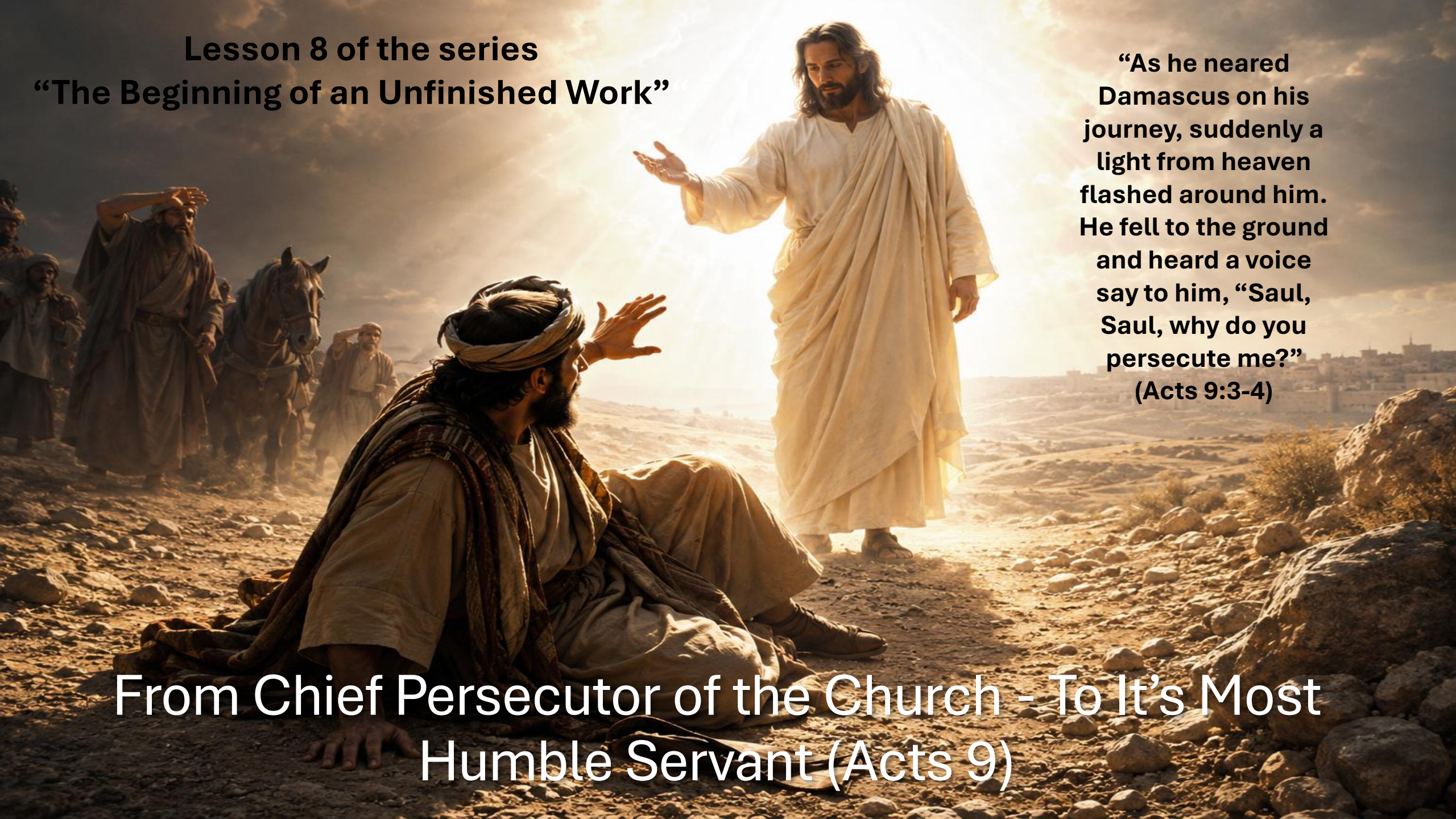


Lesson 8 of the series
“The Beginning of an Unfinished Work”

