



“Saul Begins to Preach Christ”

Acts 9:19b-31

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Introduction: Acts chapter 9 started with Saul’s commission but today we’ll look at his consequences. Thus far we’ve seen a number of different characters all with a similar mission. They all preach Jesus.

I. Saul in Damascus (vv. 19b-25)

1. The Persecutor Preaches

Acts 9:19b-20 – “Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God’”

“Divine grace does not trample human personality. Rather the reverse; for it enables human beings to be truly human. It is sin which imprisons; it is grace which liberates.” – John Stott

2. The Persecutor Amazes

Acts 9:21 – “All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, ‘Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?’”

Saul was chosen by God but ultimately the people didn’t see it. People have always had a hard time keeping up with the Lord’s work.

3. The Persecutor Increases

Acts 9:22 – “But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”

“proving” – *symbibazo* in the Greek – unite; hold together; bring together.

4. The Persecutor is Persecuted

Acts 9:23-25 – “When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.”

How many days?

Galatians 1:15-18 – “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.”

It was not unusual for homes to be built right into the city walls and for people to be lowered down by rope (cf. Joshua 2:15; 1 Samuel 19:12).

II. Saul in Jerusalem (vv. 26-31)

1. Saul is met with Skepticism

Acts 9:26 – “When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.”

Saul left on his mission blind, but he returned full of light. Not just light for himself but a light for many to see.

2. Saul is met by Barnabas

Acts 9:27-28 – “But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.”

In Damascus Saul needed Ananias. In Jerusalem Saul needed Barnabas aka “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36) to speak up for him before the apostles.

3. Saul is met with More Persecution

Acts 9:29-30 – “And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.”

Do arguments work? It depends. Arguing is a virtue. When we think of arguments, we typically tend to think of people angry, shouting or yelling at each other. However, arguments and dispute help us separate the wheat from the chaff.

1 Peter 3:14-15 – “But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

4. Peace in the Church in spite of Persecution

Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

III. Conclusion

Saul was chosen yet was oppressed. Saul was chosen yet had to be prepared. Saul was chosen yet had to endure.

If dependence is the objective, then weakness becomes an advantage (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:30-33).

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. Are you someone who is comfortable handling conflict or would you rather not deal with it?
2. Have you ever made significant changes that others had a hard time accepting?
3. How have you found encouragement in seasons of waiting?
4. Do you have a Barnabas in your life? Are you a Barnabas for someone else? If yes, in what way?