

SAUL’S PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF CONVERSION
A synthesis from the Book of Acts, 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Philippians^A

“I am a Jew, born^B a Roman citizen^C in Tarsus of Cilicia^D - no insignificant city^E - circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews;^F but brought up in this city {Jerusalem}, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God.^G As to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.^H

“So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.^I I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.^J

“And when {the Jews at Jerusalem} had driven {Stephen} out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul – {that would be me}.^K And {I} was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.^L {I} *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women {and} would put them in prison.^M

“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme.^N I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify.^O Being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.^P

^A Base text used is the New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation La Habra, California. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Changes made by Thomas J. Short for the purpose of using a first person narrative or for grammatical adjustments are enclosed within { }.

^B Acts 22: 3a.

^C Condensed from Acts 22:27-28

^D Acts 22: 3b.

^E Acts 21:39b.

^F Philippians 3: 5a.

^G Acts 22: 3b.

^H Philippians 3: 5b-6.

^I Acts 26:4-5.

^J Galatians 1:14.

^K Acts 7:58.

^L Acts 8:1.

^M Acts 8:3.

^N Acts 26:9-11a.

^O Acts 22:4-5a.

^P Acts 26:11b.

“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.^Q From {the Sanhedrin} I also 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.^R

“While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,^S approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me^T 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.’^U

“And I answered, ‘Who {are you}, Lord?’

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

“And those who were with me beheld 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?’

“And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go on into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’^V 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; delivering 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, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’^W

“And the men who traveled with {me} stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. And {I} got up from the ground, and though {my} eyes were open, {I} could see nothing.^X

“But 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.^Y And {I} was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias,^Z a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there.^{AA} And the Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’

“And he said, ‘Behold, *here am I*, Lord.’

^Q Acts 9:1-2.

^R Acts 22:5b.

^S Acts 26:12.

^T Acts 22:6b.

^U Acts 26:13b-14.

^V Acts 22:8-11

^W Acts 26:16b-18.

^X Acts 9:7-8a.

^Y Acts 22:11.

^Z Acts 9:9-10a.

^{AA} Acts 22:12.

“And the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, 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 upon {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.’

“And Ananias departed and entered the house,^{BB} came to me, and standing near,^{CC} after 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.’ And immediately there fell from {my} eyes something like scales, and {I} regained {my} sight.^{DD}

“And at that very time I looked up at him. 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. And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’^{EE}

“I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision.^{FF} {I} arose and was baptized; and I took food and was strengthened.^{GG}

“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.^{HH} 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.^{II} And {I} returned once more to Damascus.^{JJ}

“Now for several days {I} was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and {I} immediately *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’^{KK} {I} *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

“And 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?’

^{BB} Acts 9:10b-17a.

^{CC} Acts 22:13a

^{DD} Acts 9:17b-18a.

^{EE} Acts 22:13b-16.

^{FF} Acts 26:19b.

^{GG} Acts 9:19a.

^{HH} Galatians 1:15-17a.

^{II} Galatians 1:11-12.

^{JJ} Galatians 1:17b.

^{KK} Acts 9:19b.

“But I kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ. And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with {me}, but their plot became known to {me}.^{LL} The ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and *so* escaped his hands.^{MM}

“{Thus, three years after my conversion} I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas.^{NN} {I} was trying to associate with the disciples; and 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. And {I} was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.^{OO} And {I} stayed with {Cephas} fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.^{PP}

“And {I} was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put {me} to death.^{QQ} And it came about 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 cloaks of those who were slaying him.’

“And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’^{RR}

“But when the brethren learned *of {the plot}*, they brought {me} down to Caesarea and sent {me} away to Tarsus.^{SS} I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, ‘He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.’ And they were glorifying God because of me.^{TT}

“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.”^{UU}

^{LL} Acts 26:19b-24b.

^{MM} 2 Corinthians 11:32

^{NN} Galatians 1:18a.

^{OO} Acts 9:26b-28.

^{PP} Galatians 1:18b-19.

^{QQ} Acts 9:29.

^{RR} Acts 22:13-17

^{SS} Acts 9:30.

^{TT} Galatians 1:22-24.

^{UU} Acts 9:31.