SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
9:15

DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Nine, Verses 1–43

From Persecutor to Chosen Instrument — a light on the Damascus road, a frightened disciple on Straight Street, a basket over the wall, and two raised up by Jesus

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Saul rides to Damascus breathing murder and is thrown to the ground by the risen Jesus; three days blind, he is found praying, called “Brother” by a man who feared him, and sent to carry Christ’s name to the Gentiles — while on the coast Peter tells a paralyzed man and a dead woman to get up. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke’s key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 9:1–43

road · Ananias · basket · Lydda and Joppa

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

Four movements from the Damascus road to a tanner's house in Joppa

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"And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," — Acts 9:5

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 9:1–43

From Persecutor to Chosen Instrument — Jesus stops the church's worst enemy and makes him its herald — and through Peter He keeps raising the helpless

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 9 in 4 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:15

"But the Lord said to him, "Go, for △ he is a chosen instrument of Mine, ☆ to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;"

† Before the Passage

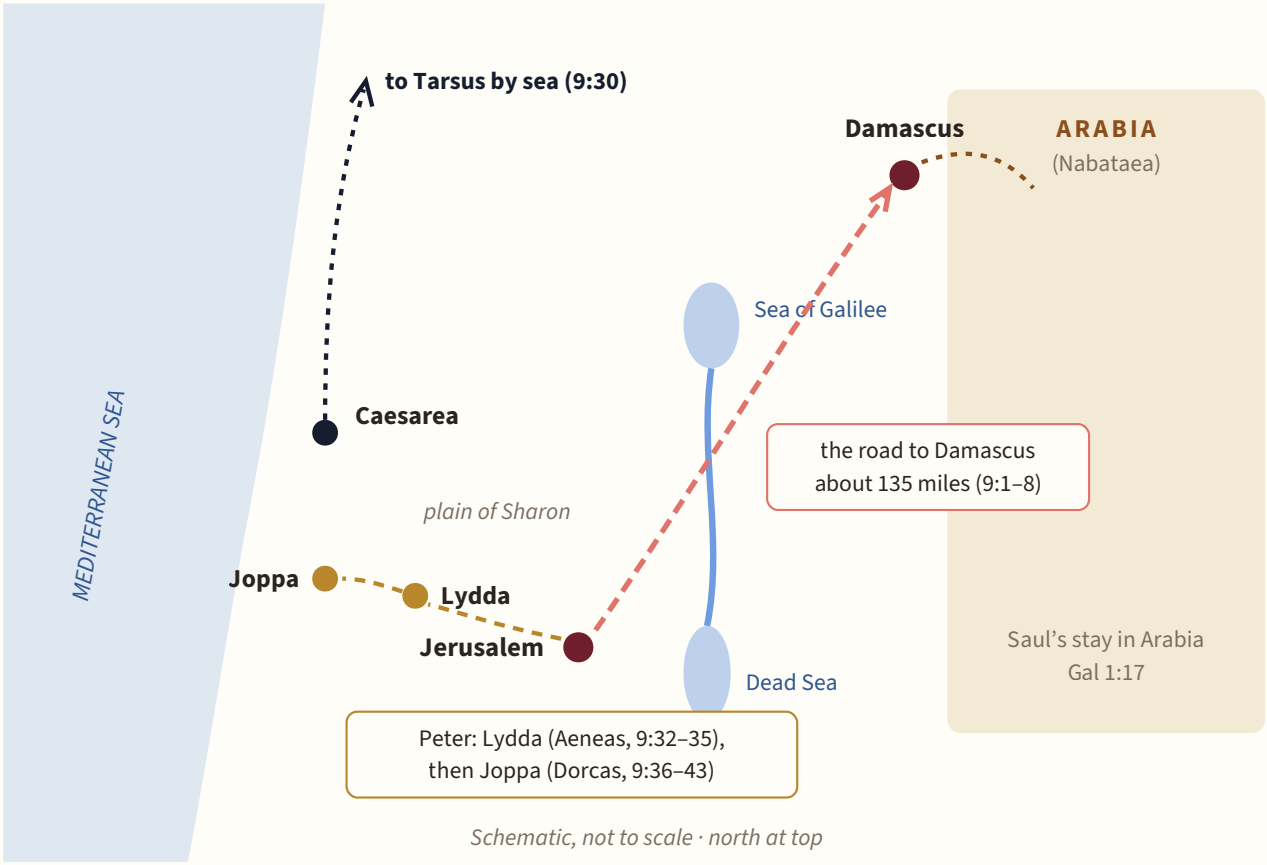
Saul first appears in Acts holding coats. The men who stoned Stephen "laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul" (7:58), and Luke adds, "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death" (8:1). A great persecution followed, and the believers scattered through Judea and Samaria. "But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison" (8:3). Chapter 8 then follows Philip to Samaria and to an Ethiopian on the desert road; chapter 9 picks Saul up where Luke left him — "still breathing threats and murder."

