

From Saul to Paul

When Stephen recounted Israel's history of their stubborn refusal of God's will and His Son Jesus Christ they killed him. This is the 1st record of Saul, the champion of Israel's rebellion against Jesus:

Acts 7:57,58 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at **a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.**

His next appearance is traveling to Damascus with arrest warrants for all he could track down who were believers in Jesus:

Acts 9:1,2 And **Saul**, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of **this way**, (that is, any who believed in Jesus) whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

The Lord Jesus blinded him with a light brighter than the sun:

Acts 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

It was Jesus, the very One, whose followers Saul had been destroying:

Acts 26:14,15 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, **I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.**

Persecution was physical harm. There is no account that Saul ever knew Jesus, while in His earthly ministry so it was Saul's treatment of those **disciples of Jesus** that Christ was referring to.

For example, that principle is seen in Jesus' description of the judgment:

Matt 25:35-40 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat:

I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink:

I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me:

I was sick, and ye visited me:

I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**

Jesus commissioned Saul to preach to the Gentile nations so they could have the benefits of God's grace that the remnant of Israel enjoyed:

Acts 26:16-18 But rise, and stand upon thy feet:

for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose,

• to make thee **a minister** • and **a witness**

both of these things which thou hast seen,

and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people,

and from **the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,**

18 To open **their** eyes, and to turn **them** from darkness to light,

and from the power of Satan unto God,

that **they** may receive • forgiveness of sins,

• and inheritance

among them which are **sanctified** by faith that is in me.

This commission was confirmed in the epistle to the saints at Rome:

Rom 15:15,16 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, **because of the grace that is given to me of God,**

16 That **I** should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being **sanctified** by the Holy Ghost.

The Lord directed Ananias, a religious Gentile, in a vision to help Saul:

Acts 22:12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Ananias was, quite naturally, very afraid of Saul:

Acts 9:13,14 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much **evil** he hath done to **thy saints at Jerusalem:**

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

The Lord reassured Ananias about Saul:

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way:
for **he is a chosen vessel** unto me,
to bear my name before the Gentiles,
and kings,
and the children of Israel:

Then the hunter would become the hunted:

Acts 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Saul received physical healing from his blindness

and he was water baptized

in obedience to the command Jesus had given to His disciples

just prior to His ascension to Heaven:

Acts 22:13-16 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Right after his baptism, Saul began preaching:

Acts 9:19-22 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway **he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.**

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, **proving that this is very Christ.**

The problem with the Jews was that most of them did not believe Jesus. However, some did believe on Him and were saved:

John 1:11,12 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

That was what Peter testified to:

John 6:69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

That was what Martha believed:

John 11:27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

That was what the Ethiopian eunuch trusted:

Ac 8:37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

That was why John wrote his gospel account:

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

.... and why John wrote his 1st epistle:

1 John 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

With that message, Saul proved Who Jesus was, and he faced persecution:

Acts 9:23-29 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

The scriptures then focus back on Peter and Saul doesn't have much going on until Acts chapter 13 where several changes take place.

Here is where Saul was officially commissioned by the church:

Acts 13:1-5 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain **prophets and teachers**; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

Next is the account of a Jew who tried to prevent a Gentile from

faith in Christ:

Acts 13:6-8 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:
7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Here is where **Saul's name was changed to Paul**, and he performed his 1st miracle which represents the effect on the whole nation of Israel the blinding of the Jews --- while the Gentiles believe:

Acts 13:9-12 Then **Saul, (who also is called Paul,)** filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Later in this chapter 13, Paul preached faith -- without the law:

Acts 13:38,39 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Paul's reputation spread:

Gal 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

Paul later recited his testimony and calling to King Agrippa:

Acts 26:19-22 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But shewed **first**

- unto them of Damascus,
- and at Jerusalem,
- and throughout all the coasts of Judaea,

and then to the Gentiles,
that **they** should repent and turn to God,
and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, **saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:**

Paul preached the death, burial, and resurrection from the scriptures

.... for Israel and for the Gentiles:

Acts 26:23 That Christ should suffer,
and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead,
and should shew light unto the people,
and to the Gentiles.

Likewise he wrote to the saints at Corinth the D-B-R (Death-Burial-

Resurrection) was **according to the scriptures:**

1 Cor 15:3,4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died** for our sins **according to the scriptures;**
4 And that he was **buried**, and that he **rose again** the third day **according to the scriptures:**

This is David Dowell, saying, "Think about it!"