

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 9 — Saul's Conversion and Peter's Miracles

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 9 records one of the most dramatic conversions in the history of the church.

Saul had been present when Stephen was killed.

He approved of Stephen's death.

Then Saul began attacking the church with extraordinary violence.

He entered houses.

He arrested men and women.

He threw believers into prison.

His goal was clear:

Destroy the followers of Jesus.

But Saul was about to discover something he never expected.

The Jesus he believed was dead was alive.

As Saul traveled toward Damascus with authority to arrest believers, a bright light suddenly surrounded him.

He fell to the ground.

Then he heard a voice:

"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Saul asked:

"Who are You, Lord?"

The answer changed his life forever:

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

The persecutor had encountered the risen Christ.

Saul entered Damascus blind.

For three days he did not eat or drink.

Meanwhile God spoke to an ordinary disciple named Ananias.

Ananias understandably feared Saul.

But God told him:

“Go, for he is My chosen instrument.”

Ananias obeyed.

Saul regained his sight.

He was baptized.

And almost immediately:

The man who had entered Damascus intending to arrest Christians began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God.

The persecutor became a preacher.

The destroyer of churches became a builder of churches.

The man who opposed the name of Jesus began risking his life for the name of Jesus.

Acts 9 also continues Peter’s ministry.

Peter heals Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for eight years.

Then in Joppa, Peter is called to the home where Tabitha—also known as Dorcas—has died.

Peter prays.

He says:

“Tabitha, get up.”

She opens her eyes.

She sits up.

And Peter presents her alive to the believers.

Acts 9 therefore demonstrates several great truths:

No sinner is beyond the reach of Christ.

God can completely transform a life.

God uses ordinary believers in extraordinary ways.

The gospel creates immediate new allegiance to Jesus.

Christ's power remains active through His servants.

The central truth of Acts 9 is:

The risen Jesus Christ can transform His fiercest enemy into His faithful servant, direct ordinary believers in His mission, strengthen His church, and demonstrate His authority through changed lives and powerful works.

I. SAUL CONTINUES THREATENING THE CHURCH

Acts 9:1 — Breathing Threats and Murder

“Saul was still breathing threats of murder against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest.”

Saul’s opposition had not weakened after Stephen’s death.

It had intensified.

Cross References

Acts 8:3

Saul began trying to destroy the church. He entered house after house, dragged out both men and women, and put them in prison.

Acts 22:4

Paul later said, “I persecuted the followers of this Way even to death, arresting both men and women and putting them in prison.”

Galatians 1:13

Paul said, “You have heard about my former life in Judaism, how violently I persecuted God’s church and tried to destroy it.”

Spiritual Principle

Religious zeal can be terribly destructive when it is disconnected from truth.

Saul was sincere.

He was also wrong.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Sincerity does not turn error into truth.

A person can be passionately committed and still be opposing God.

II. SAUL SEEKS AUTHORITY TO ARREST BELIEVERS

Acts 9:2 — Followers of “The Way”

“And asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found anyone following ‘the Way,’ men or women, he could arrest them and bring them to Jerusalem.”

Saul’s persecution was organized.

He wanted official authorization to capture believers outside Jerusalem.

Cross References

Acts 22:5

Paul later testified that the high priest and council could confirm that he received letters authorizing him to go to Damascus and arrest followers of Jesus.

Acts 26:12

Paul said, “I was traveling to Damascus with authority and a commission from the chief priests.”

Acts 8:3

Saul had already been entering homes and dragging believers away to prison.

“The Way”

Early Christianity was sometimes described as:

“The Way.”

This reflects the truth that following Jesus is not merely believing certain ideas.

It is a new way of life.

Spiritual Principle

Christianity is not only something we believe; it is a life we follow under the lordship of Christ.

III. A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

Acts 9:3

“As he neared Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven shone around him.”

Saul was approaching Damascus confident in his mission.

Then heaven interrupted him.

Cross References

Acts 22:6

Paul later said, “About noon, as I came near Damascus, suddenly a very bright light from heaven flashed around me.”

Acts 26:13

Paul said that around midday he saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun shining around him and his companions.

2 Corinthians 4:6

The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Christ knows how to interrupt a person who is moving rapidly in the wrong direction.

IV. “WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”

Acts 9:4

“He fell to the ground and heard a voice say, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”

Saul thought he was persecuting Christians.

Jesus said:

“You are persecuting Me.”

Cross References

Acts 22:7

Paul said, “I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”

Acts 26:14

Paul said that he heard a voice from heaven asking why he was persecuting Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:9

Paul later said, “I am the least of the apostles and do not deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted God’s church.”

Key Truth

Jesus identifies deeply with His people.

To attack Christ’s church is to attack Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christ takes personally what is done to His people.

V. “I AM JESUS”

Acts 9:5

“He asked, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ The voice replied, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is useless for you to resist Me.’”

This is the moment Saul’s entire worldview collapses.

