

# The Personal Testimony Of Saul Of Tarsus

*Assembled from a variety of New Testament passages by Thomas J. Short<sup>1</sup>*

“My name is Saul, also known as Paul.<sup>2</sup> I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia,<sup>3</sup> a natural-born Roman citizen of no insignificant city.<sup>4</sup> [I was] circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;...as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.<sup>5</sup>

“So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation [at Tarsus and then] at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.<sup>6</sup>

“I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.<sup>7</sup> [Therefore, I was] brought up [into] this city [of Jerusalem], educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God,<sup>8</sup> [even as] a persecutor of the church.<sup>9</sup>

“[In fact,] when they [drove Stephen] out of the city [of Jerusalem, and] began stoning him; the witnesses [against him] laid aside their robes at [my] feet<sup>10</sup> and I was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Using the 1995 updated version of the New American Standard Bible, with some pronoun & grammatical adjustments made to facilitate a first-person presentation.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:9

<sup>3</sup> Acts 22:3

<sup>4</sup> Acts 22:28 & 21:39

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 3:5-6

<sup>6</sup> Acts 26:4-5

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 1:14

<sup>8</sup> Acts 22:3

<sup>9</sup> Philippians 3:6

<sup>10</sup> Acts 7:58

<sup>11</sup> Acts 8:1

“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>12</sup> [I] began ravaging the church. I persecuted this Way to the death, entering house after house, binding and dragging off both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify.<sup>13</sup> And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.<sup>14</sup>

“Still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, [I] went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if [I] found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, [I] might bring them bound to Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> [Thus, I] received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.<sup>16</sup>

“While so engaged...with the authority and commission of the chief priests,<sup>17</sup> as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime,<sup>18</sup> God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me.<sup>19</sup>

“A very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven,<sup>20</sup> brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

“And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Acts 26:9

<sup>13</sup> Acts 22:4 & 8:3

<sup>14</sup> Acts 26:11

<sup>15</sup> Acts 9:1-2

<sup>16</sup> Acts 22:5

<sup>17</sup> Acts 26:12

<sup>18</sup> Acts 22:6

<sup>19</sup> Galatians 1:15-16

<sup>20</sup> Acts 22:6

<sup>21</sup> Acts 26:13-14

The men who traveled with [me were] speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.<sup>22</sup>

“And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’

“And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’

“And [as I said] those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

“And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’<sup>23</sup>

And the Lord said...“Get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”<sup>24</sup>

“And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’<sup>25</sup>

“[So I] got up from the ground, and though [my] eyes were open, [I] could see nothing because of the brightness of that light. [So,] I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.”<sup>26</sup>

“And [I] was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Acts 9:7

<sup>23</sup> Acts 22:8-10

<sup>24</sup> Acts 26:15-18

<sup>25</sup> Acts 22:10

<sup>26</sup> Acts 22:11 & 9:8

<sup>27</sup> Acts 9:9

"Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias,<sup>28</sup> a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there.<sup>29</sup> And the Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.'

"And he said, 'Here I am, Lord.'

"And the Lord said to him, "'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.'

"But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.'

"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.'<sup>30</sup>

"So Ananias departed and entered the house, and standing near me and laying his hands on [me] said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Receive your sight!'

And immediately there fell from [my] eyes something like scales, and [I] regained [my] sight, and I looked up at him.<sup>31</sup>

"And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.

" 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be [immersed], and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Acts 9:10

<sup>29</sup> Acts 22:12

<sup>30</sup> Acts 9:10-16

<sup>31</sup> Acts 9:17-18 & 22:13

<sup>32</sup> Acts 22:14-16

“I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,<sup>33</sup> and I got up and was [immersed]; and I took food and was strengthened.<sup>34</sup>

“But [after] God...was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia.<sup>35</sup>

“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup>

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

“After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.<sup>37</sup>

“[From Arabia, I] returned once more to Damascus.<sup>38</sup>

“Now for several days [I] was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately [I] began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’

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<sup>33</sup>Acts 26:19

<sup>34</sup> Acts 9:19

<sup>35</sup> Galatians 1:15-17

<sup>36</sup> Galatians 1:11-12

<sup>37</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-10

<sup>38</sup> Galatians 1:17

“All those hearing [me] continued to be amazed, and were saying, “Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?”

“But [I] kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

“When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with [me], but their plot became known to [me]. The ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, watching the gates day and night so that they might put [me] to death. But [my] disciples took [me] by night and let [me] down through an opening in the wall, lowering [me] in a large basket.<sup>39</sup>

“[Thus] three years [after my conversion] I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas.<sup>40</sup>

“[When I] came to Jerusalem, [I] was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of [me], not believing that [I] was a disciple.

“But Barnabas took hold of [me] and brought [me] to the apostles and described to them how [I] had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to [me], and how at Damascus [I] had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

“[Then I] was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.<sup>41</sup> [I] stayed with [Cephas] fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

“And [I] was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put [me] to death.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Acts 9:19-25 & 2 Corinthians 11:32-33

<sup>40</sup> Galatians 1:18

<sup>41</sup> Acts 9:26-28 & Galatians 1:18-19

<sup>42</sup> Acts 9:29

“It happened when I...was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’

“And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. ‘And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.’

“And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’<sup>43</sup>

"But when the brethren learned of [the plot against me], they brought [me] down to Caesarea and sent [me] away to Tarsus.

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Acts 22:17-21

<sup>44</sup> Acts 9:30-31