

Acts 9:20-31

September 7, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

Saul, newly converted, began proclaiming the good news of the gospel immediately upon regaining his sight and strength. In our reading last week, the Lord called Saul His "chosen instrument" (v.15) to share the good news, and we begin to see the Holy Spirit work through Saul in our reading today.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What have been some of your recent takeaways in our study of Acts? What are you learning?

Last week we studied Saul's conversion. How have you changed since you began to follow Jesus?

Has there ever been a time when you felt like people wouldn't believe the story you wanted (or needed) to tell? What happened?



Last week, we read about Saul's life-changing encounter with the living God on the Damascus Road. Saul, the persecutor of the church, would become Paul the proclaimer of the good news. We'll read about the events that happened immediately following his conversion today.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 9:20-22.

What stands out to you in this passage? What do you notice?

What was significant about Saul's message in the synagogues?

What did it mean for Saul to grow stronger (v.22)?

Luke recorded that Saul "immediately" (v.20) began proclaiming the good news after spending time with the disciples in Damascus (v.19). Now that he knew the truth of the good news, he didn't hesitate to share it by living out the Great Commission. Paul regularly emphasized living for Christ in his letters, and he began to model that immediately following His conversion.

After encountering Jesus, Saul's message that Jesus is the Son of God was confusing to those who heard him and knew of Saul's past. Saul's reputation had preceded him, and the people were astounded by this dramatic change in message.

As he continued teaching, Saul grew stronger, not only physically (his blinding experience would have taken a physical toll), but also in the Word and his message. We get the sense from verse 22 that Saul's command of the Old Testament Scriptures was so great that he was able to use them to prove Jesus is the Messiah in a way the Jews in Damascus were unable to refute.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 9:23-25.

What was the response to the truth that Saul proclaimed?

Why do you think the Jews had this response instead of listening to what Saul, a fellow Jew who previously aligned with them, had to say?

Ironically, when Saul began preaching that Jesus was the Messiah, "the Jews conspired to kill him" (v.23). Saul, who had previously agreed with the stoning of Stephen, and had been on a passionate mission to silence the church, now found himself in the crosshairs of Jews he may have aligned with previously.



Saul, however, learned of the plot to kill him, and his disciples helped him escape the city by lowering him in a large basket through an opening in the wall (v.25).

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 9:26-31.

How was Barnabas used for God's purposes in these verses?

How are we called to live like Barnabas in this way?

What was the apparent result of Saul joining in the ministry effort of the early church?

When Saul made it to Jerusalem, the disciples were hesitant to receive him (this is the man who watched in approval as their friend Stephen was murdered), but Barnabas the encourager spoke up for him. We will continue to see Barnabas's uplifting nature in play in his ministry as God uses men and women like Barnabas to help heal wounds and broken relationships and smooth the way for His will to be done.

Barnabas explained that Jesus had met Saul on the Damascus Road and of Saul's bold ministry in Damascus. With Barnabas' endorsement, the disciples accepted Saul into the fold.

Luke recorded that Saul tried to reach the Hellenistic Jews. Some of these men may have taken part in Stephen's stoning with Saul. Saul was a Hellenistic Jew himself, and throughout his ministry, we will see him try to reach his own people for the gospel (even though many Jews rejected him, and some even tried to kill him). When the Jews once again tried to kill him, the disciples sent him to Tarsus to keep him safe.

Note the result of Saul and the others' bold ministry: the church grew. Following the stoning of Stephen, the persecution (some at the hands of Saul himself) scattered the believers, and the gospel. Saul, now facing persecution of his own, scattered and shared the gospel message so effectively that we continue learning from his example today.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does Saul's story give us hope for being used by God in our own lives? How can we "grow stronger" like Saul?

How has God used a "Barnabas" in your life to smooth broken relationships? How has He called you to live this way with others?



How can you share about Jesus with others through the story of Saul?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for choosing to use unlikely and imperfect people like Saul and us for His good. Ask Him to show you how He wants to use you for His glory and ask that He would continue to teach you as you study the book of Acts.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.

September 14, 2025 --- Acts 9:32-43

COMMENTARY

Acts 9:20-31

9:19–20 Saul stayed in Damascus for some time, likely becoming oriented to basic Christianity even as he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues. He gave priority to the synagogues throughout his ministry, starting there before being forced to take the message elsewhere.

9:21–22 Understandably, the initial response to Saul was skeptical amazement, but as he grew stronger he was able to confound unbelieving Jews, proving that Jesus is the Messiah. Apparently, he was able to explain the messianic connections between the OT and Jesus so clearly that the Jews in Damascus could not refute him.

9:23–25 Saul dutifully preached Jesus as Messiah for long enough to become the uppermost enemy of unbelieving Jews in Damascus. He had come to help their struggle against the growing Christian movement, but now he had become the chief cause of its growth. Thus they conspired to kill him. Unable to leave via the city gates, Saul escaped in a most undignified but effective manner: he was placed in a large basket and shoved through an opening in the wall.

9:26 Among believers in Jerusalem, Saul's reputation as a persecutor of the church was unchanged. Either news had not come from Damascus, or else the disciples in Jerusalem took a "wait and see" attitude. Perhaps they even suspected his conversion was just a ruse to infiltrate the fledgling Christian movement and destroy it from within.



9:27 Barnabas was convinced of the genuineness of Saul's conversion.

9:28–30 Saul ... conversed and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, some of whom may have been involved with him in Stephen's stoning (7:57–60). A Hellenistic Jew himself, Paul had been born in Tarsus and spoke Greek as his primary language. Seeing one of their own, a former persecutor of the church no less, argue on behalf of Christianity was more than they could bear. They tried to kill Saul, with the result that he was whisked away to his hometown.

9:31 This verse marks a significant point in the development of the early church. The church, having been forced by persecution to scatter outward from Jerusalem, was at peace in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. This set the church up for a second stage of growth, which would see the gospel boldly taken outside Israel

