

Introduction:

Today we're going to conclude our look at how *the Church Expands*.

Things we will look at in this lesson:

Part One: Saul's Conversion

Part Two: Saul's New Life

Part One: Saul's Conversion:

01. What would Saul's life produce, once he met Jesus?

02. What was Saul trained as?

03. What was Saul uniquely fitted for?

04. What was Saul's goal in going to Damascus?

05. What made Saul's conversion unique?

06. Why did Saul need a personal revelation from God?

Article 1)

Saul's Example for Us Today (Acts 9:7-17):

(1) Saul was remorseful (Acts 9:9).

One of the marks of true conversion is remorse. Paul's genuine experience is seen by his immediate response. He chose not to eat or drink anything for three days. He was stunned. He had met the Lord whose people he had been persecuting. Imagine his thoughts during those days. He knew what he had done to Stephen. He knew what he had done to other believers. If we have truly met the living Christ, our life should change. Our old life will bring remorse about anything we have done that displeases God.

(2) Saul prayed (Acts 9:11).

God spoke to Ananias, a disciple in Damascus. "'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight'" (Acts 9:11–12). Saul had not yet been baptized in water. He was still blind. He had not been filled with the Holy Spirit. But already God was speaking to him in visions. Such visions tend to be nurtured in an atmosphere of intense prayer. Prayer is essential for the life of the individual Christian and the church. Visions are a means of guidance in Acts. Like the dreams of Joseph (Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22), their presence indicates a life so filled with God's presence that He has ready access to the subconscious or inner spiritual nature of people. Both Ananias (whose name means "the Lord is gracious") and Saul were directed by visions. Ananias' willingness ("Yes, Lord" in Acts 9:10) gave way to momentary questioning of the Lord (Acts 9:13) when he learned God's instructions. His questioning shows that he knew about Saul's threatening reason for coming to Damascus.

Article 1) continued...

(3) Saul connected with the body of Christ (Acts 9:10–17).

It was necessary for Saul to link up with other Christians. The Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to Saul to connect him to the body of Christ. God did not call Saul to found a new denomination, new movement, or independent ministry. Saul's ministry was to be part of the body of Christ and the church already in place. Ananias was well aware of Saul's past (Acts 9:13–14). It was not easy to trust this man who had been the gospel's enemy. But he listened to God's reassurance in Acts 9:15–16 and obeyed. Ananias went to the house and placed his hands on Saul. His actions show that he accepted Saul right away. So do his words: "'Brother Saul'" (Acts 9:17). The man who had tried to destroy the church and all Christians—who had just days earlier been his greatest enemy—was now his brother. Ananias provided what Saul needed—both physically and spiritually. "'The Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'" Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength" (Acts 9:17–19).

Part Two: Saul's New Life:

07. In Saul's first time preaching, what did he declare?

08. What was Saul's baffling the opposition a result of?

09. What is one proof of Saul's life change?

10. What role did Barnabas play in the body of Christ at this time?

11. What happened with the gospel when Saul persecuted the church?