Saul tells us more about himself in his letters: "a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church" (Philippians 3:5–6). He was from Tarsus in Cilicia, trained in Jerusalem, and later said, "I punished them often in all the synagogues … I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities" (26:11). Damascus was such a city — about 135 miles north-east of Jerusalem, an old Syrian trading center with a large Jewish community and synagogues where believers who fled Jerusalem had found a home. The high priest's letters gave Saul authority to arrest any he found "belonging to the Way" (v. 2) and bring them back bound.

Luke thinks this story is so important that he tells it three times — here in the third person, and twice more in Paul's own defense speeches (22:3–16; 26:9–18). Paul himself counts the meeting on the road as a resurrection appearance: "last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also" (1 Corinthians 15:8). His letters add details Luke leaves out: after his conversion he went away to Arabia and came back to Damascus, and only three years later went up to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17–18); the escape in the basket was from the governor under King Aretas (2 Corinthians 11:32–33).

Acts 1:8 is the map of the book: witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Chapters 1–7 were Jerusalem; chapter 8 took the word to Samaria. Chapter 9 prepares the third ring in two ways at once: Jesus calls the man who will carry His name "before the Gentiles" (v. 15), and Peter, touring the coastal plain, ends the chapter lodging with a tanner in Joppa — the very house where, in chapter 10, a Gentile's messengers will come knocking.

FIGURE · JERUSALEM, DAMASCUS AND THE COAST



Follow the red road north-east from Jerusalem to Damascus, Saul's later trip to Tarsus, and Peter's gold route down to Lydda and Joppa on the coast.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 9:1–9

Saul, Saul, Why Are You Persecuting Me?

Letters from the high priest, a light at noon, and three days in the dark

> [1] *Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,* [2] *and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.* [3] *As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;* [4] *and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* [5] *And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,* [6] *but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."* [7] *The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.* [8] *Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.* [9] *And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*
>
> ACTS 9:1–9

> *"But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."*
>
> ACTS 8:3

> *"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'"*
>
> ACTS 26:14

ὁδός

HODOS · "ROAD, WAY" · G3598

The ordinary word for a road — used of the Damascus road itself in 9:17 and 9:27 ("on the road"). But in verse 2 it is a name: those "belonging to the Way." In the NASB the believers are called "the Way" here and in 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22. Guzik: "This seems to be the earliest name for the Christian movement." Jesus had said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). Saul went down one road to destroy the Way, and on that road the Way found him.

κύριε

KYRIE · "LORD" · G2962

Kyrios can be as light as "sir" (John 4:11) or as heavy as the Greek Old Testament's word for the LORD. Saul's "Who are You, Lord?" (v. 5) sits between: he knows he is addressed from heaven, not yet by whom. Sproul: "He knew that he was being addressed by the Sovereign One of heaven, but he did not know exactly why." The answer — "I am Jesus" — fills the word with its full weight. "Lord" comes thirteen times in this chapter.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik stresses who was looking for whom: “He wasn’t seeking Jesus when Jesus sought him.” The name “the Way” tells us “that Christianity is more than a belief or a set of opinions or doctrines.” On the road Saul learned the truth about his zeal: “Saul thought that he was serving God in viciously attacking Christians, but he discovered that he was fighting God.” Guzik explains the goad — “a long, extremely sharp stick used to get an ox going the way you wanted when plowing” — and cites Boice: “Unless Saul was hallucinating, the appearance of Jesus proved that Jesus was alive and that Jesus was God.” The three days were a death: “In the three days of blindness and deprivation, Saul was dying to himself.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