Jesus is alive.

Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is the One Saul has been opposing.

Cross References

Acts 22:8

Saul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” The answer came, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.”

Acts 26:15

Paul said, “I asked, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ The Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’”

1 Timothy 1:13

Paul later said, “I was formerly a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent man, but I received mercy.”

Spiritual Principle

Conversion begins when a person sees Jesus differently.

Saul thought Jesus was a false Messiah.

Now he discovers:

Jesus is alive.

Jesus is Lord.

Jesus speaks from heaven.

Key Truth

You cannot successfully fight against Jesus Christ.

VI. “WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?”

Acts 9:6

“Trembling and amazed, Saul said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ The Lord said, ‘Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do.’”

Saul’s attitude changes immediately.

Before:

“What can I do against Christians?”

Now:

“Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Cross References

Acts 22:10

Saul asked, “What should I do, Lord?” Jesus told him to go into Damascus where he would be told what had been appointed for him.

Acts 26:16

Jesus told Saul to rise because He had appeared to appoint him as a servant and witness.

Ezekiel 2:1

God told Ezekiel, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

True conversion changes the question from “What do I want?” to “Lord, what do You want?”

VII. SAUL’S COMPANIONS STAND SPEECHLESS

Acts 9:7

“The men traveling with Saul stood speechless; they heard the voice but saw no one.”

Saul’s companions experienced something extraordinary.

But the personal message was directed to Saul.

Cross References

Acts 22:9

Paul later said that his companions saw the light but did not understand the voice speaking to him.

Daniel 10:7

Daniel saw a vision that the men with him did not see, though great fear came upon them.

John 12:29

When a voice came from heaven near Jesus, some people thought they had heard thunder while others said an angel had spoken.

Important Observation

Acts 9 emphasizes that the men heard the sound or voice, while Acts 22 explains that they did not understand the message addressed to Saul.

Spiritual Principle

People may witness the circumstances surrounding another person’s encounter with God without personally experiencing the same spiritual transformation.

VIII. THE MAN WHO CAME TO ARREST OTHERS MUST BE LED BY THE HAND

Acts 9:8

“Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he couldn’t see. They led him by the hand into Damascus.”

Saul entered the Damascus road as a powerful persecutor.

He entered Damascus blind and dependent.

Cross References

Acts 22:11

Paul said, “Because the brilliance of the light blinded me, my companions led me by the hand into Damascus.”

Acts 13:11

Later Paul would pronounce temporary blindness upon Elymas the sorcerer, who then needed someone to lead him by the hand.

Deuteronomy 28:29

Moses warned of judgment in which people would grope about as a blind person gropes in darkness.

Spiritual Principle

God sometimes humbles us before He uses us.

Saul needed to lose confidence in Saul before becoming useful to Christ.

IX. THREE DAYS OF BLINDNESS

Acts 9:9

“For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink.”

For three days Saul waits.

No persecuting.

No commanding.

No traveling under authority.

He is blind.

Silent.

Dependent.

Cross References

Esther 4:16

Esther called for a three-day fast before she approached the king during a moment of great crisis.

Jonah 1:17

Jonah remained inside the great fish for three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:40

Jesus compared His coming burial to Jonah's three days in the fish.

Spiritual Principle

God may use seasons of darkness and waiting to prepare a person for a completely new life.

X. GOD SPEAKS TO AN ORDINARY DISCIPLE

Acts 9:10

“In Damascus, there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ He answered, ‘Here I am, Lord.’”

Ananias was not one of the apostles.

He was a disciple.

Yet God used him in one of the most important conversion stories in church history.

Cross References

1 Samuel 3:4

The Lord called Samuel, and Samuel answered, “Here I am.”

Genesis 22:1

God called Abraham, and Abraham answered, “Here I am.”

Exodus 3:4

God called Moses from the burning bush, and Moses answered, “Here I am.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God often uses ordinary believers at extraordinary moments in His plan.

XI. “SAUL OF TARSUS—HE IS PRAYING”

Acts 9:11

“The Lord said, ‘Go to Straight Street, to the house of Judas, and ask for Saul of Tarsus. He is praying.’”

What a change.

Saul had come to Damascus to arrest praying believers.

Now:

Saul is praying.

Cross References

Acts 21:39

Paul later identified himself as a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia.

Acts 22:3

Paul said, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but raised in this city.”

Matthew 6:6

Jesus said, “When you pray, go into a private place, shut the door, and pray to your Father.”

Spiritual Principle

One evidence of a transformed heart is a new relationship with God.

XII. GOD PREPARES BOTH SAUL AND ANANIAS

Acts 9:12

“He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come and lay hands on him to restore his sight.”

God is working on both sides of the encounter.

Saul sees Ananias coming.

Ananias is told to go.

Cross References

Mark 16:18

Jesus said His servants would lay hands on sick people and they would recover.

Acts 28:8

Paul later prayed for a sick man, laid hands upon him, and healed him.

