

Devotional Questions – Conversion of Saul, Study Leader’s Questions

Reading: Acts 22:1-21

1. *Why was Saul persecuting the church (Acts 22:4-5, John 16:2, Romans 10:2)?
Why do people persecute the church today?*
2. *Why was Saul such a threat to the early church?
Who would we consider a threat to the church today?*
3. *How and why should we pray for men like Saul?*
 - a) *Who is there that we should pray for today?*
 - b) *Should we pray that God should judge such men?*
 - c) *What things happened to the church following Saul’s conversion?*
4. *Saul’s first question:
What is the purpose of Saul’s first question?*
5. *Saul’s second question:*
 - a) *What is implied in the second question of Saul?*
 - b) *Why does Saul ask this second question?*
6. *What did Jesus want Saul to do (Acts 9:11, 14-16)?*
7. *What did Saul do (Acts 9:18-20, 22:11)?*
8. *Why do you think Saul’s conversion was so dramatic?
In what way is every conversion the same as Saul’s?*

Devotional Questions – Conversion of Saul, Answers to Questions

Reading: Acts 22:1-21

For detailed comments see Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of Acts* pp 296-309, 630-642 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* pp 1445-1447, 1473.

1. *Why was Saul persecuting the church (Acts 22:4-5, John 16:2, Romans 10:2)?
Why do people persecute the church today?*

Saul, thinking in ignorance and unbelief that he was serving God, John 16:2, 1 Timothy 1:12, 13, persecuted the church because its members were followers of the Lord Jesus Christ Whom the Jewish leaders had deemed a blasphemer, a false teacher and a deceiver "**worthy of death**" Acts 25:11.

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first" Matthew 27:62-64.

"The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" John 10:33.

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" Acts 26:9.

Today's followers of the Lord Jesus Christ suffer persecution because even though "**All men seek for thee**" Mark 1:37 men are "**despisers of those that are good**" 2 Timothy 3:3 and like Saul hate having their consciences pricked by the examples of "**all that will live godly in Christ Jesus**" 2 Timothy 3:12.

"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" Acts 9:6.

Men therefore become ready recruits for the Devil's disciples.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

2. *Why was Saul such a threat to the early church?
Who would we consider a threat to the church today?*

Saul had official sanction to persecute believers and therefore would have been able to call on official resources to effect the persecution most efficiently. He was also extremely determined in his persecution of believers.

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem" Acts 9:1-2.

"Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon...I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests" Acts 26:10-12.

All church-state systems, such as that which Paul served, noting the Jewish leaders' pledge in John 19:15 "***We have no king but Caesar,***" are a particular threat to the church today. Dr Ruckman states rightly with respect to Acts 21:31 "***And as they went about to kill him***" that the statement illustrates the religious spirit of persecution that is found among Catholics and Mohammedans. Marxists may also be included as a kind of atheistic church-state. This spirit of persecution is invariably *traditional, ritualistic, formal, unreasonable and intolerant*.

See www.chick.com/bc/2013/most_persecuted.asp German Chancellor Declares Christians 'Most Persecuted' Issue Date: January/February 2013. Note this extract.

"Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world." To anyone moderately aware of world events, this passing comment by German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, is an obvious fact. However, it created a stir in her country and beyond by groups with anti-biblical agendas.

Several "human rights" organizations from the German Green Party to Amnesty International, to the United Nations Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religious Belief declared her statement to be either "totally senseless," or "misguided." They said her opinion was based on "occasionally rumored numbers."

The highly respected Christian international aid society, Open Doors, jumped into the fray, countering that 80% of the religiously persecuted individuals worldwide were Christian, totaling some 100 million people in all. Open Doors' list of 50 most religiously repressive regimes fall primarily in two categories: Muslim or "Marxist-legacy."

See also www.barnabasfund.org/UK/News/News-analysis/ on Christians being persecuted in Mohammedan countries in particular.

It has to be remembered though that Mohammedanism and Marxism are but two of *Mama's Girls*. See again the Chick tract of that name. As Bro. Chick says "*The Catholic Church is mother to four great false religions. She will do anything to keep you from Jesus.*"



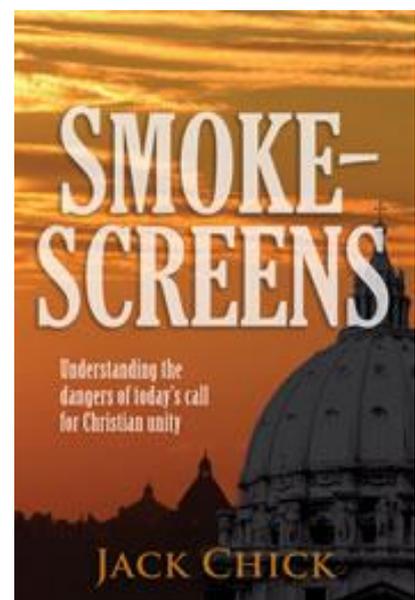
See:

www.chick.com/catalog/tractlist.asp?q=126&Language=English,
www.chick.com/reading/tracts/1077/1077_01.asp.