In “Paul’s Conversion” (30 May 2004) Sproul pictures the persecutor as “a wild beast who snorts before it attacks.” Then “A light appeared from heaven that was so blazing and bright that it virtually obscured the light of the sun.” The heart of the scene is Jesus’ question: “Jesus so identifies with His church, so identifies with His people,” that He was saying, “If you persecute My people, you persecute Me.” Saul knew heaven was speaking but not why. And Sproul draws the lesson of the goads: “It is not just sinful to resist the lordship of Christ; it is nonsensical.” “Saul’s life was turned upside down in that moment on the road to Damascus.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads “breathing” closely: “He breathed it out with heat and vehemence,” and “he persecuted them to death.” He notes that Saul was worse than his elders — “the young persecutor drove more furiously than the old one” — and that “Leaders in sin are the worst of sinners.” Jesus’ question is not a thunderbolt but a plea: “It is a very affectionate expostulation, enough to melt a heart of stone.” Henry locates the miracle inside the man — “The great change in conversion is wrought upon the will” — and reads the fast as grief: he “was so wounded in spirit for sin that he could relish neither meat nor drink.”

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 9:10–19

A Chosen Instrument of Mine

Ananias on Straight Street, a praying enemy, and “Brother Saul”

10 *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the* Lord *said to him in a vision, “Ananias.”*
*And he said, “*Here I am, Lord*.” 11 And the* Lord *said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight,*
and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying*, 12 and he has seen in a*
vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” 13 But
*Ananias answered, “*Lord*, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at*
Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name*.” 15 But the*
Lord *said to him, “Go, for* he is a chosen instrument of Mine*,* to bear My name before the Gentiles and
kings and the sons of Israel*; 16 for I will show him* how much he must suffer for My name’s sake*.” 17 So*
*Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “*Brother Saul*, the* Lord
Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight

> *and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”* [18] *And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;* [19] *and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,*
>
> ACTS 9:10–19

> *“rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’”*
>
> ACTS 26:17–18

σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς

SKEUOS EKLOGĒS · “CHOSEN INSTRUMENT” · G4632

Skeuos is a vessel, jar, tool or piece of equipment — 23 New Testament uses; the NASB renders it “instrument” only here. Older versions read “a chosen vessel.” *Eklogē* is “choice, election.” A vessel does not choose what it will carry; it is chosen and filled. Paul later calls believers “vessels of mercy” (Romans 9:23) and says “we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Guzik: “God considered Saul His chosen vessel long before there appeared anything worthy in Saul to choose.”

ἀδελφός

ADELPHOS · “BROTHER” · G80

Ananias’s first word to the man who came to arrest him is *adelphe* — “Brother Saul” (v. 17). The word occurs 343 times in the New Testament and becomes the ordinary name for believers (“the brethren,” v. 30). Ananias had told the Lord, “I have heard from many about this man” (v. 13); now he lays hands on him and calls him family. Guzik: the hands and the words “powerfully communicated the love of God.”

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads “he is praying” as the sign of a new man: “Saul had said many prayers, but he had never truly prayed,” and the report “indicated a true change of heart.” Ananias’s fears were reasonable, but God’s choice did not depend on Saul: “God considered Saul His chosen vessel long before there appeared anything worthy in Saul to choose.” The promise of suffering was “a sobering addition to the great call.” When Ananias laid hands on him and said “Brother Saul,” the love of God came through, for “God wanted to break Saul so He could fill him and leave him filled.” Then “he immediately wanted to identify with Jesus and with the disciples of Jesus by being baptized.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul’s “The Street Called Straight” (6 June 2004) imagines Ananias’s protest in plain words: “Surely, You don’t want me to go there.” The Lord’s answer turns on His own purpose — “He is My chosen instrument” — and Sproul puts the doctrine in the Lord’s mouth: “I did not elect him for his own sake; I elected him for My sake.” Saul is chosen not because he was promising but to carry Christ’s name, and suffering is part of the commission. Ananias goes, lays hands on him, the scales fall, and Saul is filled with the Spirit and baptized.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Paul's First Prayer" (No. 16, 25 March 1855) is built on three words, "Behold, he prayeth." Saul had prayed all his life as a Pharisee — "He had pronounced his magniloquent orations, but they were all good-for-nothing." "All he had ever done before went for nothing; it was not prayer." Now "the moment he began to pray, God began to hear," and "prayers are noticed in heaven." Ananias thought going to Saul was "very much like stepping into a lion's den," so God gave him the best reassurance: "Be sure you may always trust a praying man." Spurgeon presses it home: "Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion," and "a prayerless soul is a Christless soul."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes that the first thing grace produced in Saul was prayer: "Regenerating grace ever more sets people on praying." He hears God's sovereignty in the call — "The vessel God uses he himself chooses" — and he reads the falling scales as a picture of every conversion: "Converting grace opens the eyes of the soul, and makes the scales to fall from them." The man who came to bind the Lord's people is now one of them, baptized and fed, and he stays "for several days" with the disciples he came to arrest.