2 Kings 5:11

Naaman had expected Elisha personally to come out, call upon God, and place his hand over the diseased area.

Spiritual Principle

God can prepare the messenger and the recipient before either understands the entire plan.

XIII. ANANIAS EXPRESSES HIS FEAR

Acts 9:13

“Ananias replied, ‘Lord, I have heard about this man and all the harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.’”

Ananias’ fear was understandable.

Saul was dangerous.

Cross References

Acts 8:3

Saul had been destroying the church, dragging believers from their homes and placing them in prison.

Galatians 1:13

Paul later admitted that he violently persecuted God's church.

1 Corinthians 15:9

Paul said he was unworthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God.

Spiritual Principle

Faith does not require pretending danger is unreal.

Ananias tells God exactly what concerns him.

XIV. SAUL HAS AUTHORITY TO ARREST BELIEVERS

Acts 9:14

“He has authority here from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name.”

Ananias understood the threat.

Cross References

Acts 26:10

Paul said that he received authority from the chief priests to imprison many believers.

Acts 22:5

Paul testified that he carried letters authorizing arrests in Damascus.

John 15:21

Jesus warned that His followers would be mistreated because of His name.

Spiritual Principle

Sometimes God calls us to obey Him in situations that legitimately frighten us.

XV. “HE IS MY CHOSEN INSTRUMENT”

Acts 9:15

“But the Lord said, ‘Go, for he is My chosen instrument to carry My name to the Gentiles, their kings, and the people of Israel.’”

Ananias sees Saul as a persecutor.

Jesus sees Saul’s future purpose.

Cross References

Acts 26:17

Jesus later described Saul’s mission to both Israel and the Gentiles.

Romans 1:5

Paul said that through Christ he received grace and apostleship to call people among the nations to the obedience of faith.

Galatians 1:16

Paul said God revealed His Son to him so that he might preach Christ among the Gentiles.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never assume a person’s past tells you everything about his future under the grace of God.

XVI. SAUL WILL SUFFER FOR CHRIST

Acts 9:16

“I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

Saul had caused suffering.

Now he would suffer as a servant of Christ.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:23

Paul later described imprisonments, beatings, dangers, and suffering beyond measure for Christ.

Acts 20:23

Paul said the Holy Spirit repeatedly warned him that imprisonment and suffering awaited him.

Philippians 1:29

Believers have been given not only the privilege of believing in Christ but also of suffering for His sake.

Spiritual Principle

God's calling does not guarantee an easy life.

For Saul, calling included suffering.

XVII. “BROTHER SAUL”

Acts 9:17

“So Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’”

The first recorded word Ananias says to Saul is:

“Brother.”

That is grace.

Cross References

Acts 8:17

Peter and John laid hands upon the Samaritan believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 4:14

Timothy received recognition for ministry with the laying on of hands by spiritual leaders.

2 Timothy 1:6

Paul reminded Timothy to stir up the gift connected with the laying on of hands.

Spiritual Principle

Grace can turn former enemies into brothers.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The gospel does not merely forgive enemies; it can bring them into the same family.

XVIII. SAUL REGAINS HIS SIGHT AND IS BAPTIZED

Acts 9:18

“Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized.”

Saul’s physical sight returns.

His spiritual sight has already changed dramatically.

Cross References

Acts 22:13

Ananias told Saul, “Brother Saul, receive your sight,” and at that moment Saul could see him.

Acts 22:16

Ananias later told Saul to rise, be baptized, and call upon the name of the Lord.

Mark 8:25

Jesus placed His hands upon a blind man, and the man’s sight was fully restored.

Spiritual Principle

Conversion changes what a person sees spiritually before it changes where he goes physically.

XIX. SAUL JOINS THE DISCIPLES

Acts 9:19

“After eating, he regained his strength and spent some time with the disciples in Damascus.”

Saul came to Damascus to capture disciples.

Now he joins them.

Cross References

1 Kings 19:8

Elijah ate the food God provided and was strengthened for the journey ahead.

2 Corinthians 11:32

Paul later described danger he faced in Damascus under the authority of the governor.

Daniel 10:19

Daniel was told, “Be strong,” and received renewed strength.

Spiritual Principle

Conversion creates a new spiritual family.

XX. SAUL IMMEDIATELY PREACHES JESUS

Acts 9:20

“Right away, Saul began preaching in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.”

The transformation is unmistakable.

Previously:

Jesus was the enemy of Saul’s cause.

Now:

Jesus is Saul’s message.

Cross References

Romans 1:4

Jesus was powerfully declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.

Mark 1:1

The gospel begins with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

John 20:31

John wrote so that people might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life through His name.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A true encounter with Jesus changes what a person says about Jesus.

XXI. EVERYONE IS AMAZED

Acts 9:21

“Everyone who heard him was amazed, saying, ‘Isn’t this the man who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem? Didn’t he come here to arrest them?’”

The people knew Saul’s reputation.

