



Chapter 9: God's Chosen Instrument

The Persecutor Becomes the Proclaimer

A New Creation: The Sovereign Call of Saul (Acts 9:1–19)

- In Genesis, God speaks into the darkness to bring forth light (**Genesis 1:3**).
 - On the Damascus road, a light from heaven flashes around Saul — the “darkness” of his zeal for persecution meeting the True Light (**Acts 9:3**).
- Saul was “breathing threats and murder” against the disciples (**Acts 9:1**).
 - Just as God breathed life into Adam (**Genesis 2:7**), Jesus “breathes” a new spirit into Saul, transforming a breath of death into a breath of life.
- “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (**Acts 9:4**)
 - Jesus identifies Himself completely with His Church; to touch the Body is to touch the Head.
 - Election is sovereign — Saul is seized by grace before he can reach his destination.
- Saul is blind for three days (**Acts 9:9**).
 - A period of “formless and void” darkness before the new creation is fully visible; a symbolic death before his spiritual resurrection.
- The Lord calls Ananias in a vision (**Acts 9:10**).
 - Grace often requires us to move toward our “enemies.”
- “He is a chosen instrument of mine” (**Acts 9:15**).
 - Paul’s mission is divinely ordained to carry the name of Jesus to Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
 - The focus is not on the man, but on the **Instrument** and the **Artisan** (the Holy Spirit).
- Ananias calls him “Brother Saul” (**Acts 9:17**).
 - Immediate adoption into the family of God through the work of the Spirit.

Acts 22:6-16

⁶ “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, **about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me.** ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ⁸ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, **‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’** ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

¹² “And one **Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,** ¹³ came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. ¹⁴ And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, **to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth;** ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ **And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’**

Acts 26:12-18

¹² “In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, **I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language,** ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? **It is hard for you to kick against the goads.**’ ¹⁵ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

Galatians 1:1, 12, 15-24

¹ Paul, an apostle—**not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead**—

¹² **I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ**

¹⁵ But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,
¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, **I did not immediately consult with anyone; ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.**

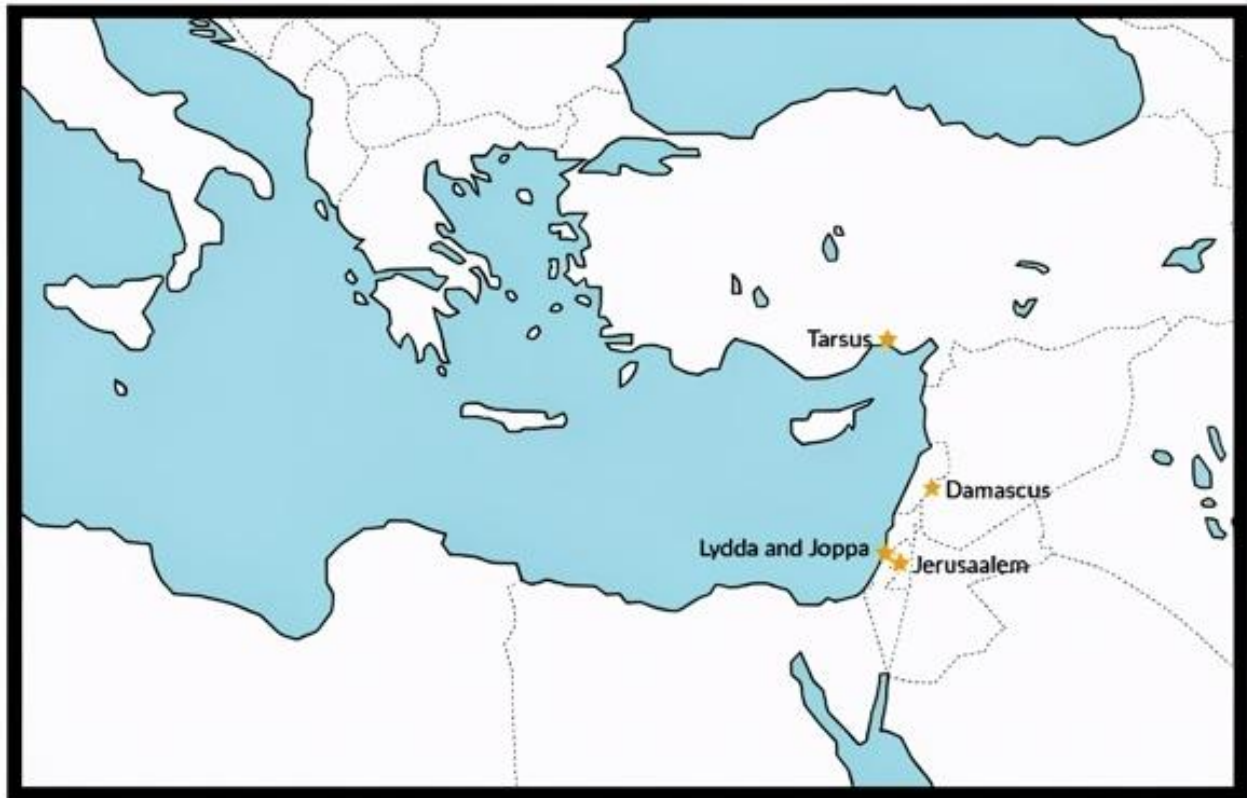
¹⁸ **Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas** and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But **I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.** ²⁰ (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) ²¹ Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And **they glorified God because of me.**

