

Saul the Persecutor Acts 9:1-20

Saul was one angry man. He could see this new group that claimed to follow Jesus growing larger by the day and no one was stopping them. All of the leaders of the Jews, Pharisees & Sadducees, were doing little or nothing to stop them. Since no one else would do the job, he would. Soon he, with a group of soldiers, was going door to door in Jerusalem looking for Christians. When he found a Christian, he would demand that they right then deny that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. If they did not do so, they were beaten and sometimes put in jail. Door to door they went: imagine if someone in your neighborhood had the authority to do this and was arresting Christians, what would you do? Soon Christians were packing up their goods and leaving town, and when Saul and the soldiers knocked on these doors, they found no one at home. After awhile Saul began to ask the neighbors where these people had gone, and the answer came back: Damascus. Saul had no authority to arrest folks in Damascus, so he had to ask his friend, the high priest, for permission. It wasn't long till he had permission letters to the synagogues in Damascus that if he found any Christians there, he could arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem.

The Scriptures say that, "Saul, yet breathing out slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" began his trip to Damascus. After some time the city of Damascus was in their sights. It was noon, but Saul was not hungry for food. He was determined to get about his business of persecuting Christians. But this was not to be, for the Lord stepped into the middle of his plans by striking him down with a light. As he lay on the ground, a voice came from the light saying "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?" Saul looked up and said, "Who art thou Lord?" Imagine his surprise when the voice said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." All of a sudden Saul realized that he had been wrong in all that he was doing against the Christians; what should he say to this Jesus? "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," was his reply. I believe that Saul was saved at this moment. Why do I say that? He called Jesus, Lord. The Bible says, "No man can call Jesus, Lord except by the Holy Ghost." At that moment, he believed in his heart that he had sinned, that Jesus had paid for his sins and that Jesus had risen from the dead and gone to Heaven. Don't you have to pray the right words to get saved: Words such as: I repent of my sin, or Jesus come into my heart? The answer is, no. God sees your heart, and what your heart is saying to God is what counts. Did you notice that Saul didn't cry or shout? Don't you have to do those things to be saved? Salvation takes place in the heart: some shout and cry, and some don't do either. Then how will I know that I really got saved? Take God at His Word: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you put your trust in Jesus to save you from your sins, He promised to save you: believe Him.

The Lord told Saul to arise and to go into the city, and it would be shown him what to do. When Saul arose, he was blind and had to be led by the hand into Damascus. They took him to the house of Judas (not Judas Iscariot) on Straight St. and Saul began to pray and wait. The Lord then spoke to a Christian by the name of Ananias. Perhaps Ananias had just awakened and told the Lord how much he loved him and that he would go anywhere that the Lord would have him to go. And the Lord answered him that he was to go and lay hands on a man in Judases' house on Straight

St; the man was waiting for him to come, so he should go right now. I wonder if Ananias then asked the Lord, who was this man? The answer that God gave was a great shock to him: it is Saul of Tarsus. Ananias protested that Saul was a killer, and that he might be setting a trap. But the Lord said, "Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto me." Ananias obeyed and went immediately, but I'm sure that he was scared as to what might happen when he got that close to this killer. Did he approach Saul slowly, carefully? Did he have a hesitation in his voice as he called him brother Saul? And did Saul completely unnerve him when he gave a shout of praise to the Lord at receiving his sight back and being filled with the Holy Spirit? Whatever the details, one thing is very clear, Saul began immediately to preach the Gospel in Damascus. What a complete change there was in his life and his behavior. How many Christians do you know who preached the Gospel starting the day they got saved? There are a few, but very few. Most of us waited weeks or months and some of us years before we even passed out a Gospel Tract. Why do some grow in the Lord so much more quickly than others? Is their salvation experience better than others, or is there another answer? I believe that Saul was a man of character who, when he made up his mind about something, would immediately act accordingly. Even as a lost person Saul would act according to his beliefs, and thus he sought to put Christians to death. When he accepted Christ, he immediately acted upon his new beliefs because he had the character to follow through on whatever he believed. Most Christians have little or no character before coming to Christ. They are followers of others and don't do that very well. When they come to Christ, they still don't have the character to begin doing anything for God on their own. They still will be followers and their growth in Christ and service for Him will come very slowly. Sadly some Christians never develop the character they need to stand alone for Christ and serve Him whether others do or not. How can one develop that good character? Begin by getting your yes's and no's correct. When someone asks if you would like to smoke a cigarette, you immediately say, no; and that no stands even when they call you a chicken. When someone asks you to go out witnessing to lost people, you immediately answer, yes and then carry through without excuse. When someone asks you to go to good Bible believing church, you make no excuse. Then be ready to go the next Sunday. Your character will grow stronger each time you follow through on your yes's and no's. Imagine what God can do through you when you become a person of character.

Perhaps you are not yet a Christian, you, like Saul, can be saved in a moment. You don't need to be in a church, or say just the right words, or cry aloud to God: all you must do is put your trust in Jesus Christ to cleanse you from all your sins and come live in your heart. If you understand that you are a sinner who is lost and headed for hell, if you believe that Christ died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the dead in order to save you, then you can be saved now. Ask Him to come into your heart to save you soul and he will. May God bless you as you begin to grow in our Lord Jesus Christ. Contact us at bmason6@bellsouth.net or call us at 864-271-3060.

William H Mason
120 Cureton St
Greenville, SC 29605