That made his transformation even more powerful.

Cross References

Galatians 1:23

Churches heard the report: “The man who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”

Acts 8:3

Saul had previously tried to destroy the church.

Acts 26:9

Paul later admitted that he had once believed he should do everything possible to oppose the name of Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

A changed life gives credibility to a changed message.

XXII. SAUL PROVES JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

Acts 9:22

“But Saul grew more powerful and confounded the Jews in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.”

Saul knew Scripture.

Now he understood Scripture through Christ.

Cross References

Acts 18:28

Apollos powerfully demonstrated from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

Luke 24:27

Jesus explained from Moses and all the Prophets the Scriptures concerning Himself.

Acts 17:3

Paul later reasoned from Scripture that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead and that Jesus is that Messiah.

Spiritual Principle

Conversion does not destroy biblical learning; it gives biblical learning its proper center in Christ.

XXIII. PEOPLE PLOT TO KILL SAUL

Acts 9:23

“After many days, the Jews plotted to kill him.”

The persecutor has now become the persecuted.

Cross References

Acts 20:3

Paul later faced another plot against his life.

Acts 23:12

Some Jews formed a conspiracy and swore not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:26

Paul later described repeated dangers from many groups during his ministry.

Spiritual Principle

Following Jesus may quickly change who considers you an ally and who considers you an enemy.

XXIV. THE GATES ARE WATCHED

Acts 9:24

“But Saul learned of their plan. They watched the city gates day and night to kill him.”

The danger was serious.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:32

Paul said that in Damascus the governor had the city guarded in order to arrest him.

Acts 23:21

Paul was warned that men were waiting in ambush to kill him.

Acts 25:3

Later enemies requested that Paul be transferred so they could ambush and kill him along the road.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom and faith are not opposites.

Knowing God protects us does not mean unnecessarily ignoring danger.

XXV. SAUL ESCAPES IN A BASKET

Acts 9:25

“But the disciples took him by night and lowered him in a basket through the city wall.”

The man who once entered Damascus carrying official letters leaves secretly in a basket.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:33

Paul later said, “I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped.”

Joshua 2:15

Rahab lowered the Israelite spies through a window because her house was built into the city wall.

1 Samuel 19:12

Michal lowered David through a window so he could escape from Saul's attempt to kill him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's servants do not always escape danger dramatically; sometimes deliverance looks like a basket through a wall.

XXVI. JERUSALEM DOES NOT TRUST SAUL

Acts 9:26

"When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were afraid of him, not believing he was truly a disciple."

Their fear was understandable.

Saul's former reputation was terrifying.

Cross References

Galatians 1:18

Paul later said that after a period of time he went to Jerusalem and spent time with Peter.

Acts 22:17

Paul later described returning to Jerusalem and praying in the temple.

Acts 26:20

Paul testified that he preached repentance in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, and among the Gentiles.

Spiritual Principle

Forgiveness may be immediate, but rebuilding trust can take time.

The disciples were not necessarily being unforgiving.

They were cautious.

XXVII. BARNABAS STANDS WITH SAUL

Acts 9:27

“But Barnabas took him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road and how he had preached boldly in Damascus in Jesus’ name.”

Once again Barnabas lives up to his name:

Son of Encouragement.

Cross References

Acts 4:36

Joseph, whom the apostles called Barnabas, was known as a son of encouragement.

Galatians 1:19

Paul later said that during this Jerusalem visit he also saw James, the Lord’s brother.

Acts 11:25

Barnabas later went to Tarsus specifically to look for Saul.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Sometimes a new believer needs one trusted person willing to say, “I believe God is at work in him.”

Barnabas becomes a bridge.

XXVIII. SAUL SPEAKS BOLDLY IN JERUSALEM

Acts 9:28

“So Saul stayed with them, moving freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the Lord’s name.”

Saul does not hide his faith.

Cross References

Acts 26:26

Paul later said that the events concerning Jesus had not happened secretly.

Ephesians 6:20

Paul asked believers to pray that he might speak the gospel boldly, even while in chains.

Acts 4:31

The early believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke God's Word boldly.

Spiritual Principle

The same city where Saul had persecuted Christians now hears Saul preach Christ.

XXIX. SAUL DEBATES THE GREEK-SPEAKING JEWS

Acts 9:29

“He debated with Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to kill him.”

This strongly echoes Stephen.

Stephen debated Greek-speaking Jews.

Saul had been connected with the persecution surrounding Stephen.

Now Saul enters similar ministry and faces similar opposition.

Cross References

Acts 6:9

Greek-speaking Jews from various regions debated with Stephen.

Acts 21:27

Later opponents would again stir up crowds against Paul.

Acts 23:12

Paul later faced a conspiracy to kill him.

Spiritual Principle

Grace can transform a man from participating in persecution to sharing in the sufferings of the persecuted.

XXX. SAUL IS SENT TO TARBUS

Acts 9:30

“When the believers learned of this, they took him to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.”