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 9:20–31

Over the Wall in a Basket

"He is the Son of God," a plot at the gates, and Barnabas the encourager

20 *and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "△ He is the Son of God."* 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?"* 22 *But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by △ proving that this Jesus is the Christ.* 23 *When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him,* 24 *but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;* 25 *but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall,* ◷ *lowering him in a large basket.* 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.* 27 *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.* 28 *And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the ⟲ name of the ⟲ Lord.* 29 *And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.* 30 *But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.* 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.*

ACTS 9:20–31

> *"Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),"*
>
> ACTS 4:36

FIGURE · SAUL'S FIRST YEARS

SAUL'S FIRST YEARS AS A BELIEVER · ACTS 9 WITH GALATIANS 1

THE ROAD 9:3–9	ANANIAS 9:10–19	DAMASCUS 9:20–22	ARABIA Gal 1:17	THE BASKET 9:23–25	JERUSALEM 9:26–29	TARSUS 9:30
light, voice, three days blind	"Brother Saul," sight, Spirit, baptism	"He is the Son of God" in synagogues	not told in Acts; then back to Damascus	a plot; let down through the wall	Barnabas vouches; three years on (Gal 1)	sent home by way of Caesarea

"WHEN MANY DAYS HAD ELAPSED" (9:23)

Luke compresses about three years into one phrase; Paul fills in Arabia and the dates *and the governor under King Aretas who guarded the gates (Gal 1:15–18; 2 Cor 11:32–33).*

Read left to right: Acts 9 gives the events, and Paul's letters add the stay in Arabia and the three years before Jerusalem.

παράκλησις

PARAKLĒSIS · "COMFORT, ENCOURAGEMENT" · G3874

Twenty-nine New Testament uses: "comfort, exhortation, encouragement, appeal." Two of them frame this movement. Barnabas's nickname is "Son of *Paraklēsis*" — Son of Encouragement (4:36) — and in verse 27 he lives up to it, taking hold of the man everyone feared. Then verse 31 says the church went on "in the comfort (*paraklēsis*) of the Holy Spirit." The same root gives *Paraklētos*, the Helper of John 14:16. What the Spirit does for the church, Barnabas did for Saul.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that from the first day "The message of Saul was all about Jesus," and that his hearers needed to know "that He is the Son of God." He fits Galatians into the gap Luke leaves: Paul "described how he went to Arabia for a period of time, and then returned to Damascus." The escape was humbling: "There is nothing triumphant about sneaking out of a city by night hiding in a large basket." In Jerusalem, "Barnabas simply extended the love of Jesus to Saul, and as Paul would write later, love believes all things." And verse 31's peace "doesn't mean that all persecution had stopped; instead, it means that they had peace in the midst of persecution."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "A Basket Case" (27 June 2004) Sproul notes that "From the moment he began preaching in the synagogues in Damascus, Paul's message was about Jesus as the Christ," and adds a detail: "This is the only time in the book of Acts where "Son of God" is used in reference to Jesus." "Paul's ministry began with his proving that Christ was the Messiah." He explains the escape from the city's architecture — "the city walls often included homes built right on the wall" — and the turn in Jerusalem: the disciples were afraid, "But Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement," interceded for Paul."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees a pattern for every growing believer: "Where God gives great grace he commonly exercises it with great trials." Saul, newly bold, is hunted at once, and "they let him down by the wall, in a basket." In Jerusalem the frightened disciples needed a go-between, and Henry praises the man who stepped up: "The introducing of a young convert into the communion of the faithful is a very good work." Verse 31 is the rest after the trouble — "After a storm comes a calm."

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 9:32–43

Jesus Christ Heals You

Aeneas at Lydda, Tabitha at Joppa, and a tanner's house by the sea

32 *Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.*
33 *There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.* 34 *Peter said to him, "Aeneas, △ Jesus Christ heals you; ▤ get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.* 35 *And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they ☆ turned to the Lord.* 36 *Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was ▤ abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.* 37 *And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.* 38 *Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."* 39 *So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.* 40 *But Peter sent them all out and ▤ knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "△ Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.* 41 *And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.* 42 *It became known all over Joppa, and ☆ many believed in the Lord.* 43 *And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with ◷ a tanner named Simon.*

ACTS 9:32–43

"When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed. So he entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to the LORD."

2 KINGS 4:32–33

FIGURE · PETER DOES WHAT HE SAW

PETER DOES WHAT HE SAW HIS LORD DO

	ELISHA · 2 Ki 4	JESUS · Mark 5	PETER · Acts 9
the room	shut the door (v33)	put them all out (v40)	sent them all out (v40)
before the word	prayed to the LORD	takes her hand	knelt down and prayed
the word	(stretched on the boy)	"Talitha kum!"	"Tabitha, arise"
the hand	—	by the hand (v41)	gave her his hand (v41)
the result	the lad opened his eyes	she got up	she opened her eyes

One letter apart: "Talitha" (little girl) and "Tabitha" (gazelle). The difference: Jesus speaks in His own name; Peter kneels first, and tells Aeneas, "Jesus Christ heals you" (v34).

Compare the columns: Peter had stood in the room when Jesus raised Jairus's daughter, and at Joppa he does the same things — but he prays first.

μαθήτρια

MATHĒTRIA · "DISCIPLE (WOMAN)" · G3102

The feminine of *mathētēs*, disciple — and it occurs only once in the New Testament, here: "a disciple named Tabitha" (v. 36). Luke gives her both names, Aramaic *Tabitha* and Greek *Dorcas* — both mean "gazelle." She is remembered for what her hands made: the widows show Peter "all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make" (v. 39). The only woman the New Testament calls by this word is a seamstress who served widows.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Peter took no credit: "Peter clearly identified who healed – Jesus the Christ," and "Peter was only His instrument." Of Dorcas he says some are full of good works only in theory — "Some people are full of good works and charitable deeds, but they are only full of them in their minds and hearts" — but hers were real. Sending everyone out, "Peter seemed to clearly remember what Jesus did in Mark 5:38-43 (or Luke 8:50-56)." "Dorcas wasn't raised for her own sake," but so that many would believe. And the last line about Simon the tanner "would be somewhat shocking to an observant Jew of that time."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "The Raising of Dorcas" (4 July 2004) Sproul reads Peter's word to Aeneas in the present tense: "It could also be translated, "Jesus the Christ is healing you"—that is, at that moment." Tabitha's goodness was practical: "She had constantly made garments, tunics, blouses, and other forms of clothing to distribute to the widows." Healing a sick man is one thing; "It is another to raise somebody from the dead." Sproul sees Peter walking in his Master's steps: "Peter was summoned just as his Lord had been summoned to Bethany upon the death of Lazarus, His friend."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Aeneas" (16 July 1876, MTP 22) makes the paralyzed man a picture of the sinner. "This man's sickness was no imaginary ill, for he could not move," and eight years made it worse: "The length of its endurance is a terrible element in a disease." The cure came from Christ alone — "Peter's message took him off from himself" — and Aeneas "proved he was healed by making his bed for himself." So with us: "If ever you are saved you must be saved by Jesus Christ alone through your own personal belief in him." "Yet is it true that Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once." "Yes, sinner, he can heal you now."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry observes that "Christ chose such patients as this, whose disease was incurable in a course of nature," and that "Peter does not pretend to do it himself by any power of his own." "Power went along with this word: he arose immediately," and the region "turned themselves over to him to be ruled and taught and saved by him." Of Dorcas: "Her hands were full of good employment," a rebuke to those "full of good words, who are empty and barren in good works." Peter sent the mourners out "that he might with the more freedom pour out his soul before God."

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The persecutor remembers his mercy — and the Servant's light for the nations

> *"For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 15:9–10

> *"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."*
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 1:15–16