**“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,
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persecute me?”
(Acts 9:3-4)**

**From Chief Persecutor of the Church - To It's Most
Humble Servant (Acts 9)**



“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.” (Acts 9:1-2)

✓ The events recorded here are directly linked to what Luke records in Acts 6-8

“Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. **Opposition arose**, however, from members of the **Synagogue of the Freedmen** (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who **began to argue with Stephen**. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. **Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”** (Acts 6:8-11)

“So, they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. **They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.** They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.” (Acts 6:12-14)

Stephen responded - **“You stiff-necked people!** Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! **Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One.** And **now you have betrayed and murdered him,** you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” (Acts 7:51-53)

“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.” (Acts 9:1-2)

✓ The events recorded here are directly linked to what Luke records in Acts 6-8

“When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. **“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”** At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, **they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.”** (Acts 7:54-58)

“On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:1-3)

✓ Luke (not an eyewitness) reports what Paul later tells him - here is Paul’s account:

“Then Paul said: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. **I studied under Gamaliel** and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. **I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death,** arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. **I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.”** (Luke 22:2-5)

“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.” (Acts 9:1-2)

- ✓ The apparent plan of religious leaders was to crush this movement by intimidating, persecuting and even killing those who spoke out against their “Jewish Laws”.

“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. **On the authority of the chief priests, I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.** Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and **I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.**” (Acts 26:9-11)

- ✓ It is important to point out that believing in Jesus does not violates “Mosaic Law” and in fact Scripture teaches He was a fulfillment of it.
- ✓ Perhaps the religious leaders found themselves threatened by this uneducated band of fisherman and losing hold on their status and control over their own people.

“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.”** (Acts 9:1-2)

- ✓ The letters that Paul sought from the high priest would authorize him to identify any followers of the “Way” (Jesus), arrest them, put them in chains, and bring them from Damascus back to Jerusalem for trial.
- ✓ The phrase “belonged to the Way” or “followers of the Way” was the earliest description of those who were disciples of Jesus and was probably based on his statement to the apostles; ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”*** (John 14:6). Later in the region of Antioch, the followers of Christ will be called “Christians”. (Acts 11:26)
- ✓ While on his way to bring these Christ followers back to Jerusalem to be tried, he will travel toward Damascus believing there was a group of believers there. On his way to Damascus; he will meet Jesus and his life will forever be changed.

“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.” (Acts 9:3-6)

- ✓ Luke has already established why Saul was on his way to Damascus – he was going there with “letters from the High Priest” to find any within the Synagogue of Damascus who were followers of the Jesus.
- ✓ Saul’s plans were to arrest these Jesus followers and bring them back to Jerusalem to be punished.
- ✓ The Lord had other plans in mind for Saul and Jesus (whom Saul calls Lord) divinely intervenes and stops Paul from continuing this mission.



“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.” (Acts 9:3-6)

- ✓ Luke wasn't present to see **this encounter between Saul and Jesus**, but we are told later by Paul that his travelling companions did see the light but didn't see who it was, nor did they understand what was said:

“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.” (Acts 22:6-9)

“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ (Acts 26:12-14)

“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.” (Acts 9:3-6)

- ✓ This was a turning point for Saul, marking the start of his conversion from being the chief persecutor of those who followed Jesus to one who will humbly follow and submit to Jesus as well as teach many others to do the same.
- ✓ This proves that God’s grace can reach anyone, even a person who is actively working against Him. This is evidenced by Saul’s recognition of Jesus as Lord and his reverent submission to Him by falling to the ground in awe of Him.
- ✓ This moment stopped Saul from fighting against God, and he became known as Paul, one of the most prominent advocates of the Christian Faith. (I Corinthians 15:1-11)

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (I Corinthians 15:1-11)

“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.” (Acts 9:3-6)