The church protects Saul.

Cross References

Acts 11:25

Barnabas later went to Tarsus looking for Saul.

Galatians 1:21

Paul later described going into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Acts 22:3

Paul identified Tarsus as the city where he was born.

Spiritual Principle

Sometimes leaving a dangerous location is wisdom, not cowardice.

XXXI. THE CHURCH EXPERIENCES PEACE AND GROWTH

Acts 9:31

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

This verse summarizes healthy church life.

Peace

External pressure temporarily lessened.

Strength

The church became spiritually established.

Fear of the Lord

Believers lived reverently before God.

Encouragement of the Holy Spirit

They experienced divine help and comfort.

Growth

More people became believers.

Cross References

Acts 6:7

God's Word spread, and the number of disciples increased greatly.

Acts 16:5

The churches were strengthened in faith and increased in number daily.

Acts 2:47

The Lord continued adding to the church those who were being saved.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A healthy church walks in both the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Reverence and encouragement belong together.

XXXII. PETER TRAVELS TO LYDDA

Acts 9:32

“As Peter traveled through the region, he came to the believers in Lydda.”

The narrative returns to Peter.

Peter continues visiting and strengthening believers.

Cross References

Acts 8:14

Peter and John had previously traveled to Samaria to confirm the gospel's work there.

Acts 8:25

Peter and John preached in many Samaritan villages while returning to Jerusalem.

Matthew 9:35

Jesus traveled through towns and villages teaching, preaching, and ministering to people.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful ministry often involves going where people are rather than waiting for people to come to us.

XXXIII. AENEAS HAS BEEN PARALYZED FOR EIGHT YEARS

Acts 9:33

“There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years.”

His condition was longstanding.

Cross References

John 5:5

Jesus encountered a man who had suffered from a disabling condition for thirty-eight years.

Mark 2:3

People brought a paralyzed man to Jesus, carried by four men.

Acts 3:2

A man lame from birth had been carried daily to the temple gate.

Spiritual Principle

Length of suffering does not limit Christ’s authority.

XXXIV. “JESUS CHRIST HEALS YOU”

Acts 9:34

“Peter said, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed.’ Immediately he got up.”

Peter makes the source of the healing clear.

He does not say:

“Peter heals you.”

He says:

“Jesus Christ heals you.”

Cross References

Mark 2:11

Jesus told the paralyzed man, “Get up, pick up your mat, and go home.”

Acts 3:6

Peter told the lame man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

John 5:8

Jesus told the disabled man, “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faithful ministry gives Jesus the credit for what only Jesus can do.

XXXV. PEOPLE TURN TO THE LORD

Acts 9:35

“All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.”

Again the miracle points beyond itself.

People do not merely admire Peter.

They:

“Turned to the Lord.”

Cross References

Acts 4:4

Many who heard the gospel believed.

Isaiah 35:2

Isaiah describes people seeing the glory and majesty of the Lord.

Acts 19:17

When God’s power became widely known, the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored.

Spiritual Principle

The proper result of spiritual ministry is not admiration of the servant but turning toward the Lord.

XXXVI. TABITHA — A DISCIPLE KNOWN FOR GOOD WORKS

Acts 9:36

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas). She was always doing good and helping the poor.”

Tabitha is remembered not for public preaching but for practical compassion.

Cross References

Proverbs 31:20

The godly woman opens her hand to the poor and reaches out to those in need.

1 Timothy 5:10

A godly widow is known for good works, hospitality, service, and helping those in trouble.

Galatians 2:10

Paul said the apostles urged him to remember the poor, something he was eager to do.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A life of quiet service can leave a powerful spiritual legacy.

XXXVII. TABITHA DIES

Acts 9:37

“About that time, she became sick and died. They washed her body and laid her in an upstairs room.”

A faithful disciple becomes sick and dies.

Cross References

2 Kings 4:21

The Shunammite woman laid her dead son on the prophet's bed in the upstairs room.

John 11:14

Jesus plainly told His disciples, "Lazarus is dead."

Acts 20:9

Eutychus later fell from an upper room and was taken up dead.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness to God does not mean believers never become sick or die.

Tabitha was godly.

She still died.

XXXVIII. THE DISCIPLES SEND FOR PETER

Acts 9:38

"Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men urging him, 'Please come at once!'"

The believers act with urgency.

Cross References

2 Kings 4:22

The Shunammite woman urgently prepared to go find the prophet Elisha.

Mark 5:23

Jairus pleaded with Jesus to come because his daughter was near death.

Luke 7:6

A centurion sent friends asking Jesus to help his sick servant.

Spiritual Principle

Faith often expresses itself by seeking God's help in desperate circumstances.

XXXIX. TABITHA'S LIFE SPEAKS AFTER HER DEATH

Acts 9:39

“Peter went with them. When he arrived, they took him upstairs. All the widows stood around him crying and showing him the clothes Dorcas had made while she was alive.”