Philippians 3:3-7

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ **circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.**

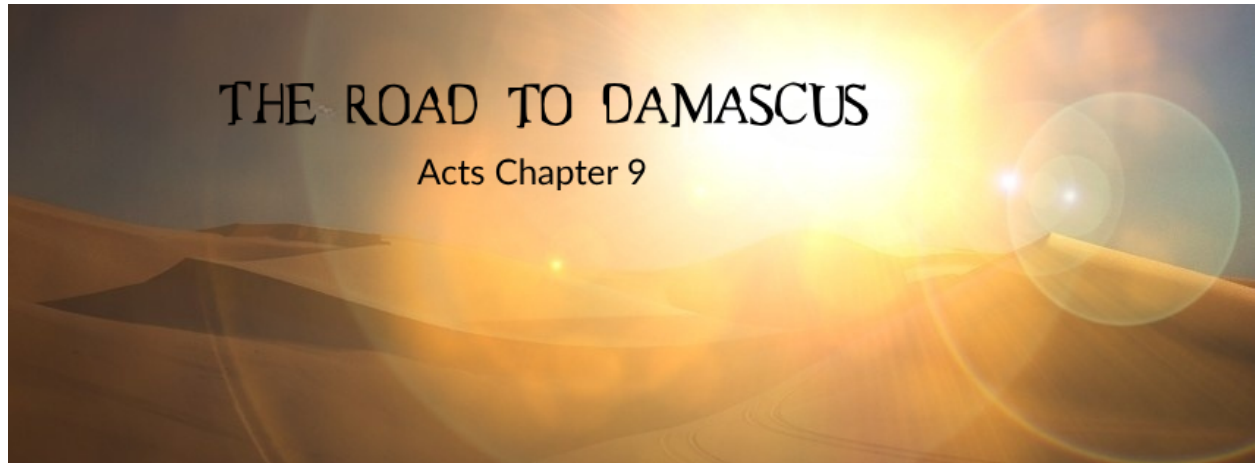
"It is an awful discovery when a great light from heaven shows a man that what he has regarded his solemn duty has been one long sin against the dearest purposes of God."

F. B. Meyer



The Immediate Fruit: Proclamation and Opposition (Acts 9:20–31)

- “And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God’” (**Acts 9:20**).
 - The same zeal once used for destruction is now harnessed for the Gospel.
- The reversal of status: The hunter becomes the hunted (**Acts 9:23–25**).
 - Saul escapes in a basket, an echo of Moses being saved for his mission (**Exodus 2:3**).
- Barnabas: The Son of Encouragement (**Acts 9:27**).
 - The Holy Spirit uses Barnabas to bridge the gap between the suspicious Jerusalem church and the transformed Saul.
- “So the church... had peace and was being built up” (**Acts 9:31**).
 - In the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the church multiplied—fulfilling the creation mandate in a spiritual sense.



Five takeaways

1. **God is sovereign in salvation (Saul's conversion).** Acts 9 shows Jesus interrupting Saul — the leading persecutor — and turning him into a follower. It's a reminder that the hardest hearts aren't "too far gone."
2. **Jesus personally identifies with His people.** "Why are you persecuting *me*?" (9:4). Persecution of believers is treated as persecution of Christ Himself — highlighting both His closeness to the church and the seriousness of harming it.
3. **God often uses ordinary, faithful disciples to shape big stories (Ananias).** Ananias isn't famous, but his obedience—going to Saul, praying for him, and speaking courage — becomes pivotal. Courage and faithfulness in small assignments can change everything.
4. **Suffering can be part of calling, not a contradiction of it.** Saul is chosen, and in the same breath he's told he will "suffer" for Jesus' name (9:16). The chapter links mission with hardship, not comfort.
5. **The gospel creates both transformation and opposition—and God sustains His church.** Saul immediately begins proclaiming Jesus, and just as quickly faces threats. Meanwhile, the church experiences strengthening and growth (9:31). Expect both resistance and real fruit.

"Mission sooner or later leads into passion. In biblical categories ... the servant must suffer ... it is this which makes mission effective. ... Every form of mission leads to some form of cross. The very shape of mission is cruciform. We can understand mission only in terms of the Cross ..."

John Stott, *The Radical Disciple*

One question: Are you one of God's chosen instruments?

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2 Timothy 2:20-21

²⁰ In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. ²¹ Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Next: Acts 9:32-10:48