✓ **Who was Saul anyway? What do we know about him?**

- He was born a Jew (Tribe of Benjamin) – Philippians 3:5-6
- He was born in Tarsus (located in modern day Turkey) – Acts 21:39
- He was a Roman Citizen due to his birthplace in Tarsus – Acts 22:25-28
- He was also trained by Gamaliel (a leading Jewish Pharisee) and became a strict and devoted Pharisee himself – Acts 22:3, Acts 23:6
- He was a tentmaker by trade – Acts 18:1-3
- It is believed that he was also trained in the Greek system of education

“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.” (Acts 9:3-6)

- ✓ **Take note that Luke** (although not an eyewitness to the events recorded here) **specifically states that Saul acknowledged Jesus as Lord**. This is how Paul describes it to him and his conversion is recorded in even greater detail in this passage:

“On one of these journeys, **I was going to Damascus** with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as **I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions**. We all fell to the ground, and **I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ‘Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.** I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. **I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.**’ (Acts 26:12-18)

“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.” (Acts 9:3-6)

- ✓ Prior to this Saul/Paul was persecuting and killing Christians and now he discovers that Jesus is the true Messiah and that he was fighting against God.
- ✓ When Jesus says; “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting”, it must have caused Paul to be overwhelmed with grief.

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. **The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.** 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 immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.** Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (I Timothy 1:12-17)

“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.”** (Acts 9:3-6)

- ✓ Despite all the evil things that Paul had done; had he rejected the call by Christ it would have been the greatest crime of all. (I Corinthians 16:22)
- ✓ Paul believed that Jesus was the Christ – the Son of God. He expressed that outwardly by accepting the call and then obeying the command. Faith is always followed by obedience because it involves trust in the one whom we are obeying
- ✓ Saul’s obedience was very similar to the way that Abraham submitted to God when He told him to go to the Land of Promise.

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6)

“The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 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. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything.” (Acts 9:7-9)

- ✓ Clearly this visit by Jesus was specifically meant for Saul as was the call that Jesus placed on his life to follow Him. Very similar to the call that Jesus made to each of his disciples (later known as the 12 Apostles)

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)

- ✓ Saul (though temporarily blinded) got up in obedience and went into the city of Damascus to wait for further instructions. Jesus had pre-arranged this meeting with a man named Annanias who would lay hands on Saul and restore his sight.

“In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. **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. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.” (Acts 9:10-12)**

- ✓ Who is this Annanias?
 - He is not the same Ananias mentioned in Acts 5 for that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and he died
 - He is not the same Ananias who was the High Priest mentioned in Acts 23
 - The Ananias mentioned here in Acts 9 is probably best understood to be a devout follower of Jesus who lives in Damascus and receives instructions from the Lord to visit, heal, and baptize Saul of Tarsus.
- ✓ Paul would have also received instructions that Ananias would visit him

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.” And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” 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. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Acts 9:13-16)

- ✓ Ananias knew of Saul’s evil workings more than likely from the spread of various reports from other believers throughout the region.
- ✓ The Lord had specific plans for Saul (who would later be known as Paul), and Ananias was to be the instrument through whom the Lord would heal him and set Saul on a path of reconciliation with those he had harmed and become the chief evangelist to the Gentiles spread throughout the Greek speaking world.
- ✓ The life Paul will live will span another 33-34 years and he will be responsible for writing at least 13 New Testament books/letters. Paul will experience many successes and challenges, ultimately meeting a martyr’s death by being beheaded.

“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.**”**

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. **He got up and was baptized**, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. **Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus**” (Acts 9:17-19)

- ✓ Notice how Ananias immediately obeyed:
 - He knew Saul would be there when he arrived at the house
 - He went and laid hands on Saul both for the purpose of being the instrument of healing for Saul as well as an affirmation of his testimony.
 - He embraced Saul as a brother (fellow believer) in the Lord
- ✓ Because of Saul’s faith and trust in Jesus – he was filled with the Holy Spirit. This resulted in his obedience in baptism and opened the door of fellowship with the other believers in Damascus. This became the pattern of the New Testament Church.

