



January 27, 2016
Acts 9:1-43
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Exegetical Study

1. Pastor Gary said, “Saul [was] emotionally and spiritually engaged in the intentional destruction of the church. He [was] vehemently opposed to Christianity. He [saw] it as a heretical sect of Judaism, and in his zeal he [did] everything he [could] to personally persecute Christians and to have them murdered. Some believe that he was, sort of, the prosecuting attorney for the Sanhedrin. [Paul was] dispatched with a letter [that gave] him authority to go to Damascus, Syria... [He was intent on taking Christians back to Jerusalem with the hope of having them killed.]”
2. **Acts 9:1-19a** – *“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats¹ 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. 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.’ 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. 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.’ ‘Lord,’ Ananias answered, ‘I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he*

¹ **Acts 9:1** – *“... breathing out threatenings and slaughter...”* – King James Version (KJV)

has done to your saints 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 carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’ 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.”

- a. The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus was about 150 miles.
- b. There was a community of Jews living in Damascus, who were among those who had left Israel because of persecution.
- c. Saul/Paul’s Background
 - i. **Acts 22:3-5** – *“Then Paul said: ‘I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and 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 also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.”*
 - ii. Cilicia was a province of the Roman Empire in southern Turkey along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
 - iii. Gamaliel was one of the most well-respected rabbis.
 - iv. The Way was a title for what we know as Christianity.
 - v. Paul was a highly educated man who had a lot of zeal for God; however, he had no understanding about what the Scriptures had to say about Jesus, the Messiah.
 - vi. **Galatians 1:13** – *“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.”*
- d. Conversion
 - i. There is no evidence for the notion that Paul fell off of a horse; the Bible simply tells us that he fell to the ground.
 - ii. Jesus, the risen, resurrected Christ, appeared to Paul!
 1. Jesus did not reveal himself to Paul’s traveling companions; they only heard a sound.
 - iii. The King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) have additional text between verse five and verse six. (Emphasis added)
 1. **Acts 9:5-6** – *“And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Then the Lord*

said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?' Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' "

2. The reason this text is not in the 1984 New International Version (NIV) is because of the debate between accepting the old manuscripts or accepting the greatest quantity of manuscripts.
 3. The 1984 New International Version (NIV) doesn't include this text because not all of the ancient manuscripts include this text, so they did not include it in this translation.
 4. A goad was a long stick that had a sharp metal tip, which was used to prod oxen.
 5. Jesus told Paul that his hardheartedness and his hard headedness was his kicking against the goad, and that was a source of pain and difficulty in Paul's life.
- iv. Ananias is the Greek transliteration of the name Hananiah, which means God is gracious.
 - v. Pastor Gary said, "I believe in all of the gifts of the Spirit. I don't believe they faded out in the first century. I [believe] that God [still] does miraculous, wonderful things, and he gives freely the gifts of the Spirit according [to his will]. But I will say this, for those who are on the hyper charismatic side, don't ever just accept somebody coming up to you saying, '[The] Lord told me [such and so] on your behalf.' I want you to know from this story, and this happens again in [Acts 10](#), that God works at both ends, [so to speak]. ... [The Lord gave Ananias specific instructions to go and minister to Paul. And the Lord gave a vision to Paul, so that he would know that Ananias was on the way to meet with him.] ... [In Acts 10 we see the same thing happen when Peter has a vision from the Lord, and Cornelius had a vision from the Lord, which confirmed that this was of the Lord!] ... Do not [believe] when someone says to you, 'I have something for you from the Lord,' unless [the Lord] has already told you. ... The Lord can certainly bring someone along to confirm what he has already shown you, but a new revelation from somebody else is not reliable. You also can receive from the Lord directly and then have confirmation [about what the Lord is going to do]."
 - vi. This was a radical thing for Ananias to hear because it would have been like someone today being called to go and minister to a leader of a terrorist organization!
 - vii. The Lord is still in the business of radically saving even the most violent and evil people, who can be saved by calling on the name of Jesus

Christ.