The widows held physical evidence of Tabitha's compassion.

Clothes she had made.

Cross References

2 Kings 4:32

Elisha entered the room where the dead child had been laid.

Luke 7:12

Jesus encountered a funeral procession where a grieving widow had lost her only son.

James 1:27

Pure religion includes caring for widows in their distress.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The value of a Christian life is often revealed by the people who were helped through it.

Tabitha left more than possessions.

She left evidence of love.

XL. PETER KNEELS AND PRAYS

Acts 9:40

“Peter sent them all out, knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, ‘Tabitha, get up.’ She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.”

Peter does not immediately speak to the body.

First:

He prays.

Cross References

2 Kings 4:33

Elisha entered the room, closed the door, and prayed to the Lord.

Mark 5:41

Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand and told her to rise.

John 11:43

Jesus cried out loudly, "Lazarus, come out!"

Spiritual Principle

Powerful ministry begins with dependence upon God.

Peter kneels before he speaks.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Prayer should come before presumption.

XLI. TABITHA IS PRESENTED ALIVE

Acts 9:41

"He took her by the hand, helped her to her feet, and presented her alive to the believers and widows."

The sorrow of the room becomes joy.

Cross References

1 Kings 17:23

Elijah carried the restored child downstairs and presented him alive to his mother.

Mark 5:42

Jairus' daughter immediately stood and began walking, and everyone was overwhelmed with amazement.

Luke 8:55

The girl's spirit returned, and she immediately stood up.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus Christ remains Lord over life and death.

XLII. MANY BELIEVE IN THE LORD

Acts 9:42

“This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.”

Again the miracle serves the gospel.

Cross References

John 11:45

Many people who saw what Jesus did in raising Lazarus believed in Him.

John 12:11

Many people were believing in Jesus because of Lazarus.

Acts 19:17

As God’s power became known, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Spiritual Principle

God’s works should direct attention toward faith in the Lord.

XLIII. PETER STAYS WITH SIMON THE TANNER

Acts 9:43

“Peter stayed in Joppa for many days with a man named Simon, a tanner.”

This detail prepares for Acts 10.

A tanner regularly worked with animal hides and dead animals, an occupation many strict Jews would have regarded as ceremonially uncomfortable or socially undesirable.

Peter is already being moved toward boundaries that God will challenge even more dramatically in the next chapter.

Cross References

Acts 10:6

Peter stayed with Simon the tanner, whose house was beside the sea.

Acts 10:32

Cornelius was told to send for Peter, who was staying with Simon the tanner.

Acts 11:5

Peter later described the vision he received while praying in Joppa.

Spiritual Principle

God often prepares His servants gradually for the next step of obedience.

XLIV. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 9

1. No One Is Beyond the Reach of Christ

Saul was actively persecuting believers.

Jesus stopped him.

Principle:

Never decide that someone is too hardened for God to save.

2. Conversion Changes Allegiance

Saul entered Damascus serving one purpose.

He soon began serving Jesus.

Principle:

Salvation is not merely adding Jesus to an old life; it places the whole life under a new Lord.

3. God Uses Ordinary Believers

Ananias was not a famous apostle.

Yet his obedience became part of Paul's conversion story.

Principle:

You do not have to be famous to become important in God's work.

4. God Can Redeem a Terrible Past

Saul had persecuted the church.

Christ made him a chosen instrument.

Principle:

Grace does not deny the past; grace transforms what comes next.

5. New Believers Need Christian Community

Ananias welcomed Saul.

Barnabas defended Saul.

The disciples protected Saul.

Principle:

Conversion brings people into the family of God.

6. Miracles Should Point to Jesus

Peter said:

“Jesus Christ heals you.”

People turned to the Lord.

Principle:

God's servant must never steal God's glory.

7. Quiet Service Matters

Tabitha was known for good works and helping the poor.

Principle:

A life of practical love can have enormous spiritual influence.

XLV. SAUL BEFORE AND AFTER MEETING JESUS

Before

Breathing threats.

Seeking arrests.

Destroying churches.

Opposing Jesus.

Feared by believers.

After

Praying.

Calling Jesus Lord.

Being baptized.

Joining disciples.

Preaching Jesus.

Proving Jesus is Messiah.

Suffering for Jesus.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The best evidence of conversion is not merely a story about what happened once—it is a transformed direction of life.

XLVI. WHAT SAUL'S CONVERSION TEACHES ABOUT GRACE

Saul did not earn Christ's attention.

He was not searching for Jesus.

He was traveling to arrest Jesus' followers.

Yet Christ confronted him.

Grace Interrupted Him

Grace Humbled Him

Grace Forgave Him

Grace Called Him

Grace Changed Him

Grace Used Him

Spiritual Principle

Grace can meet a sinner while he is still traveling in the wrong direction.

XLVII. WHAT ANANIAS TEACHES ABOUT OBEDIENCE

Ananias was afraid.

