is one who has *seen* something. And Saul *did*. He had seen, with his own eyes, the *risen* and *ascended* Jesus. Like the other apostles, Saul could say, “I *know* that Jesus arose ... because I *saw* Him.”

To be a faithful witness, however, Saul had to do much more than say, “I know that Jesus arose.” He must be able to tell others about who Jesus *is*, *why* He had to die, *how* He arose, *what He does* in heaven — and how all of this *fits* with what the prophets had foretold. What do you think, did Saul have to *go back to school* to learn all of that? Did he have to study under Peter and John, to learn about Christianity? No, Saul already *knew* what Christians believed. He *knew* it, and *hated* it ... until Jesus touched his *heart* on the Damascus road. And then, when Ananias put his hands on Saul’s head, Saul was *filled with the Holy Spirit*. Then, yes *then*, in a moment, he could *see*, he could *understand*, that what the Christians believed was *exactly what the Bible said*.

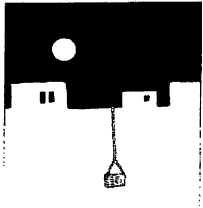
So Saul went right to work. He went into the synagogues in Damascus and preached about Jesus — showing, from the Bible, that Jesus is the *Son of God*. And the more he preached ... and studied ... and meditated on the Scriptures, the bolder he became.

Everybody who heard Saul preach was amazed. The Christians were *delighted*. Their worst enemy had become ... a *brother*. The Jews, on the other hand, were really upset. Their champion had turned *traitor*. What upset them the *most* was that Saul was able to use *their own Scriptures* to prove that the Christians were *right*, that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised Messiah. How they hated

that! So angry were they, that they decided to *kill him*.

Trouble is, they couldn't *find* him. Somehow Saul had learned of their wicked plot, and he went into *hiding*. The Jews, however, are determined not to let Saul escape. Off they go to the governor of the city. Saul, they say, is a *troublemaker*. He is an enemy of the *peace*. And the governor *believes* them. He orders the soldiers who guarded the gates of the city to watch for this man, and to *arrest* him.

Now, the Jews think, they have Saul trapped. Sooner or later they will get him. But Saul learned also about *this* plot. And his friends help him. In the middle of the night, they help Saul get over the city's high *wall*. In a *basket*, let down by a *rope*. Soon, therefore, Saul is on his way back to Jerusalem.



When Saul reached Jerusalem, he didn't go back to his old friends. He knew he wouldn't be welcome anymore in the *Sanhedrin*. He went instead to those who he hoped would soon be his *new* friends. But they were all *afraid* of him. They were afraid it was all a *trick* — that he was just *pretending* to be their friend, so it would be easier for him to *catch* them and put them all in prison.

Finally one man dared to meet with him. It was Barnabas. He listened as Saul told him about his conversion on the Damascus road. And Barnabas believed him. He brought Saul then to the

other apostles, and they believed too — believed that their old enemy had been chosen by Christ to be ... an *apostle*.

Saul's old friends believed it too. They despised this traitor, and, just like the Jews in Damascus, they plotted to *kill* him.

But, again, Saul found out about it. How? From Jesus Himself. Listen.

Saul went to the temple to pray. And while he was praying, the Bible tells us, he fell into a "trance." It was as if he *fainted*. And when he was in that trance, Jesus appeared to him and said, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me."

Saul was disappointed. He was hoping that the Jews would listen to, and believe, one who was a *converted persecutor*. No, Jesus answered, they will not believe you. "Depart," Jesus said again, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Yes, to the *Gentiles*. Saul didn't know that before. Now he does. He is a chosen vessel, in the Master's hand, to preach ... to the Gentiles. That will be his *special work*. And, as we shall see, Saul obeyed — immediately, and to the day of his death.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. When did Saul receive the Holy Spirit?
2. What did Saul begin to do in Damascus right after his conversion?

3. How did Saul escape from Damascus?
4. What good man in Jerusalem brought Saul to the apostles?
5. Who told Saul to flee for his life from Jerusalem?
6. What special, lifetime work did God give to Saul?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. Saul was persecuting *Christians*. Why, then, did Jesus ask, "Why persecutest thou *me*?"
2. How did Saul's companions know

that Saul's imagination was not playing tricks on him?

3. How did Saul learn that he was appointed to be an apostle?
4. What did the Holy Spirit do for Saul?
5. Why were the Christians in Jerusalem afraid of Saul?
6. Why was Saul disappointed that he had to flee from Jerusalem?

Memory Verse

Acts 9:5b "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Follow the Dots

Color the picture. Remember — it is nighttime.