“At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.” All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.” (Acts 9:20-22)

- ✓ The Lord took a man who intended to bring harm to “the saints” and transformed his life:
 - He used the natural gifts that Saul already had and refined them
 - He eliminated his undesirable qualities and gave him new passions and new pursuits
- ✓ One of the key traits of a Christ follower is the evidence of a transformed life which results in our obedience through service to our savior.
- ✓ Saul immediately goes to the Jewish houses of prayer (synagogues) to tell everyone that Jesus is the Son of God. His words “astonished” the listeners for they knew him as a persecutor of Christ followers yet now he has chosen to embrace Christ as Lord

“At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” **Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.**” (Acts 9:20-22)

- ✓ The phrase “Saul grew more and more powerful is probably better understood to mean he became wiser and bolder in his preaching, for his words baffled those Jews living in Damascus.
- ✓ It’s hard to dispute or debate the claims of a man who formerly rejected the claims that Christ was the Messiah and now boldly declares that Jesus is the Son of God which was something the Jews of that time would have openly rebuked.
- ✓ Saul (a former Pharisee) knew the Old Testament Scriptures well and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he (like the other Apostles) was able to prove (by those very Scriptures) that Jesus was the promised Messiah the very Son of God!

“After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.” (Acts 9:23-25)

- ✓ It didn't take long for the evil one (Satan himself) to stir up those Jews whose hearts were not obedient to God's call through the preaching of Saul, and they set out to silence him just like they tried to silence Stephen.
- ✓ Saul knew of their plans for he knew their playbook. Although they kept watch with either a plan to arrest Saul or even kill him – it was not his time to die. The Lord had work of Saul to do and through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the believers in Damascus found a way to protect Saul and provide a way of escape.
- ✓ A similar story of God's protection can be found in the O.T. where a woman named Rahab is used by God to protect the two servants from harm in Jericho. (Joshua 2)

“When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ” (Acts 9:26-27)

- ✓ During the time that Paul preached while in Damascus and prior to his departure to Jerusalem as described here by Luke, could have been as much as 3 years.

“I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. **Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas (Peter) and stayed with him fifteen days.** I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother. (Galatians 1:11-19)

“When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. **He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him,** and how in Damascus **he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.** ” (Acts 9:26-27)

- ✓ During Saul’s visit to Jerusalem, he tried making contact with the local believers, but they were afraid of him and unsure if his conversion was legitimate
- ✓ It will be a man named Barnabas who will bring Saul before the Apostles and basically vouch for him that he is one of them
 - He affirms that Saul had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus thus believing his testimony and conversion.
 - He also affirms his motives and actions as being consistent with those of a follower of Christ by describing how Saul spoke boldly about Jesus Christ

“So, Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.” (Acts 9:28-30)

- ✓ Saul will preach, argue and debate the Hellenistic Jews to the point where he wears out his welcome
- ✓ Death threats against Saul continued but it was still not his time to die for the Lord had much more work for him to accomplish
- ✓ The decision was made to take Paul to Caesarea and then finally sent him away to his hometown of Tarsus where (for about 2-3 years) he will conduct missionary work and possibly establish churches in the region of Syria and Cilicia. (Galatians 1:21)
- ✓ It is believed that during those times in the Arabian Desert as well as his time in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Tarsus; that Paul was being molded and shaped by the Lord to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.” (Acts 9:31)

