

Acts 9 Paul

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
The *axe* = **ACTS**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* formed by the cloud and lightning bolt = **CHAPTER 9**
3. The THEME:
As light flashed around him, *Saul* fell to the ground on the highway to Damascus
= **PAUL** (formerly Saul)

ACTS 9: BACKGROUND

His name was Saul. He was a proud Pharisee, destined to become one of the greatest men of all time. The story of his conversion is perhaps the best known in history. Born at Tarsus, Paul was probably in his early 30's when we first hear of him in the Scriptures. Luke mentions him as being the coat watcher at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58). However, we get more of an insight into his fanatic zeal as we see him on the way to Damascus on a search-and-destroy mission against the new Christians.

God intervened. In a flash, literally, Saul's life was turned around. God changed his direction—which is what conversion is all about.

From that moment forward, he became God's great missionary to the Gentiles. The zeal he used against God's people is now used to proclaim God's way of salvation through Christ.

Paul, as he became known, never forgot this conversion. He never ceased to be amazed at the mercy of God, who had come to save him while he was in the middle of rebellion.

Throughout his missionary journeys, Paul established numerous congregations. His vigorous preaching and teaching held up Jesus Christ the Savior for all to see. The great sermon in Athens illustrated his simple and direct style of preaching (Acts 17: 22-31). Under inspiration from God, Paul wrote letters to churches and individuals throughout the ancient world. These letters constitute over one-third of the New Testament.

The life of Paul will forever be an example of what happens when God turns a person around and that person becomes turned on to God. He indeed was set apart for the Gospel of God (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:15)

As a theme for his life, Paul could very well have chosen what he wrote to the church in Rome recorded in Romans 1: 16-17, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from beginning to end, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

KEY VERSES OF ACTS 9

Verses 1-2

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Saul, as he was known at the time, was not seeking God. He was out to destroy the young Christian church.

Verses 3-6

AS he neared Damascus on his journey, 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," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Saul would never forget the significance of this meeting with Jesus.

Verse 12

In a vision, he had seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.

God let him know he would be healed.

Verse 15

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."

God had singled Saul out for a special purpose—to bring the Good News of salvation in Christ to the Gentile world.

Verse 11

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We are not left to guess at the meaning of these words. The explanation is given. We are "dead to sin" (vv. 5-7) and "alive to God" (vv. 8-10) through faith in Christ. Show no "signs of life" toward sin. A corpse cannot react. Show your life by responding to God who brought you life in Christ. This *new life* is possible only to those who are united with Christ.

Verse 13

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

We are to offer ourselves to God. The Spirit enables us to be available to him to fulfill *his* purposes.

Verse 14

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

The Law makes slaves; people who have no choice and can't obey God. Under grace we have been set free. We are made willing servants to righteousness. The Law gives no power to resist the control of sin nor to do righteousness. By grace we are enabled to live the new life of choosing to follow Christ.

Verses 16

I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

Those who serve the Lord must be prepared to suffer for his name's sake. (See Luke 9: 23-24; 14: 25-35).

Verses 20

At once, he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Saul begins the ministry that will extend throughout his life.

Verse 22

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

The core of the message was *Jesus is the Christ*.

Verse 24

But Saul learned of their plan. Day and night, they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him.

The foretold (v. 16) persecution begins.

Verse 31

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit; it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

God provided a time of peace and growth for the church.

Verses 34, 41

"Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up.

He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.

The last quarter of the chapter deals with the ministry of Peter; healing Aeneas and raising Dorcas.

THOUGHTS ON PAUL

Day 1

Paul frequently referred to his conversion (Acts 22: 4-19; 26: 9-15; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8; Galatians 1: 11-12; 1 Timothy 1: 12-16). But his *experience* wasn't the heart of this message. Christ was his message.

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“Paul” was the Roman name for “Saul.” It’s interesting that once Saul starts reaching the Gentiles, he is frequently called Paul. Luke refers to this in Acts 13:9. The Gentiles could more easily identify with the Gentile name Paul than the Hebrew name Saul.

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There were ups and downs in Paul’s ministry. At times, people listened and responded. At other times, his life was threatened by their hostility.

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Paul was anxious to spread the message of Christ. He traveled throughout the Gentile world to proclaim Jesus. Among the places where he preached were Salamis (Acts 13:5), Paphos (Acts 13:6); Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13: 14-51), and Macedonia (Acts 16: 6-10).

