

LESSON AIM: God can use anyone; even those we think can never change, to be powerful witnesses for Him!

KEY SCRIPTURES: Acts 9:1-22

REVIEW QUESTIONS: (*“Ok, who remembers from last week’s lesson...”*)

- 1) What was the name of the festival that brought everyone to Jerusalem?
- 2) What happened to the disciples as they were praying?
- 3) Can someone explain last week’s Bible verse in their own words?

I. INTRODUCTION

Imagine sitting in a very comfortable church, or even a house, having a worship service and Bible study with your friends and family. Suddenly some angry people kick down your door and run into your house with guns and weapons. They force everyone out and arrest everyone, even the kids, and put them in jail. Why? For being a Christian! This was happening in Jerusalem and other cities, and the main bad guy making sure all these Christians were put away in jail or even killed, was named Saul of Tarsus.

But even God can change the most hateful, violent and dangerous person and use him or her for God's Kingdom! God's love and message of salvation can change anyone!

II. PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

A. Saul was one of the Jewish religious rulers who had been persecuting the believers in Jerusalem (v. 1).

[To persecute someone is to treat him/her in a mean or cruel way because of what he/she believes. Saul did not believe Jesus was God or that He had risen from the dead. He punished Jesus' followers in the synagogues, forcing them to say things against God. He put men and women in chains and had them taken to prison. He even voted to have them killed. Saul's anger against believers was so strong that many of Jesus' followers went to other cities to escape his persecution (**Acts 22:4; 26:10-11**).]

B. Saul went to the high priest for letters that would grant him authority to arrest believers in Damascus and have them taken back to Jerusalem to be put in prison (v. 1-2).

[As a Pharisee, Saul knew well the teachings of the Old Testament. The Pharisees claimed to keep God's laws strictly; they even made up extra rules in an effort to please Him (**Acts 22:3-4**).]

Saul thought he was pleasing God by keeping many rules and trying to force others to keep them. You may be trying to please God by being good or keeping rules. Or you may realize how impossible that is. God says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (**Romans 3:10**). You cannot get rid of sin by trying to be good. Saul was a sinner separated from God; he could not please God by trying to keep rules—or by lashing out at those who disagreed with him.

C. As Saul traveled along the road to Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly shone around him, causing Saul to fall to the ground and be blinded by the light (v. 3).

D. Falling to the ground, Saul heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me [treating Me cruelly]?" (v. 4).

E. When Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?" the Lord replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (v. 5).

When Saul persecuted Jesus' followers, he was persecuting Jesus! Jesus really was—and is—alive! God wanted Saul to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the One God had promised to send to save us from sin. He wanted Saul to see that Jesus had truly risen from the dead!

[Goads? We don't use this term in our day and age, but it was a tool that farmers used when plowing their field. When an ox was being stubborn, they would use this sharp tool to make the ox move. Sometimes the ox would get angry and kick the goad, but that would only end up causing the ox more pain by kicking against it. God goaded and prodded the stubborn pride of Saul, who was like a stubborn ox! Day after day Saul had kicked against it, until finally he got the message. There would be no more running, no more hiding, the fight was over. As always, God won.]

F. Trembling and astonished, Saul believed in Jesus and said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (v. 6)

G. The Lord told him to go to Damascus (v. 6).

H. Still blinded by the light, Saul was led to the city (v. 8).

I. After 3 days, God sent Ananias, and Saul received his sight (v. 9-18).

Remember, the Christians in Damascus were hiding and afraid of Saul. But God gave a man named Ananias a vision. In this vision the Lord told Ananias to go to a house he had never visited, owned by a man named Judas he had never met. In that house, the Lord said he would find a man, blind and praying. Not just any man, but he would encounter the infamous (famous for killing Christians or locking them away in jail) Saul of Tarsus! Ananias probably was scared to death about what God told him to do! What would you do? Would you obey God and go pray for someone you knew was trying to kill you, your family and your Christian friends?

Ananias trusted God and obeyed. He found Saul and told this new believer about the special plan God had for his life. Because of God's love for Saul, God had shown him that Jesus really is alive. Then He sent Ananias to encourage him and give him exciting news. God had an exciting plan for Paul's life, and He had an exciting plan for your life too!

III. CLIMAX

Saul, now a believer, stopped arresting and killing Christians and instead began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God! (v. 20)

IV. ENDING

A. Conclusion

Knowing that Saul had come to Damascus to persecute the believers, all who heard him preach about Jesus were amazed, they couldn't believe such a miracle had happened! (9:21-22).

Is there anyone in your life who you think is an impossible case for God? God can change anyone! This week, pray for that person that you know that needs God. God might even use you to tell them about Him!

MEMORY VERSE:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10