



Lesson 11 – From Persecutor to Disciple

Based on Acts 9:1-8

1) How did Saul describe himself?

Acts 8:4 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an _____ of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, _____.

Prominent among the Jewish leaders who became thoroughly aroused by the success attending the proclamation of the gospel, was Saul of Tarsus. A Roman citizen by birth, Saul was nevertheless a Jew by descent and had been educated in Jerusalem by the most eminent of the rabbis.

He was regarded by the rabbis as a young man of great promise, and high hopes were cherished concerning him as an able and zealous defender of the ancient faith. His elevation to membership in the Sanhedrin council placed him in a position of power.

2) What did he do with great zeal?

Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this _____ unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

3) What decision against Stephen marked him forever?

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his _____. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Saul had taken a prominent part in the trial and conviction of Stephen, and the striking evidences of God's presence with the martyr had led Saul to doubt the righteousness of the cause he had espoused against the followers of Jesus. His mind was deeply stirred. In his perplexity he appealed to those in whose wisdom and judgment he had full confidence. The arguments of the priests and rulers finally convinced him that Stephen was a blasphemer, that the Christ whom the martyred disciple had preached was an impostor, and that those ministering in holy office must be right.

4) What did persecution bring to God's Church?

Acts 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went _____ preaching the word.

The priests and rulers had hoped that by vigilant effort and stern persecution the heresy might be suppressed. Now they felt that they must carry forward in other places the decided measures taken in Jerusalem against the new teaching. For the special work that they desired to have done at Damascus, Saul offered his services.

5) What was his plan?

Acts 9:1-2 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the _____ of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them _____ unto Jerusalem.



6) Were his counterparts in agreement?

Acts 26:12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with _____ and _____ from the chief priests,

Saul of Tarsus, in the strength and vigor of manhood, and fired with mistaken zeal, set out on that memorable journey, the strange occurrences of which were to change the whole current of his life.

7) What did Jesus do?

Acts 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a _____ from _____:

8) How did he describe it later to others?

Acts 26:13 At _____, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the _____, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

While Saul, with his companions, gazed with admiration on the fruitful plain and the fair city below, suddenly as he afterward declared, "there shone round about me and them which journeyed with me a light from heaven", above the brightness of the sun, too glorious for mortal eyes to bear. Blinded and bewildered, Saul fell prostrate to the ground.

9) Now that God had his attention, what did He ask him?

Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why _____ thou me?

10) How did Saul respond?

Acts 9:5 And he said, _____, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Filled with fear, and almost blinded by the intensity of the light, the companions of Saul heard a voice, but saw no man. But Saul understood the words that were spoken, and to him was clearly revealed the One who spoke, even the Son of God. In the glorious Being who stood before him he saw the Crucified One. **Upon the soul of the stricken Jew the image of the Saviour's countenance was imprinted forever.** The words spoken struck home to his heart with appalling force. Into the darkened chambers of his mind there poured a flood of light, revealing the ignorance and error of his former life and his present need of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

11) In this encounter, what words of Stephen came to mind?

Acts 7:55-56 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the _____ of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens _____, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

In that hour of heavenly illumination Saul's mind acted with remarkable rapidity. The prophetic records of Holy Writ were opened to his understanding. He saw that the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, had been foretold by the prophets and proved Him to be the promised Messiah. Stephen's sermon at the time of his martyrdom was brought forcibly to Saul's mind, and he realized that the martyr had indeed beheld "***the glory of God***" when he said, "***Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.***"



Saul now saw that in persecuting the followers of Jesus he had in reality been doing the work of Satan. He saw that his convictions of right and of his own duty had been based largely on his implicit confidence in the priests and rulers. He had believed them when they told him that the story of the resurrection was an artful fabrication of the disciples. Now that Jesus Himself stood revealed, Saul was convinced of the truthfulness of the claims made by the disciples.

12) What had he witnessed from Stephen?

Acts 6:15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an _____.

The Saviour had spoken to Saul through Stephen, whose clear reasoning could not be controverted. The learned Jew had seen the face of the martyr reflecting the light of Christ's glory. He had witnessed Stephen's forbearance toward his enemies and his forgiveness of them. He had also witnessed the fortitude and cheerful resignation of many whom he had caused to be tormented and afflicted. He had seen some yield up even their lives with rejoicing for the sake of their faith.

All these things had appealed loudly to Saul and at times had thrust upon his mind an almost overwhelming conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah. At such times he had struggled for entire nights against this conviction, and always he had ended the matter by avowing his belief that Jesus was not the Messiah and that His followers were deluded fanatics.

13) Who was Saul REALLY persecuting?

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am _____ whom thou persecutest...

In falsely accusing and testifying against them, he had falsely accused and testified against the Saviour of the world.

14) Fully convinced, what did Saul ask Jesus?

Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou _____ to _____? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

When the glory was withdrawn, and Saul arose from the ground, he found himself totally deprived of sight. The brightness of Christ's glory had been too intense for his mortal eyes; and when it was removed, the blackness of night settled upon his vision. He believed that this blindness was a punishment from God for his cruel persecution of the followers of Jesus.

15) What did his friends do for him?

Acts 9:8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they _____ him by the hand, and _____ him into Damascus.

Stricken with blindness, helpless, tortured by remorse, knowing not what further judgment might be in store for him, he sought out the home of the disciple Judas, where, in solitude, he had ample opportunity for reflection and prayer.

16) What did he do?

Acts 9:9 And he was _____ days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.



These days of soul agony were to him as years. Again and again, he recalled, with anguish of spirit, the part he had taken in the martyrdom of Stephen. With horror he thought of his guilt in allowing himself to be controlled by the malice and prejudice of the priests and rulers, even when the face of Stephen had been lighted up with the radiance of heaven. In sadness and brokenness of spirit he recounted the many times he had closed his eyes and ears against the most striking evidences and had relentlessly urged on the persecution of the believers in Jesus of Nazareth.

17) Did God know what was happening?

Acts 9:10-12 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a _____, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called _____, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his _____ on him, that he might receive his sight.

18) Was Ananias excited to help him?

Acts 9:13-14 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much _____ he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to _____ all that call on thy name.

The prayers of the penitent Pharisee were not in vain. The inmost thoughts and emotions of his heart were transformed by divine grace; and his nobler faculties were brought into harmony with the eternal purposes of God. Christ and His righteousness became to Saul more than the whole world.

The marvelous light that illumined the darkness of Saul was the work of the Lord; but there was also a work that was to be done for him by the disciples. Christ had performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn from those whom God had ordained to teach His truth.

19) What did God tell Ananias?

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

20) Was Ananias obedient?

Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that _____ unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the _____ . And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been _____: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Jesus gave sanction to the authority of His organized church and placed Saul in connection with His appointed agencies on earth. Christ had now a church as His representative on earth, and to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life.

Saul was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world. In this case Ananias represents Christ, and also represents Christ's ministers upon the earth, who are appointed to act in His stead. In Christ's stead Ananias touches the eyes of Saul, that they may receive sight. In Christ's stead he places his hands upon him, and, as he prays in Christ's name, Saul receives the Holy Ghost. All is done in the name and by the authority of Christ. Christ is the fountain; the church is the channel of communication.

Have you ever "kicked against the goads"?

Do you want an encounter with Jesus?

When is the time listen to God's pleadings?