- viii. Remarkably, Ananias did as the Lord had told him to do, and he greeted Paul as a brother in the Lord!
- ix. At some point during the three days Paul became a Believer, received the Holy Spirit, and was water baptized.
 - 1. When Ananias met with Paul and placed his hands on him, he received the fullness or the baptism of the Holy Spirit in addition to having his sight restored. (See [Acts 9:17](#))

3. [Acts 9:19b-31](#) - *“Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. 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 Christ. After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired 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. 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. 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 Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.”*

- a. It’s remarkable that the same man who came to Damascus to kill Christians was now openly and boldly declaring Jesus as Messiah!
- b. Saul grew more powerful in the Spirit.
- c. [Acts 9:23](#) - *“After many days had gone by...”*
 - i. The time period being referenced was about three years!
 - ii. [Galatians 1:13-18](#) - *“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 Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from birth, and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”*

- iii. Pastor Gary said, “After Paul had [a] dramatic conversion, he became a very controversial figure. The Christians loved him but were skeptical of him, [and] didn’t know if they could trust him. ... The Jews, on the other hand, who don’t follow [or] believe in Jesus [saw Paul] as a traitor...”
 - 1. [2 Corinthians 11:32–33](#) – *“In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.”*
 - 2. The Grecian Jews in Jerusalem also plotted to murder Paul.
- iv. Barnabas
 - 1. The first mention of Barnabas in the Bible is [Acts 4:36](#).
 - 2. Barnabas would become one of Paul’s closest friends and partners in ministry.
- v. Paul made his way back to Tarsus, his hometown, and he stayed there about ten years (36 A.D. to 47 A.D.).
 - 1. Pastor Gary said, “Sometimes we are so eager to [fulfill] the Lord’s will or get on with God’s plan for our lives that we can get impatient [because we live in a culture where everything is expected to be instantaneous], and we think that God should be like that. Notice from Paul’s life that he [spent] three years in Arabia [and then ten years in Tarsus]. It was thirteen years before he [launched] his ministry for the Lord. God’s timing is always perfect, but sometimes [his timing] is a lot slower than [our timing]. We’ve got to be patient people. God is not slow in keeping his promises. ... It’s my experience, and I think that many of you would vouch for this, that we don’t so much lag behind, but we get ahead of what God wants to do. [Moses got ahead of God’s will and plan by forty years!] ... If you are eager to do what God wants you to do, or you are eager for the fulfillment of God’s will for your life... please take note; it may not come as quickly as [we] might want, but God is still faithful and his timing is always perfect. ... How many of you can look back on your life and perhaps, at the time, you were frustrated because things weren’t coming along more quickly? [Looking back you are glad because] you can see that God’s timing was perfect, [and] his delay was an opportunity for his display!”
- vi. The Church to grow numerically
 - 1. Pastor Gary said, “[Numbers] can be a good indicator of the health of a church but not always. The more important element of the health of a church is that it has a genuine fear of the Lord.”

4. [Acts 9:32-43](#) - *“As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. ‘Aeneas,’ Peter said to him, ‘Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat.’ Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who 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. 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 the believers and 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.”*

- a. Lydda is a few miles southeast of Tel Aviv, and today it’s called Lod.
- b. Aeneas experienced a miraculous healing.
 - i. Peter obviously had been given the gift of healing by the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “I don’t think the Holy Spirit does stuff through us for our benefit, but he does stuff through us for his glory. [This didn’t happen] just for the benefit of Aeneas, and it [didn’t happen] just so Peter could walk around saying, ‘Hey, I have the gift of healing!’ It [happened so all of those who lived in Lydda and Sharon and Joppa] saw the miracle [and would] turn to the Lord.”
- c. Tabitha
 - i. Tabitha is an Aramaic name meaning gazelle.
 - ii. Dorcas is the Greek name for Tabitha.
 - iii. The miracle of Dorcas being raised from the dead is just like the miracle Jairus’ daughter experienced in [Mark 5:21-25, 35-43](#).

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the 1984 New International Version (NIV)