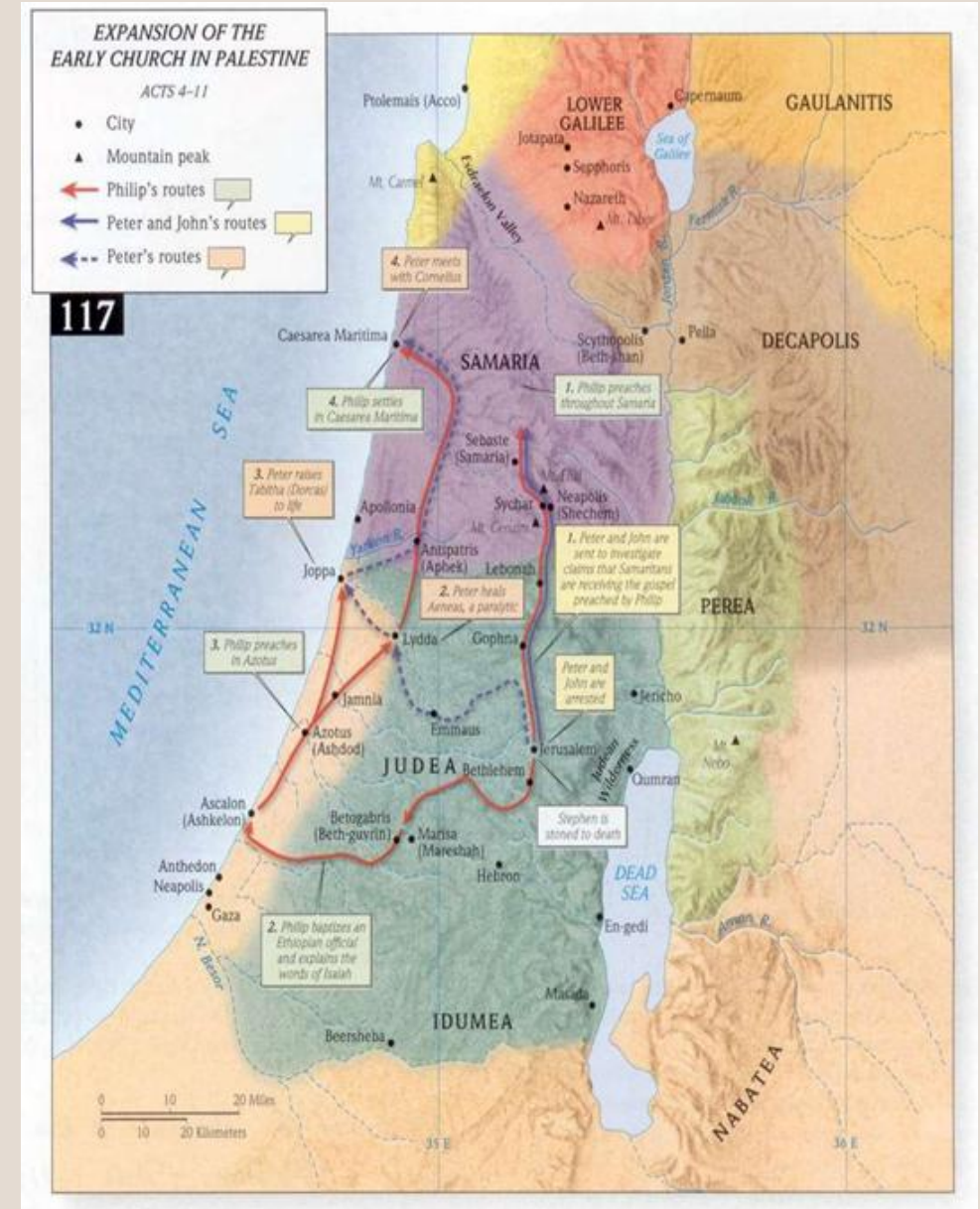
- ✓ With Paul gone – things quieted down for a season.
- ✓ The churches throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, and Samaria experienced a pause in persecution, allowing believers to settle and find safety in the region.
- ✓ Believers were built up ("edified") and strengthened in their daily walk.
- ✓ The presence and comfort of the Holy Spirit actively guided and encouraged the church community throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.
- ✓ Luke's attention will shift back to Peter who also had a very fruitful ministry
- ✓ Paul's name will resurface again in Acts 11 and then he will begin his missionary journeys starting in Acts 13

“As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord’s people who lived in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 9:32-35)

