

=THE BOOK OF ACTS=

Lesson 9

“The Conversion of Saul” or “All Things New” - Acts 9

AIM: to teach my pupils the wonderful conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask the pupils to tell something about the circumstances surrounding their conversion. Do not ask them to tell all about their conversion; they will elaborate too much. Simply ask them to tell where, ask everyone to tell when, ask everyone to give just a sentence of something unique about it, and give them questions that will demand only short answers. Allow no one to take over 15 seconds.

INTRODUCTION: In II Corinthians 5:17, the Apostle Paul said, “...all things are become new.” Perhaps no one ever said this who meant it any more than the Apostle Paul. Let us look at his wonderful conversion experience and the things that became “new” when he was saved.

- I. HE BECAME A NEW MAN. The Lord had the evangelizing of the Gentiles in His plan. It was difficult to evangelize the Jews after the resurrection of Christ, but not nearly as difficult as evangelizing the Gentiles. The Jews were brethren after the flesh, dwelling in Judæa, and while they were slow to receive the Gospel, many thousands were saved. It became a little more difficult, however, to preach the Gospel in Samaria, for they had a lot of ancient traditions and habits of many centuries and they had “no dealings with the Jews.” This antagonism was innate. However, under the preaching of Philip, a man full of the Holy Spirit and a godly deacon, Samaria had received the Gospel, and the victory had been won. Now the most difficult work of all appears on the scene, and that is, “...unto the uttermost part of the earth.” However, God had been preparing a man for this task. His name was Saul of Tarsus. Let us look at some things about this man:
1. He was reared in Tarsus, a Greek city and the location of the great university of the time. He had the cultural background necessary.
 2. When he was about 14 years of age, his parents sent him to Jerusalem. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Hence, he had the culture of the Greeks and the religion of the Jews. He had spent his childhood time in the Greek atmosphere and then gotten his education in the Jewish atmosphere. He knew the Jewish religion and the Greek way of life. God was equipping him, no doubt, for the work of taking a Gospel born from Judaism and carrying it to the Greeks and other Gentiles. So this man, who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, was also a Greek. Greece had touched him with its culture, refinement, poetry and glory; and then Gamaliel had taught him deeply in the teaching of Judaism. God does not need talent, etc. He can take a man with no natural equipment and gifts and bestow upon him all the talents needed to do His work. On the other hand, God can use background, as was the case in the life of Saul.
 3. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. Acts 8:1a, “And Saul was consenting unto his [Stephen’s] death.” In this statement we find that he gave his vote for the death of Stephen, teaching us that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. Hence, he was bitterly devoted to the cause of the Hebrew religion.
 4. He was one of the most active of those in his religion. Look at Acts 9:1. Notice the words, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter.” He was fiercely opposed to Christianity.
 5. He was under conviction. Notice in Acts 9:1, the third word, “yet.” This would suggest that he was breathing out threatenings in spite of something. Something had happened to him, and even so, he was breathing out threatenings and slaughters. What could this something be? You will get an idea of this “something” in Acts 9:5, where Jesus said, “...it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” This is a goad, a stick; something was sticking Paul; something was pricking him. What was it? No doubt, he was fighting conviction. He was fighting against the strange turmoil in his mind, his questions and inquiries and wonderings. This, no doubt, was brought about at the death of Stephen. We find from other teaching in the Scripture that this never left the Apostle Paul, and he became under conviction after having heard Stephen preach and having watched this great man die. Who could watch Stephen die without being under conviction?! Saul was a man under conviction.
- II. HE HAD A NEW LORD. In Acts 9:5, notice the words, “Who art thou, Lord?” He did not know Who He was Who had given him this wonderful experience, but he did call Him Lord. In other words,

Whoever it was, was going to be his Lord. Jesus Christ is now his Lord and Master. This means that He is his Boss, his Leader; he will be consumed with serving Him. Would God we could make Jesus our Lord as the Apostle Paul did!