Yet he obeyed.

That matters.

He Listened to God

He Expressed His Concern Honestly

He Received God's Answer

He Went Anyway

He Called Saul "Brother"

Spiritual Principle

Courage is not the absence of fear; courage is obedience after fear has been brought before God.

XLVIII. WHAT BARNABAS TEACHES ABOUT ENCOURAGEMENT

Saul's conversion was real.

But others did not trust him yet.

Barnabas stood beside him.

Barnabas Saw Possibility

Barnabas Took a Risk

Barnabas Opened a Door

Barnabas Helped Build Trust

Crawford Bible Study Principle

An encourager can help someone move from a changed life into a useful life.

XLIX. WHAT ACTS 9 TEACHES ABOUT SUFFERING

Jesus told Saul:

“I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.”

This corrects the idea that God's calling always produces comfort.

Saul would experience:

Imprisonment.

Beatings.

Plots.

Shipwreck.

Rejection.

Hardship.

Yet he would remain faithful.

Principle

Christian calling is measured by faithfulness, not ease.

L. WHAT ACTS 9 TEACHES ABOUT THE CHURCH

Acts 9:31 presents a balanced church.

It had:

Peace.

Strength.

Fear of the Lord.

Encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

Growth.

Spiritual Principle

Healthy Christianity combines reverence, encouragement, maturity, and mission.

LI. AENEAS AND TABITHA — TWO MIRACLES, ONE LORD

Peter ministers in two different situations.

Aeneas

Paralyzed for eight years.

Jesus heals him.

Tabitha

Dead.

God restores her life through Peter's prayer.

In both cases the result is gospel impact.

People:

Turn to the Lord.

And:

Believe in the Lord.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The miracle is never greater than the Lord to whom the miracle points.

LII. TABITHA — THE POWER OF A USEFUL LIFE

Tabitha may not have been known as:

A preacher.

An apostle.

A theologian.

A public leader.

But when she died:

Widows wept.

They showed Peter the clothes she made.

Her ministry could be held in their hands.

Spiritual Principle

Some of the strongest sermons are lives spent quietly doing good.

Ask yourself:

What evidence of Christlike love would people remember if I were gone?

LIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What was Saul doing when Jesus appeared to him?

Saul was traveling to Damascus with authority to arrest followers of Jesus.
He was actively persecuting the church.

Question 2

Why did Jesus say Saul was persecuting Him?

Jesus identifies Himself with His people.

Saul was attacking Christians, but Christ described those attacks as persecution against Himself.

This reveals the deep union between Christ and His church.

Question 3

What changed first in Saul's life?

His understanding of Jesus changed.

He discovered that Jesus was not dead or defeated.

Jesus was alive and Lord.

That revelation changed Saul's entire direction.

Question 4

Why was Saul blind for three days?

The text records the blindness as the immediate result of his encounter with Christ.

During those days Saul was humbled, dependent, fasting, and praying.

It became a period of dramatic transition between persecutor and disciple.

Question 5

Who was Ananias?

Ananias was a disciple living in Damascus.

He was not introduced as an apostle or famous leader.

God used this ordinary believer to minister to Saul at a decisive moment.

Question 6

Why was Ananias afraid to go to Saul?

He knew Saul's reputation.

Saul had persecuted believers in Jerusalem and had authority to arrest Christians in Damascus.

His fear was based upon genuine danger.

Question 7

What did Jesus say Saul would become?

Jesus called Saul:

"My chosen instrument."

Saul would carry Christ's name before:

Gentiles.

Kings.

Israel.

His future mission would become extraordinarily broad.

Question 8

What happened after Saul regained his sight?

He was baptized, spent time with the disciples, and began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God.

Question 9

Why were believers in Jerusalem afraid of Saul?

They knew his former reputation and did not initially believe his conversion was genuine.

Barnabas helped confirm Saul's testimony and introduced him to the apostles.

Question 10

Who was Barnabas and what did he do?

Barnabas was known as the son of encouragement.

He took Saul to the apostles and explained Saul's encounter with Jesus and his bold preaching in Damascus.

Barnabas became a bridge between Saul and suspicious believers.

Question 11

Who was Tabitha?

Tabitha, also called Dorcas, was a disciple in Joppa known for doing good and helping the poor.

Her life had especially affected widows, who mourned deeply when she died.

Question 12

What happened after Peter raised Tabitha?

The news spread throughout Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

The miracle became an occasion for increased faith in Jesus Christ.

LIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 9 asks several serious questions.

Have I Truly Encountered Jesus as Lord?

Saul's life changed because his understanding of Jesus changed.

Am I Fighting Something God Is Trying to Change in Me?

Saul learned resistance was useless.

Can God Use My Past?

Yes, but He must transform my direction.

Am I Available Like Ananias?

Would I obey even when God's assignment frightens me?

Can I Welcome Someone Whose Past Makes Me Uncomfortable?

Ananias called Saul:

“Brother.”

