SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 9

From Persecutor to Chosen Instrument — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The risen Jesus meets the church's worst enemy on the road, takes his violence personally, and turns him into a chosen instrument who preaches "He is the Son of God." Then, through Peter, the same Jesus lifts a man who had been down eight years and raises a servant-hearted woman from the dead — and many believe.

00 The Text

ACTS 9 (NASB95), MARKED

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

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.

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,

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.

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “belonging to the Way” — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** “a light from heaven flashed around him” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” — God — His character & actions
- **v6** “get up and enter the city” — Command / instruction
- **v9** “three days without sight” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “Here I am, Lord” — Command / instruction
- **v11** “for he is praying” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “he is a chosen instrument of Mine” — God — His character & actions
- **v15** “to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “how much he must suffer for My name’s sake” — Sin / warning
- **v17** “Brother Saul” — Promise / blessing
- **v17** “be filled with the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v18** “something like scales” — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** “He is the Son of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “proving that this Jesus is the Christ” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “lowering him in a large basket” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “they were all afraid of him” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “But Barnabas took hold of him” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v34** “Jesus Christ heals you” — God — His character & actions
- **v34** “get up and make your bed” — Command / instruction
- **v35** “turned to the Lord” — Promise / blessing
- **v36** “abounding with deeds of kindness and charity” — Command / instruction
- **v40** “knelt down and prayed” — Command / instruction
- **v40** “Tabitha, arise” — God — His character & actions
- **v42** “many believed in the Lord” — Promise / blessing
- **v43** “a tanner named Simon” — Time / place / contrast
- **v1** “Lord” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v14** “name” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

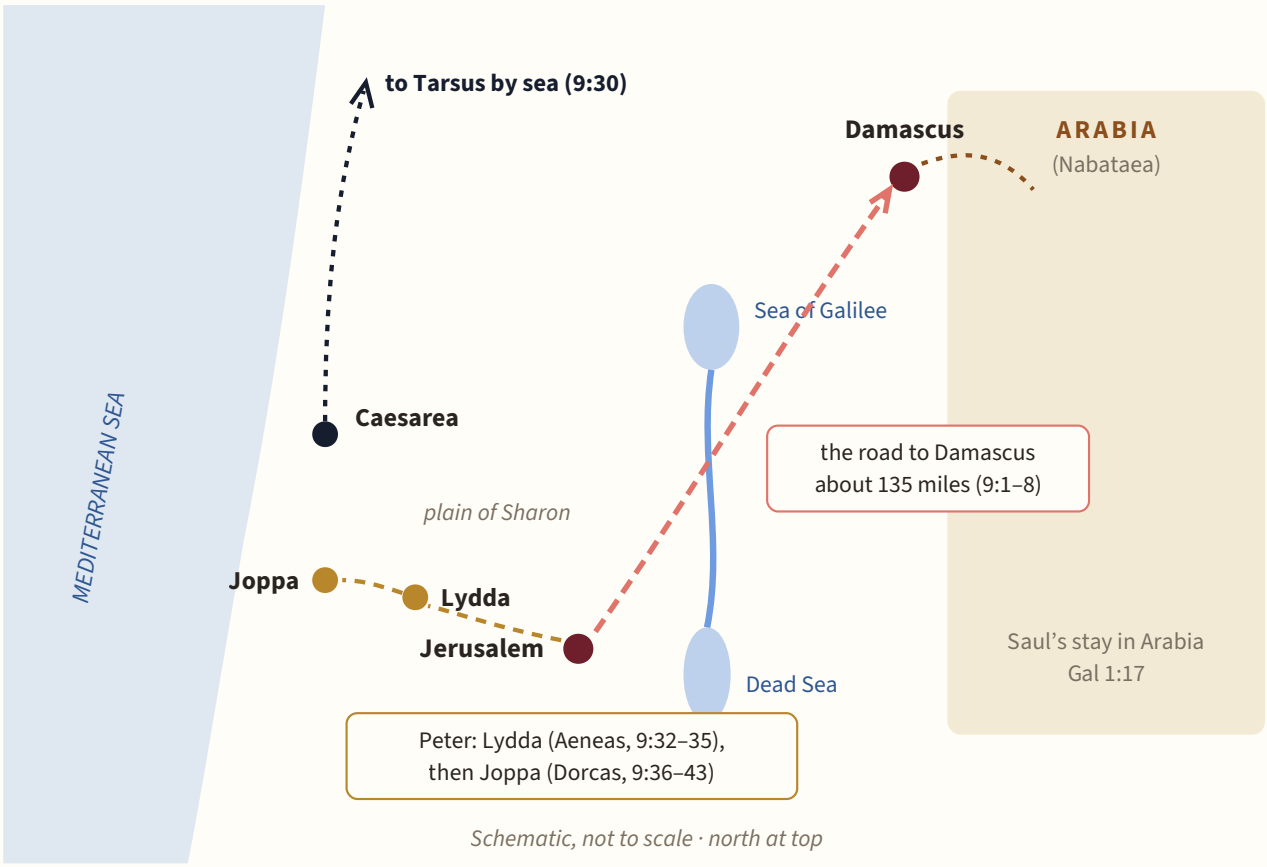
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:4

“and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “⚠Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?””

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.

Setting. Saul, still raging after Stephen’s death, gets letters from the high priest to arrest believers in the synagogues of Damascus (vv1–2). Near the city a light from heaven flashes around him (v3). He spends three days blind in Damascus, at the house of Judas on the street called Straight (vv9, 11). Later he preaches in Damascus, escapes over the wall, goes to Jerusalem, and is sent through Caesarea to Tarsus (vv20–30). The chapter ends with Peter on the coastal plain — at Lydda and then Joppa, lodging with Simon the tanner (vv32–43).

Structure:

- vv1–9 — **the Damascus road:** threats and murder; letters for "the Way" (vv1–2); the light and the fall (vv3–4); "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" — "Who are You, Lord?" — "I am Jesus" (vv4–6); speechless companions; three days blind, not eating or drinking (vv7–9).
- vv10–19 — **Ananias:** the vision — "Here I am, Lord" (v10); Straight Street, "for he is praying" (vv11–12); Ananias objects (vv13–14); "he is a chosen instrument of Mine" and must suffer (vv15–16); "Brother Saul" — sight, the Spirit, scales, baptism, food (vv17–19).
- vv20–31 — **Damascus to Jerusalem:** "He is the Son of God" (v20); amazement; proving Jesus is the Christ (vv21–22); the plot and the basket (vv23–25); the disciples afraid; Barnabas brings him to the apostles (vv26–27); bold in Jerusalem, sent to Tarsus (vv28–30); the church at peace and increasing (v31).
- vv32–43 — **Lydda and Joppa:** Aeneas, bedridden eight years — "Jesus Christ heals you" (vv32–34); Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord (v35); Tabitha dies; the widows and the garments (vv36–39); Peter kneels and prays — "Tabitha, arise" (vv40–41); many believe; Simon the tanner (vv42–43).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Lord" ×13 — vv1, 5, 10 (×2), 11, 13, 15, 17, 27, 28, 31, 35, 42.
- "see / saw / seen / sight / eyes" ×12 — vv8 (×2), 9, 12 (×2), 17, 18 (×2), 27, 35, 40 (×2).
- "Saul" ×8 — vv1, 4 (×2), 8, 11, 17, 22, 24.
- "disciple(s)" ×8 — vv1, 10, 19, 25, 26 (×2), 36, 38.
- "get up / got up / arise / arose / raised" ×8 — vv6, 8, 18, 34 (×2), 39, 40, 41.
- "Damascus" ×7 — vv2, 3, 8, 10, 19, 22, 27; "Peter" ×7 — vv32, 34, 38, 39, 40 (×2), 43.
- "Jesus" ×6 — vv5, 17, 20, 22, 27, 34; "name" ×6 — vv14, 15, 16, 21, 27, 28.
- "Jerusalem" ×5 — vv2, 13, 21, 26, 28; "heard / hearing" ×5 — vv4, 7, 13, 21, 38.
- "Joppa" ×4 — vv36, 38, 42, 43; "Lydda" ×3 — vv32, 35, 38.
- "bound / bind" ×3 — vv2, 14, 21; "saints" ×3 — vv13, 32, 41.
- "persecuting" ×2 — vv4, 5; "boldly" ×2 — vv27, 28; "Holy Spirit" ×2 — vv17, 31; "vision" ×2 — vv10, 12.

Contrasts: Breathing threats and murder ⟷ "he is praying" (vv1, 11). Bringing others bound ⟷ led by the hand himself (vv2, 8). Eyes open, seeing nothing ⟷ scales fall, sight regained (vv8, 18). "how much harm he did" ⟷ "a chosen instrument" (vv13, 15). He made others suffer ⟷ he must suffer (vv1, 16). Destroyer ⟷ preacher of the name (v21). Proving Jesus is the Christ ⟷ plotted against (vv22–23). All afraid ⟷ Barnabas took hold of him (vv26–27). Persecution ⟷ peace (vv1, 31). Bedridden eight years ⟷ "Immediately he got up" (vv33–34). Dead ⟷ presented alive (vv37, 41).

Shape of the chapter: two halves, two apostles. The long first half (1–31) is one man turned around — from the road to the basket to the church at peace. The short second half (32–43) returns to Peter and two quick miracles, and quietly moves him to a tanner's house by the sea, ready for Cornelius.