- III. HE HAD NEW ORDERS. If you will notice Acts 9:2, he had orders and letters to go to Damascus and persecute the Christians. Now he has new orders! In verse 6, notice, "...Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." He now receives his orders step by step from his new Lord. There are two things to notice here: One is, Saul obeyed immediately. He immediately started doing what God said. Another is, God gives His orders one step at a time. Saul was to rise and go into the city. Then he would find the next command. We are to follow Jesus today, be in His will today, and hear His command today; then tomorrow He will show us the next step.
- IV. HE HAD A NEW DESIRE. In Acts 9:6, Paul said, "...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?..." He does not want to serve Judaism or the Devil anymore, but his desire is to serve the Lord. Each Christian should ask the Lord, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" This tells us God has a will for every life. We should learn His will and follow it.
- V. HE HAD A NEW FRIEND. See Acts 9:10, 11. Ananias was his new friend. When a person becomes a Christian, he will have new friends, and the best friends he ever has in his life will be his Christian friends. Let us notice a few things about Paul's new friend:
1. Ananias held no official position. He was not an apostle, he was not a deacon, he was not a pastor. He was simply a good, lay Christian friend.
 2. Ananias had a personal, name-calling relationship with Jesus Christ. Notice, if you would please, verse 10. The Lord said, "Ananias." Here is a glorious picture of the wonderful, tender, direct, sweet relationship and familiarity between Christ and His own. He knows us by name.
 3. Ananias was ready to do whatever God said. Notice the words in verse 10, "Behold, I am here, Lord."
 4. Ananias was courageous and would do God's will at any cost. Saul was a well-known person who was dangerous, and yet, Ananias was willing to follow God's will and risk his own life to help Saul. May God help us to be helpers to new Christians. A new Christian needs help; he needs friends, he needs encouragement, he needs strength. He can get this from his fellow Christians.
- VI. HE HAD A NEW RELATIONSHIP. Notice, if you would please, the words, "Brother Saul," in verse 17. You will notice the word "Brother" is capitalized. Oftentimes people ask the pastor, "Pastor, where do you get this 'Brother Hyles' idea?" This is one place; there are many others, of course. Why should we call each other "Brother" and "Sister?" We have the same Father. People who have the same Father are brothers and sisters in Christ. Also, it shows the closeness of the relationship that should exist between God's people. There is a warmth about it.
- VII. HE HAD A NEW POWER. In Acts 9:17c, notice the words, "and be filled with the Holy Ghost." God wants every Christian to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When a person is saved, the Holy Spirit comes in him to live, but does not necessarily control every facet of his life. Let us invite the Holy Spirit to fill us, as was the case with Saul.
- VIII. HE HAD A NEW ORDINANCE. Read Acts 9:18. He was baptized. Once again we find the Scriptural teaching of immediate baptism. This, of course, is by immersion, and it follows salvation. Explain to the class that baptism is like an X-ray; it reveals outwardly what has happened inwardly. It is a picture of salvation—death to the old life, risen to walk in newness of life. It also pictures our faith that someday, even though we die, we shall be raised, and the fact that we believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- IX. HE HAD A NEW PASSION. Notice Acts 9:20. Now he is going to Damascus to preach Christ. He was going to persecute Him; now he is going to preach Him. This is certainly a fulfillment of Ephesians

2:8-10. When a person is saved by faith, immediately he becomes God's workmanship to do God's work and will. This work is the winning of souls to Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: There is one thought in closing we ought to notice, and that is in Acts 9:4. Notice the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul was persecuting the Christians. Jesus said he was persecuting Him. Inasmuch as we do it unto the least of these, we do it unto Jesus. If we witness to someone or help someone, we help Jesus. If we persecute someone, we persecute Jesus. Let us always be careful how we treat others, for in the treatment of them we manifest our treatment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," II Corinthians 5:17.