

## Transformation from Persecutor to Preacher and Missionary

### Acts 9:20-31

Immediately following Paul's conversion and baptism, he began speaking of Christ publicly. Paul now knew that Jesus Christ was in fact the Messiah and that He is alive. Psalms 107:2 says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." When we are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, it is crucial that we declare our faith publicly. There is nothing more exciting and powerful than to hear the public profession of Jesus Christ. Paul went on to author many books of the New Testament; Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews. He made three major missionary journeys, establishing many new churches. For Paul, his life's purpose became his passion for his Lord. He explains this in short in Philippians 1:21 when he writes, "For me to live is Christ." The secret of Paul's life lies in that question that he never stopped asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

### Saul Preaches Christ

<sup>20</sup> Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. <sup>21</sup> Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" <sup>22</sup> But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. <sup>23</sup> Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. <sup>24</sup> But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. <sup>25</sup> Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. <sup>26</sup> And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup> But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. <sup>28</sup> So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. <sup>29</sup> And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. <sup>30</sup> When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. <sup>31</sup> Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

### Discussion Questions

1. Ananias and many others had to forgive Saul in addition to welcoming him. How do you find it within yourself to forgive when others have hurt you deeply?
2. What was the response of the disciples when Paul tried to meet with them?
3. Why do you think Barnabas was willing to take Paul to the disciples?
4. Barnabas was a nickname meaning "son of encouragement." Why is encouragement such a powerful force in relationships?
5. In Acts 9:23, Luke tells us that it was "many days" after Saul's conversion that he went into the synagogues of Damascus and began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God. What does that tell us about God's evangelism strategy?
6. What are some of the advantages a new believer has in sharing the gospel?
7. What are some of the advantages a long-time, mature believer has in sharing the gospel?
8. Are you fearful of those who might resist your sharing of the gospel? Have you asked God to give you courage and boldness to overcome those fears?
9. Saul is a great reminder that God can use our past as a great testimony to reach others. In what ways has God used your testimony to reach and touch others when sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ?