ACTS 9

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

> *"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;"*
> ACTS 9:15

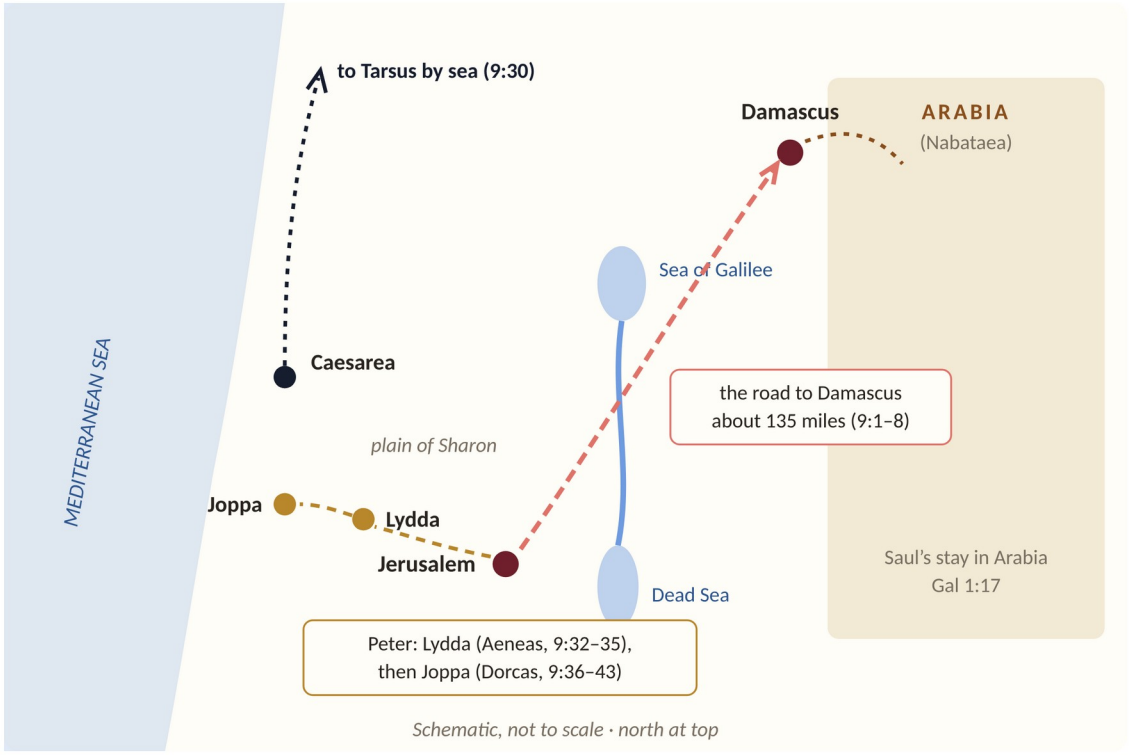
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Luke has brought us

1. Saul first appears in Acts holding coats.

2. 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).

3. 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).



Saul, Saul, Why Are You Persecuting Me?

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

ACTS 9:1

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

DAVID GUZIK

Jesus sought him; Saul found he was fighting God.

R.C. SPROUL

Persecute My people, persecute Me; resisting Christ is nonsensical.

MATTHEW HENRY

An expostulation to melt a heart of stone; the change is in the will.

ὁδός

HODOS · "ROAD, WAY"

The ordinary word for a road — used of the Damascus road itself in 9:17 and 9:27 ("on the road").

A Chosen Instrument of Mine

Ananias on Straight Street, a praying enemy, and "Brother Saul"

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;

DAVID GUZIK

Many prayers, never truly prayed; break him to fill him.

R.C. SPROUL

"Surely, You don't want me to go there"; elected for His sake.

C.H. SPURGEON

Behold, he prayeth — you may always trust a praying man.

MATTHEW HENRY

Grace sets people praying; it makes the scales fall.

σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς

SKEUOS EKLOGĒS · "CHOSEN INSTRUMENT"

Skeuos is a vessel, jar, tool or piece of equipment — 23 New Testament uses; the NASB renders it "instrument" only here.

Over the Wall in a Basket

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

ACTS 9:20

and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

DAVID GUZIK

All about Jesus; peace in the midst of persecution.

R.C. SPROUL

The only "Son of God" in Acts; Barnabas interceded.

MATTHEW HENRY

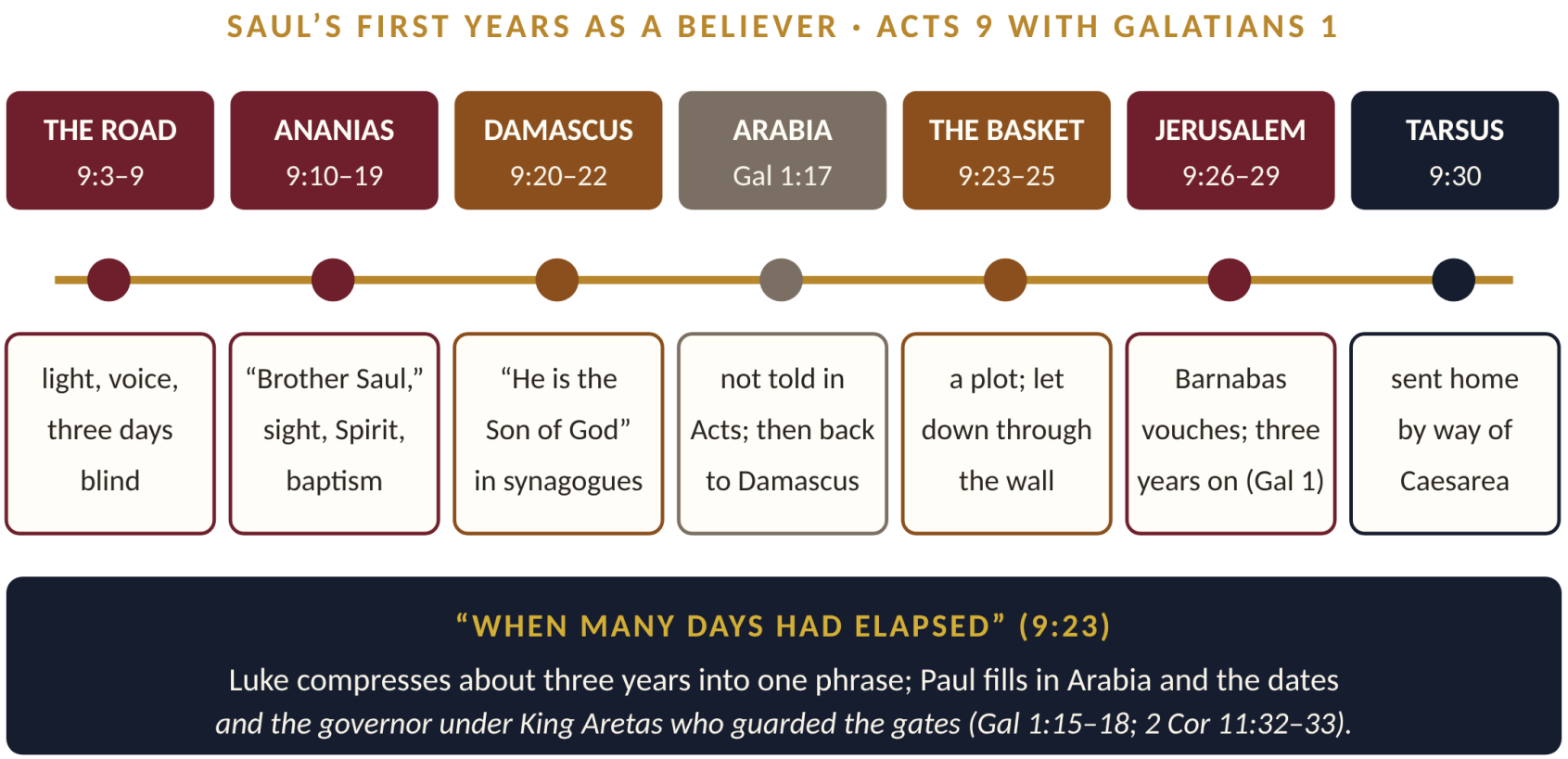
Great grace, great trials; after a storm comes a calm.

παράκλησις

PARAKLĒSIS · "COMFORT, ENCOURAGEMENT"

Twenty-nine New Testament uses: "comfort, exhortation, encouragement, appeal."

Saul's first years



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

Jesus Christ Heals You

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

ACTS 9:34

Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.

DAVID GUZIK

Peter only the instrument; Dorcas raised for others' sake.

R.C. SPROUL

"Jesus the Christ is healing you" — now; Peter in his Lord's steps.

C.H. SPURGEON

No imaginary ill; Christ alone heals, and heals at once.

MATTHEW HENRY

Incurable patients; hands full of good employment.

μαθήτρια
MATHĒTRIA · "DISCIPLE (WOMAN)"

The feminine of mathētēs, disciple — and it occurs only once in the New Testament, here: "a disciple named Tabitha" (v. 36).

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.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Jesus takes persecution personally.

“why are you persecuting Me?”

2

He wasn’t seeking; he was sought.

Guzik: “He wasn’t seeking Jesus when Jesus sought him.”

3

“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.

4

Three days in the dark.

Blind, fasting, praying — Guzik: “Saul was dying to himself.”

More to carry

5

Prayer is the first sign of life.

Spurgeon: “Be sure you may always trust a praying man.”

6

A vessel is chosen and filled.

Skeuos eklogēs (v15). Guzik: God chose Saul “long before there appeared anything worthy in Saul to choose.”

7

“Brother” before anything else.

Ananias’s first word to his would-be jailer was adelphe (v17).

8

Every new believer needs a Barnabas.

The disciples “were all afraid of him” (v26); the Son of Encouragement took hold of him.

Talk it through

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?

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?

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?

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

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?

CLOSING

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

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.