Am I an Encourager Like Barnabas?

Who needs someone to believe that God is working in them?

Does My Faith Produce Visible Change?

Saul immediately began proclaiming Christ.

Am I Doing Quiet Good Like Tabitha?

Who is helped because I follow Jesus?

LV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Never Write the Final Chapter of Someone God Has Not Finished With”

Ananias knew Saul’s history.

The believers knew Saul’s history.

Everyone knew Saul’s history.

But Jesus knew Saul’s future.

They saw:

Persecutor.

Jesus saw:

Chosen instrument.

They saw:

Danger.

Jesus saw:

Missionary.

They saw:

Enemy.

Jesus saw:

Servant.

Principle

God's grace can write a future that a person's past could never predict.

LVI. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“God Often Uses One Obedient Believer to Help Launch Another Believer's Calling”

Without Ananias, Saul still belonged to Christ.

But Ananias became part of Saul's restoration, welcome, healing, and commissioning.

Later Barnabas became part of Saul's acceptance.

Principle

Do not underestimate the ministry of helping another person become who God has called them to become.

You may never preach to thousands.

But you may encourage someone who will.

LVII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Changed Life Must Eventually Produce Changed Direction”

Saul did not merely say:

“I had an experience.”

His entire life changed.

He joined the people he had persecuted.

He preached the Jesus he had opposed.

He suffered for the name he had attacked.

Principle

Conversion is more than emotional experience; it is a new allegiance to Jesus Christ.

LVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 9 begins with Saul breathing threats.

It ends with many people believing in the Lord.

At the beginning:

Saul wants Christians arrested.

By the middle:

Saul is preaching Christ.

At the beginning:

Christians fear Saul.

Soon:

Saul suffers beside them.

What caused the difference?

Jesus.

One encounter with the risen Christ changed everything.

Saul discovered:

Jesus is alive.

Jesus is Lord.

Jesus identifies with His church.

Jesus has authority over Saul.

Jesus has a purpose for Saul.

That remains the heart of conversion.

Christianity is not merely becoming more religious.

Saul was already religious.

It is not becoming more sincere.

Saul was already sincere.

It is not becoming more committed.

Saul was already committed.

Saul needed Jesus.

Acts 9 also reminds us that God uses ordinary people.

Ananias does not dominate the book of Acts.

But he obeyed one critical assignment.

Barnabas was willing to stand beside someone others feared.

Tabitha spent her life helping people quietly.

Peter continued traveling and ministering wherever God opened doors.

All of them mattered.

Acts 9 therefore speaks to every believer.

You may be:

A Saul who needs transformation.

An Ananias who needs courage.

A Barnabas who needs to encourage someone.

A Tabitha who needs to keep serving quietly.

A Peter who needs to keep going wherever God opens the next door.

Whatever the assignment:

Be faithful.

Jesus still transforms.

Jesus still calls.

Jesus still restores.

Jesus still uses ordinary people.

And Jesus still receives the glory.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the testimony of Saul's conversion.

Thank You that no sinner is beyond the reach of Your grace.

Thank You that Jesus can stop a person moving in the wrong direction and completely transform his life.

Search us.

Show us where we may be resisting You.

Give us hearts that ask:

“Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Thank You for Ananias.

Give us his courage.

Help us obey You even when Your assignment makes us afraid.

Give us grace to see people not only as they were but as they may become through Jesus Christ.

Thank You for Barnabas.

Make us encouragers.

Help us stand beside people who are trying to follow Christ but are struggling to be trusted or accepted.

Thank You for Saul.

Remind us that past sin does not have to become future identity when Christ transforms a life.

Thank You for Peter.

Keep us faithful in ministry.

Keep us prayerful.

Keep us dependent upon You.

Thank You for Aeneas and the reminder that Jesus Christ is powerful.

Thank You for Tabitha and the reminder that quiet service matters.

Make us people who do good.

Help us care for the poor.

Help us strengthen the weak.

Help us leave behind evidence of Christlike love.

Strengthen Your church.

Teach us to walk in the fear of the Lord.

Encourage us through the Holy Spirit.

And continue adding people who believe in Jesus.

May our lives proclaim the same truth Saul began preaching:

Jesus is the Son of God.

And:

Jesus is the Messiah.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“But the Lord said, ‘Go, for he is My chosen instrument to carry My name to the Gentiles, their kings, and the people of Israel.’ — Acts 9:15

Central Truth

The risen Jesus Christ can transform His fiercest enemy into His chosen servant, use ordinary believers to advance His purposes, strengthen His church through the Holy Spirit, and demonstrate His authority through changed lives and powerful works.

Acts 9 in One Sentence

Jesus confronts Saul on the Damascus road and transforms the church's violent persecutor into a bold preacher of the gospel, while ordinary believers such as Ananias and Barnabas help him begin his new life and Peter's ministry continues demonstrating Christ's power through the healing of Aeneas and the restoration of Tabitha.