Chapter theme (my words): No one is too far gone for Jesus. He stops the persecutor, takes his sin personally, calls him by name and makes him a vessel for His name — and He keeps lifting the helpless and raising the dead through ordinary disciples who pray.

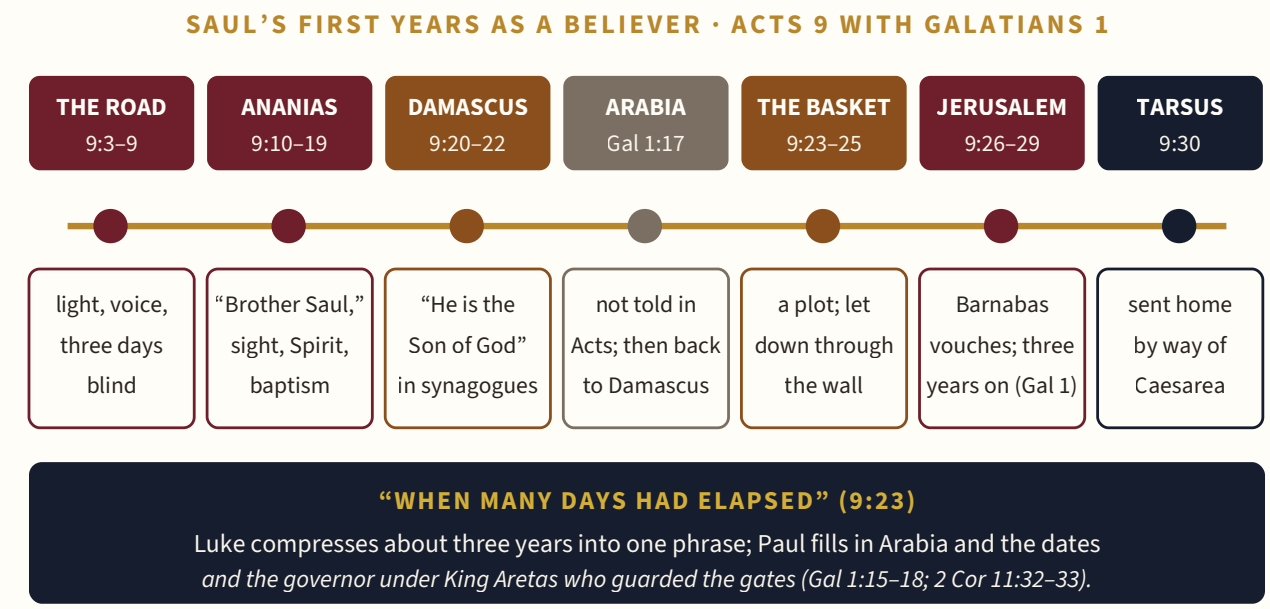
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:20

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

FIGURE · 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.

What happened on the road — vision or appearance? Paul counts it with the resurrection appearances: "last of all … He appeared to me also" (1 Cor 15:8), and Ananias says "the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road" (v17). Guzik cites Boice: "Unless Saul was hallucinating, the appearance of Jesus proved that Jesus was alive and that Jesus was God." It was not a dream; it changed the direction of a life.

Did the companions hear the voice or not? Here they are "hearing the voice but seeing no one" (v7); in 22:9 Paul says they "did not understand the voice." The Greek word for voice (*phōnē*) can mean a sound or intelligible speech. They heard something; only Saul heard words. Luke tells it three times and was not bothered by the difference.

Why "why are you persecuting Me?" Saul never touched Jesus. Sproul: "Jesus so identifies with His church, so identifies with His people," that persecuting them is persecuting Him. This is the seed of Paul's teaching about the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12, 27).

Was Saul converted on the road or in the house? Our teachers don't split hairs here. He calls Jesus "Lord" on the road, prays for three days (v11), and Ananias calls him "Brother" before he is baptized (v17). Then he is filled with

the Spirit and baptized (vv17–18). Guzik: baptism was Saul identifying "with Jesus and with the disciples of Jesus." I take it that the road was the turning, and the house was where the Lord confirmed it through His church.

Chosen — what does that mean? "he is a chosen instrument of Mine" (v15). Sproul hears election: "I did not elect him for his own sake; I elected him for My sake." Guzik: chosen "long before there appeared anything worthy in Saul to choose." Henry: "The vessel God uses he himself chooses." And the call includes suffering (v16) — no prosperity gospel here.

Where is Arabia? Acts moves from Damascus straight to "many days" later (v23). Paul fills it in: he went away to Arabia, came back to Damascus, and three years later went up to Jerusalem (Gal 1:17–18). Guzik places the Arabia stay in that gap. Luke compresses; Paul gives the calendar.

Why were the disciples afraid — and why Barnabas? They had good reason: Saul had been dragging believers to prison (8:3). Barnabas, "Son of Encouragement" (4:36), took the risk. Sproul: "Barnabas … interceded for Paul." Henry: introducing a young convert "is a very good work."

