

Exegetical Notes, Acts 9:1-19a

“God Gets Saul’s Attention”

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Acts 9:1-19a

Verses 1-2

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ² 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, who will later become the Apostle Paul, is mentioned several times before this in the Book of Acts. He was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and approved of it (Acts 8:1). He began to work actively to destroy the Church after Stephen’s stoning (Acts 8:3). Saul was actively working to destroy the church even going to the High Priest to get permission to arrest Christians in Damascus and return them to Jerusalem for trial.
- Early on, before Christians were called Christian, the Church was called The Way.
- Damascus was a major trade center in the ancient world. Caravans went from there to Syria, Greece, Persia, and Arabia. It was essential to stop the growth of the church there because from there Christianity could spread to the entire world.

Verses 3-6

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

- As he approached Damascus with the intention of arresting Christians, Saul was enveloped in an extremely bright light. He fell to the ground and heard

a voice ask why he was persecuting it. Saul did not know who was asking the question, so he asked the voice to identify who was speaking. The voice identified itself as Jesus.

- Saul was persecuting the Church, not Jesus, but the association between the Church and Jesus is so close that to persecute one is to persecute the other.
- Saul was told by Jesus to go into the city of Damascus and await instructions.

Verses 7-9

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

- Those traveling with Saul apparently saw the light and heard the voice, but could not see anyone.
- When Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, he was blind.
- Those traveling with him led Saul into Damascus.
- He was blind for three days. During that time he fasted.

Verses 10-16

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

- There was a follower of Jesus in Damascus named Ananias. (The Greek form of the Hebrew name, Hananiah which means God is gracious.) This man was called by God to go the house of Judas on Straight Street in Damascus to find Saul, lay hands on him and restore his sight.

- At first, Ananias was reluctant to obey because he had heard of Saul's reputation and knew that Saul was in Damascus to arrest Christians.
- But God insisted, telling Ananias that he had chosen Saul to preach his name among the Gentiles and to suffer much for doing so.

Verses 17-19a

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

- Ananias went to the house where Saul was staying, placed his hands on Saul. He told Saul that he had been sent to him by Jesus to restore his sight and to give him the Holy Spirit.
- Something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He was baptized with water declaring his faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord and was filled with the Holy Spirit.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *God Gets Saul's Attention*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)