- ✓ The last time we heard about Peter was in Acts 8
 - Luke tells us that Peter and John were dispatched to Samaria to observe the conversion of Gentiles (to faith in Christ) in that region due to Phillip’s preaching
 - After affirming those believers in the faith and evidencing their conversion by the laying on of hands – Peter & John will return to Jerusalem and Phillip heads to Gaza
 - Sometime while Peter was in Jerusalem, he will meet up with Paul. (Acts 8:27-28, Galatians 1:18)
- ✓ Peter’s missionary ministry expanded throughout the region of Judea, and we now find him going to visit the saints in the city of Lydda

Information on the cities that Peter visited:

- ✓ **Lydda** is about 9 miles east (inland) of Joppa. Its modern name is Ludd or Lod and is home to the Ben Gurion International Airport. It was also called Lod in the O.T.
- ✓ **Sharon** is a fertile plains area between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea. It is about 30 miles long and anywhere from 8-15 miles wide. This is where we get the phrases “Rose of Sharon” and “Lily of the Valley”.
- ✓ **Joppa** is a coastal seaport town with quite a history and is located about halfway between Caesarea and Gaza. It is approx. 30 miles north-west of Jerusalem. This is the same town where Jonah sailed from in his attempt to flee from the Lord. It has also served as the seaport that received the cedars of Lebanon from King Hiram that Solomon used to build the temple. Its modern name is Jaffa (located in the municipality of Tel Aviv) and it continues to be a major seaport for the State of Israel.



“As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord’s people who lived in Lydda. **There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years.** “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. **All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.”** (Acts 9:32-35)

- ✓ While in the town of Lydda; Peter finds a paralytic man who had been confined to his bed for 8 years
- ✓ The only thing we know about Aeneas is what is recorded here in this passage. Peter seemed to have personal compassion on him, and he would have learned such compassion from the Lord Jesus Himself.
- ✓ Peter acknowledges where the source of healing comes from and he (by the authority and power granted to him by Jesus) commands Aeneas to be healed.
- ✓ The healing was evidenced by Aeneas (a former paralytic) getting up and walking and was witnessed by those living in Lydda and Sharon causing them to turn to the Lord

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so, **when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!” Peter went with them, and **when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room**. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.” (Acts 9:36-39)**

- ✓ Peter has now moved on to the city of Joppa where he will be used by God to raise a woman from the dead. The name of this woman in ***Aramaic*** is Tabitha and in ***Greek*** her name is Dorcas; both names mean gazelle.
- ✓ Luke describes her as “a woman abounding in deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did”. She made clothing and blankets for others – especially the poor and needy. At some point she became sick and subsequently died of that illness.
- ✓ The disciples in Lydda (knowing that Peter was in town) sent for him. They must have believed that God would perform a miracle through Peter.

“Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.” (Acts 9:40-43)

- ✓ Peter did not presume to know the will of God, so he knelt and prayed and sought the Lord. Peter had never raised anyone from the dead before, but he knew such a thing was possible for he witnessed the raising of Jairus’ daughter and Lazarus from the dead by Jesus and he also saw Jesus Christ rise from the dead.
- ✓ Peter knew that it was not his own power but the Lord who was the instrument by which such a miracle could take place
- ✓ These were unique times and the Apostles were gifted with unique abilities (many that may not have been recorded for in our New Testament Scriptures), which is probably one reason that the church grew so rapidly.

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- ✓ The miracle authenticates Peter's role and authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ
- ✓ Tabitha's life of charity and service to the vulnerable (especially local widows) is honored and restored because of God's love and grace toward her.
- ✓ The miracle was witnessed by not just the believers, but word spread all over the town of Joppa and many people “believed in the Lord”.
- ✓ Luke tells us that Peter stayed in Joppa with Simon (although a Jew but a tanner of animal skins which was looked down upon by “religious Jews”) many days. This begins the transition in the breaking down of “formal” religious barriers as the Gospel will now spread to the Gentiles as we will see more clearly in Acts 10.