The new believers at Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, as well as Rome were nourished and instructed by him. God used Paul as the founder of these new congregations of believers. His personal love and concern can be seen in his later letters to them.

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The disciples were suspicious concerning the authenticity of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:26). Barnabas helped Paul win the acceptance of the others (v. 27).

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Day 2

Paul spent three years in the Arabian Desert to be prepared for his ministry. This was a time alone with God (Galatians 1:17).

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The first convert to Christianity in Europe was a businesswoman named Lydia, a seller of fabric (Acts 16:14).

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Paul was a man of great courage. In Athens (while preaching the Areopagus in full view of the Parthenon, which contained the gold and ivory statue of Athene), he denounced the temples (Acts 17:24) and its statues of silver and gold (Acts 17:29). Paul knew what it meant to put his trust in the Lord. He wrote in his letter to the Romans, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

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Even in prison, Paul praised the Lord (Acts 16:25).

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On one occasion (Acts 22: 1-24) in Jerusalem, a riotous crowd was out to kill him. Soldiers intervened to save his life. Paul took the opportunity to *preach another sermon* about Jesus Christ.

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Nothing stopped Paul from his mission—not ridicule, not slander, not prison, not beatings, no shipwreck, not being stoned, not even the “thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7). In reviewing all these problems, he said God’s power was made perfect in contrast to his own weakness.

Also, in reviewing his futile attempts to keep the Law, he saw they amounted to “nothing at all” (garbage) when compared to his task of preaching Jesus Christ to the world (Philippians 3: 4-11). Paul had the right attitude:

- He believed God’s grace was sufficient for him (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- He considered it an honor to suffer for the name of Jesus (2 Corinthians 12:10).
- He refused to despair (2 Corinthians 4:8).
- He had a glorious hope (Romans 8:18).

God help us have the same attitude.

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Day 3

Paul remained faithful to the end. I look forward to seeing him in heaven (2 Timothy 4: 7-8).

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When thinking about the lost condition of the enemies of Christ, Paul was moved to tears. His pity and sorrow can be an example for us. Perhaps such deep concern for the lost would guide us to be more aggressive in our mission to the world (Philippians 3:18).

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In order to win more people to Christ, Paul was willing to do anything (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23).

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Immediately upon his conversion, the will of Saul (Paul) was changed (converted). He had vigorously opposed the church. Now he asks, “What wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9: 6 KJV).

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Frequently God sends another person to help us, just as Ananias was sent to heal Paul (Acts 9:17). Are you willing and open for God to use you as the “human instrument” to help and bless someone?

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Paul was moved to witness. Why? Because the spirit of God was in him.

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Some people find it most difficult to witness to relatives. Paul goes to his hometown (Acts 9:30). By the same Spirit, you and I can witness to relatives.

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Day 4

The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus is approximately 140 miles, a week’s journey by foot. It was a life-changing trip for Paul.

The message of Paul was always clear and sharp. No one had to wonder what he meant. Had he “softened” his message, people would have been confused about grace. Paul wanted them to understand clearly—there is only one way to be saved, and that is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

He did not compromise the message to fit the world. Compromise makes you ineffective for the Lord. Ineffective people are not persecuted. Paul experienced many vicious attacks. He considered such attacks a blessing because they taught him that he must rely totally on God (w Corinthians 1:9).

Like Paul, you have to make a choice. Either you “tickle” the ears with half-truths, or you “tingle” the ears with the truth.

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God does not hold past sins against us—once they are forgiven in Christ, they are gone forever. It is a new day. You are a new person. Serve the Lord in gladness. (See Key Chapter booklet *Romans 6: New Life*).

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In Acts 9:13 and 41 the word sometimes translated “believers” means “saints.” Later Paul often uses this same word to describe those who follow Christ. The word literally means “holy ones”. Those who have been chosen by God are sanctified—made holy—by God. They have joy! They have purpose! They have hope! Eternity is theirs!

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The followers of Jesus were first called “Christians” at Antioch (Acts 11:26). To this day Christians give glory to God by proudly bearing his name and giving public testimony to their being followers of Christ.

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Day 5

Some of my favorite passages from Paul’s letters include the following:

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15: 2-23, 42-44, 51-52: But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Galatians 2: 19-20: For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Ephesians 2: 8-10: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Philippians 4: 4-7: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18: Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.

1 Timothy 1: 15-16: Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

2 Timothy 1: 7-9: for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

Titus 2: 11-14: For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Philemon 6: I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

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