Why tell the stories of Aeneas and Dorcas here? They show Peter doing what Jesus did — "Jesus Christ heals you" (v34) — and they move him to Joppa and Simon the tanner, where chapter 10 begins. Guzik: Dorcas "wasn't raised for her own sake," and many believed (v42). Sproul notes the present tense: "Jesus the Christ is healing you"—that is, at that moment.

Word study (Greek):

- **the Way — *hodos* (G3598):** road, way; a name for the believers (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).
- **Lord — *kyrios* (G2962):** from "sir" to the LORD; "Who are You, Lord?" (v5); ×13 in the chapter.
- **instrument — *skeuos* (G4632):** vessel, tool; "a chosen instrument" only here in NASB (Rom 9:23; 2 Cor 4:7).
- **brother — *adelphos* (G80):** Ananias's first word to Saul (v17).
- **comfort — *paraklēsis* (G3874):** "Son of Encouragement" (4:36); "the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (v31).
- **disciple (woman) — *mathētria* (G3102):** only here in the New Testament, of Tabitha (v36).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Jesus takes persecution personally** — "why are you persecuting Me?" (v4).
2. **He wasn't seeking; he was sought** (Guzik).
3. **"The Way" is a road, not just an opinion** — *hodos* (v2).
4. **Three days in the dark** — dying to himself (Guzik; Henry).
5. **Prayer is the first sign of life** — "he is praying" (v11; Spurgeon).
6. **A vessel is chosen and filled** — *skeuos eklogēs*, with suffering (vv15–16).
7. **"Brother" before anything else** (v17).
8. **Every new believer needs a Barnabas** (vv26–27).
9. **Jesus Christ heals — Peter only speaks** (v34; Spurgeon).
10. **A tanner's house sets up chapter 10** (v43).

Cross-references: Acts 1:8; 4:36; 7:58–8:3; 13:47; 22:3–16; 26:9–19; Isa 49:6; Matt 25:40; Mark 5:37–43; John 11; 14:6; Rom 9:23; 1 Cor 12:27; 15:8–10; 2 Cor 4:7; 5:17; 11:32–33; Gal 1:13–24; Phil 3:4–8; 1 Tim 1:12–16; 2 Kings 4:32–37.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:17

"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.""

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.

Truth to face — I can be sincere and wrong. Saul thought he was serving God. Guzik says he "discovered that he was fighting God." I have been that man — sure I was right, angry at the people God loved. I ask the Lord today the question Saul asked: "Who are You, Lord?" — and I mean it, ready for the answer.

Sin to confess — how I treat His people. Jesus said, "why are you persecuting Me?" about people Saul had hurt. When I gossip about a brother, write a man off, or hold a grudge against someone in my church, Jesus takes it personally. I name the brother I have wronged and I confess it to the Lord, then I make it right.

Command to obey — get up and go. Jesus told Saul, "get up and enter the city" (v6); He told Ananias, "Go" (v15). Ananias was afraid and went anyway. There is a man God wants me to visit — one I'm wary of, maybe one with a record or a reputation. I will go, and the first word out of my mouth will be "Brother."

Example to follow — Barnabas. The church was "all afraid" of Saul (v26). Barnabas took hold of him. The men I serve coming out of prison or out of addiction need someone to vouch for them and bring them in. This week I will be that man for someone.

Promise to trust — Jesus Christ heals you. Aeneas had been down eight years. Some of us have been down longer. Peter did not say "I heal you"; he said, "Jesus Christ heals you; get up." I believe Jesus can lift me, and lift the men I pray for, at once.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

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? (9:1–5; Phil 3:6) *He discovered that he was fighting God (Guzik).*
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? (9:4–5; Matt 25:40) *If you persecute My people, you persecute Me (Sproul).*
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? (9:10–17) *Surely, You don't want me to go there (Sproul).*
4. God's proof to Ananias was "he is praying." What does my prayer life say about where I really am with God? (9:11; 1 Thess 5:17) *Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion (Spurgeon).*
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? (9:26–28; 4:36) *A young convert needs introducing (Henry).*
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"? (9:33–35) *Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The risen Lord Jesus, shining brighter than the noon sun, stopped His enemy on the road and called him by name. He chose a vessel nobody would have chosen, gave him a brother and an encourager, and sent him with His name to the nations. He is the Son of God, the One who heals the paralyzed and raises the dead.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You found me when I wasn't looking for You. Forgive me for every way I have fought You by hurting Your people. Take the scales off my eyes. Make me a chosen vessel for Your name, even if it costs me. Give me the courage of Ananias to go where I'm afraid, and the heart of Barnabas to bring others in. And for every man I know who has been down for years — Jesus Christ, heal him; tell him to get up. Amen.

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