

**'Next to the events of the death and resurrection of Christ, no event has been more importance for the history of Christianity than the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.'**

**F. F. Bruce**

**'God chose the 'most aggressive enemy of the church, its bitterest persecutor, and transformed him into the great apostle...the most tireless missionary of the Church he once ached to destroy.'**

**J. O. Sanders**

After Stephen's stoning Saul began to destroy the church. (Acts 8:1-3)

Saul was a religious zealot (Acts 9:1-2; 22:3) who persecuted 'followers of the Way to the death' (22:4). In my obsession. I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.' (26:11)

*As he neared Damascus...suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting...Acts 9:3-6*

**A vision. A voice**

**'Who are you, Lord?' 'I am Jesus'.**

Saul saw God's Son Jesus in glory.

**'God spoke, and God was Jesus'**

(James Boice)

**'Lord, what do you want me to do?'** Acts 22:10

**'Get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do'** (Acts 9:6).

Jesus also spoke to Ananias in a this 'double vision' encounter (9:12).

**Jesus calls us to active faith.**

Get Up = Anastasis = resurrection

The reality of the resurrection.  
**What are the signs that a person has encountered the risen Lord Jesus?**

<b>HUMBLING</b>	<b>'they led him by the hand into Damascus'</b> Converted from self-centeredness to Christ dependence.	(9:8)
<b>PRAYING:</b>	<b>'ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying'</b> Calling out to the risen Jesus for help and healing,	(9:11)
<b>OBEYING.</b>	<b>'This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name'</b> No longer his own, he lived and suffered for the Lord Jesus.	(9:15)
<b>FILLING:</b>	<b>'be filled with the Holy Spirit.'</b> Living in the power of the risen Jesus Christ.	(9:17)
<b>SEEING:</b>	<b>'something like scales fell from Saul's eyes'</b> Leaving religious darkness for the kingdom of light.	(9:18)
<b>TESTIFYING</b>	<b>'At once he began to preach in the synagogues ' that Jesus is the Son of God</b>	(9:20)

**'Catch on fire with enthusiasm and people will come for miles to watch you burn.'**

(John Wesley)

**Enthusiasm (enthousiasmos) = in God.**

Saul encountered Jesus and "caught alight".

**At once he began to preach in the synagogues him that Jesus is the Son of God'** (Acts 9:20).

### Reconnect the revelation.

*'As Saul spoke, he grew strong, baffling the Jews by "proving that Jesus is the Christ.'* (Acts 9:22)

**The source of a word will determine its weight.**

**'Proving'** means **'put together'** Old Testament prophecy alongside their fulfillment in Jesus.

We must learn to put the biblical parts together.

**Why visit 'Arabia'?** Arabian evangelism? This might explain the hostility shown Paul from Nabatean King Aretas (Acts 9:24-25; 2 Cor 11:32-33). *1st Century Arabia stretched from Damascus to Petra to the western tip of modern 'Saudi Arabia.*

### Recapture the enthusiasm.

*The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him: "We have found the Messiah." And he brought him to Jesus. John 1:42*

What happens between **'several days'** (9:19-22)

and **'after many days'** 9:23?

*'When God who set me apart from birth called me through his grace... I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem...' Galatians 1:13-18*

**'I went away into Arabia' (Gal 1:17) 'Sinai is a mountain in Arabia' (Gal 4:25)**

Pre-Christian Saul was **'zealous for the traditions of his fathers.'** He persecuted the church because in his eyes Jewish Christians were traitors to the Torah (Gal 1:13).

**Elijah** too said: **'I have been very zealous for YHWH of Hosts'** (1 Kings 19:14). Later,

he ran **'to Horeb, the mountain of God'** (19:8) to resign. There God spoke to him:

**"Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus...anoint Hazael as king over Aram...Jehu as king over Israel; and anoint Elisha.'** Saul did what Elijah did.

He went to **Sinai**, where the Law was first given. **In Arabia**, the Lord revealed the Law afresh to him as God's life and love now fulfilled in Jesus - God's Son Savior.

Saul returned to Damascus to proclaim Jesus as king (1:16,23) to all the nations.

After spending 15 days in Jerusalem, he returned home to Tarsus for a decade.

**AD 34 Saul converted AD 34-36 Damascus Arabia Jerusalem AD 36-46 Tarsus**

### 'ALONGSIDERS'

**First**, commit to studying Scripture by putting the parts of the bible alongside each

other ('proving' = bring together 9:22) like Paul, to understand the gospel of Jesus

**Second**, as Barnabas brought Saul alongside fearful Christians in Jerusalem and won

his acceptance, we "meet and mingle" with insiders & outsiders, being neighborly.

**Third**, be encouraged by the Greatest Along-sider - the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:31)

*The church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace..was strengthened.*

*Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.*