> *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 3:7

> *"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,"*
>
> ACTS 22:4

> *"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,"*
>
> ACTS 26:19

> *"For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'"*
>
> ACTS 13:47

> *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik cites Boice on the apologetic weight of the Damascus road: "Unless Saul was hallucinating, the appearance of Jesus proved that Jesus was alive and that Jesus was God." Paul's later letters keep returning to this mercy shown to the foremost of sinners.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and gathers background from Paul's letters; Sproul preached it in four sermons in 2004 and keeps returning to Christ's purpose and election; Spurgeon preaches two verses — a praying man and a paralyzed one — straight at the sinner; Henry turns each scene into a rule for the Christian life. They agree that the change was all of grace, and differ mostly in emphasis.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The Damascus road	Jesus sought him; Saul found he was fighting God.	Persecute My people, persecute Me; resisting Christ is nonsensical.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	An expostulation to melt a heart of stone; the change is in the will.
II · Ananias and the scales	Many prayers, never truly prayed; break him to fill him.	"Surely, You don't want me to go there"; elected for His sake.	Behold, he prayeth — you may always trust a praying man.	Grace sets people praying; it makes the scales fall.
III · Damascus to Jerusalem	All about Jesus; peace in the midst of persecution.	The only "Son of God" in Acts; Barnabas interceded.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Great grace, great trials; after a storm comes a calm.
IV · Aeneas and Dorcas	Peter only the instrument; Dorcas raised for others' sake.	"Jesus the Christ is healing you" — now; Peter in his Lord's steps.	No imaginary ill; Christ alone heals, and heals at once.	Incurable patients; hands full of good employment.

ACTS 9:1–43 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Jesus takes persecution personally.** "why are you persecuting Me?" (v4). Saul never laid a hand on Jesus — only on His people. Sproul: "If you persecute My people, you persecute Me." SPROUL
- **He wasn't seeking; he was sought.** Guzik: "He wasn't seeking Jesus when Jesus sought him." No one in Acts was less likely to be converted, and no one is beyond the reach of the risen Lord. GUZIK
- **"The Way" is a road, not just an opinion.** *Hodos* names the believers in verse 2 and the road Saul traveled in verses 17 and 27. Christianity is a way of walking behind Jesus. THE GREEK
- **Three days in the dark.** Blind, fasting, praying — Guzik: "Saul was dying to himself." Henry: "so wounded in spirit for sin that he could relish neither meat nor drink." HENRY
- **Prayer is the first sign of life.** Spurgeon: "Be sure you may always trust a praying man." God answered Ananias's fear with three words: "he is praying" (v11). SPURGEON
- **A vessel is chosen and filled.** *Skeuos eklogēs* (v15). Guzik: God chose Saul "long before there appeared anything worthy in Saul to choose." And the call included suffering (v16). THE GREEK
- **"Brother" before anything else.** Ananias's first word to his would-be jailer was *adelphe* (v17). Saul's first fellowship came from the man most afraid of him. THE TEXT
- **Every new believer needs a Barnabas.** The disciples "were all afraid of him" (v26); the Son of Encouragement took hold of him. Henry: introducing a young convert "is a very good work." HENRY
- **Jesus Christ heals — Peter only speaks.** "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you" (v34). Spurgeon: "Peter's message took him off from himself." SPURGEON

❖ **A tanner's house sets up chapter 10.** Peter stays with Simon the tanner (v43) — a trade that handled dead animals. Guzik: "somewhat shocking to an observant Jew." The walls are already coming down. GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **Saul was sure he was serving God while fighting Him. Where could I be sincere and still be wrong — and how would I find out?**

He discovered that he was fighting God (Guzik).

9:1-5; Phil 3:6

2 **Jesus said, "why are you persecuting Me?" about people Saul had hurt. How does it change the way I treat other believers to know Jesus takes it personally?**

If you persecute My people, you persecute Me (Sproul).

9:4-5; Matt 25:40

3 **Ananias was afraid and told the Lord so — then went. Who is the "Saul" God might be sending me to, and what is my honest fear?**

Surely, You don't want me to go there (Sproul).

9:10-17

4 **God's proof to Ananias was "he is praying." What does my prayer life say about where I really am with God?**

Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion (Spurgeon).

9:11; 1 Thess 5:17

5 **The church was "all afraid" of Saul until Barnabas took hold of him. Who in my church or group needs someone to vouch for him?**

A young convert needs introducing (Henry).

9:26-28; 4:36

6 **Aeneas had been down eight years. What has kept me down so long that I have stopped expecting to get up — and what would it mean to hear "Jesus Christ heals you"?**

Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once (Spurgeon).

9:33-35

❖

Acts 9 begins with a man breathing murder and ends with a woman sitting up on her funeral bier. In between, the risen Jesus stops His enemy, names him a chosen instrument, and gives him a brother, an encourager and a message: "He is the Son of God." Whatever has you on the ground today, the same Lord says, "Get up."

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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