

**Lesson 9**  
**Acts 9:1–31**  
**GOD ARRESTS SAUL**

**Memory Verse:** “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Acts 9:16 NIV)

The writer next focused our attention on a key figure in the spread of the Christian mission, and on significant events in the development of that mission to the Gentiles. Peter's evangelization of Cornelius (Chapter 10) will continue to advance this theme. Luke has given us three portraits of significant individuals in the evangelization of Gentiles: Stephen, Philip, and now, climactically, Saul. He stressed that Saul's conversion and calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles came supernaturally and directly from God, and Saul himself played a passive role in these events.

Saul (Paul) retold the story of his conversion and calling twice, in Acts 22 and 26, and a third time in Galatians 1. Saul's conversion was one of the most miraculous and significant instances of repentance that took place during the early expansion of the church. His calling to be God's main missionary to the Gentiles was equally dramatic.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the leading persecutor of the Christians, was perhaps the greatest event in church history after the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. The next great event would be the conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 10), and Saul (Paul) would become the apostle to the Gentiles. God was continuing to work out His plan to bring the gospel to the whole world.

“Paul was a great man,” said Charles Spurgeon, “and I have no doubt that on the way to Damascus he rode a very high horse. But a few seconds sufficed to alter the man. How soon God brought him down!”

When you look at Saul on the road (Acts 9:1–2), you see a very zealous man who actually thought he was doing God a service by persecuting the church. Had you stopped him and asked for his reasons, he might have said something like this:

“Jesus of Nazareth is dead. Do you expect me to believe that a crucified nobody is the promised Messiah? According to our law, anybody who is hung on a tree is cursed [Deut. 21:23]. Would God take a cursed false prophet and make him the Messiah? No! His followers are preaching that Jesus is both alive and doing miracles through them. But their power comes from Satan, not God. This is a dangerous sect, and I intend to eliminate it before it destroys our historic Jewish faith!”

In spite of his great learning (Acts 26:24), Saul was spiritually blind (2 Cor. 3:12–18) and did not understand what the Old Testament really taught about the Messiah. Like many others of his countrymen, he stumbled over the cross (1 Cor. 1:23) because he depended on his own righteousness and not on the righteousness of God (Rom. 9:30–10:13; Phil. 3:1–10). Many self-righteous religious people today do not see their need for a Saviour and resent it if you tell them they are sinners.

Let's study Saul's experience with Jesus Christ that transformed his life.

**Scriptural Reading:** Acts 9:1-31

**Things to learn:** 1) Conversion and Calling    2) Opposition    3) Rejection and Acceptance

**Questions**

**Q1.** Discuss the conversion and calling of Paul as recorded in Acts 9: 1-19a and practical lessons all believers can learn from this.

**Q2.** What happened to Saul (now known as Paul) after his turning to the Christian faith (Acts 9:19b-25)?

**Q3.** Discuss the experiences of Paul and the Jerusalem believers found in Acts 9:26-31 and Acts 22:17-21.