See also *Smokescreens* www.chick.com/catalog/books/0153.asp and note the following introduction to that work:

Dangers of the Ecumenical movement

Many Christians are joining the ecumenical movement, thinking God has ordained it to bring all Christians into unity. But this book reveals that the ecumenical movement is nothing more than a smokescreen, hiding the Vatican's real intent, to stamp out religious freedom and rule the world. Our fight is not with the Roman Catholic people who have been betrayed by their church. Our job is to rip the mask off her face, and let the poor Roman Catholics see what they're really tied to. They have to find Christ as the answer and it's our job to try to win them to Christ. The Lord Himself condemns Rome as persecutor-in-chief of all whom she opposes, especially those who follow Jesus Christ.



"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" Revelation 18:24.

3. *How and why should we pray for men like Saul?*
 - a) *Who is there that we should pray for today?*
 - b) *Should we pray that God should judge such men?*
 - c) *What things happened to the church following Saul's conversion?*

Men like Saul should be prayed for because the Lord said **"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"** Matthew 5:44.

Paul exhorts that those in authority be prayed for, insofar as it may eventually result in their salvation. These would include persecuting authorities.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Paul in effect also prayed for judgment on evildoers and warned Timothy likewise.

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works. Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words" 2 Timothy 4:14.

Note then Paul's exhortation to his readers, who could therefore pray the same kind of prayer against evildoers that he did.

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" 1 Corinthians 11:1.

Christians could therefore certainly pray that those who withstand **"the word of the Lord"** and hinder its **"free course"** be removed, whatever it takes for God to do it.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith" 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2.

The church had great blessing after Saul's conversion, no doubt in part because, in spite of persecution against himself for his boldness **"he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him"** Acts 9:29.

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" Acts 9:31.

Paul's experience shows that today's believers should pray for **"great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus"** 1 Timothy 3:13.

"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" Acts 4:29.

4. *Saul's first question:*
What is the purpose of Saul's first question?

By asking **"Who art thou, Lord?"** Acts 22:8 Saul revealed that he realised he'd had an encounter with Him Whom he'd later describe as **"the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve"** Acts 27:23. He therefore sought to know the name that he knew was not revealed in the Old Testament with respect to **"the angel of the LORD"** Judges 13:3. Note the testimony of Manoah's wife with respect to **"the angel of the LORD"** Judges 13:3.

"Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name" Judges 13:6.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?” Judges 13:18.

Saul understood that was the individual Who had confronted him. When the Lord answers him and declares to Saul that **“I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest”** Acts 22:8, Saul knew then that the Lord Jesus Christ was the promised Immanuel, Israel’s Messiah Isaiah 7:14, 8:8, 9:5, 6, 7, Daniel 9:25, 26 of Whom Matthew would later write with respect to fulfilled prophecy including that which had been spoken but not written until Matthew recorded it.

“...behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” Matthew 1:20-23.

“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene” Matthew 2:23.

The scriptures had all come together in this Damascus Road encounter for Saul, who experienced the fulfilment of the Lord’s exhortation that He had given during His earthly ministry. Saul had found Him Whom **“All men seek”** Mark 1:37. The same can be true of anyone **“such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel”** 2 Chronicles 11:16.

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” John 5:39.

5. Saul’s second question:
 - a) What is implied in the second question of Saul?
 - b) Why does Saul ask this second question?

When Saul asked **“What shall I do, Lord?”** Acts 22:10 Saul revealed that he was now a saved man in that the Spirit of God now indwelt him as **“Peter and the other apostles”** Acts 5:29 testified.

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” Acts 5:32.

Saul asked the question because the scripture says **“Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day”** Deuteronomy 27:10, obedience also being due to anything that the Lord commands over and above that which is **“written in the law of the LORD”** 1 Chronicles 16:40, 2 Chronicles 31:3, 35:26, Luke 2:23. Saul knew that and so should every one of today’s believers.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” John 14:21.

6. What did Jesus want Saul to do (Acts 9:11, 14-16)?

Acts 9:15 summarises the Lord’s commission to Saul.

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:”

The Christian has a similar commission from the Lord as explained by Paul himself.

“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

7. *What did Saul do (Acts 9:18-20, 22:11)?*

Saul obeyed the Lord’s commission to him in the sense of Romans 1:16 **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** without delay.

“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” Acts 9:20.

Paul later went to the Gentiles i.e. **“to the Greek”** in obedience to Acts 9:15 and in accordance with Romans 1:16.

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” Acts 13:46.

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” Acts 26:19-20.

Note that *delayed obedience is disobedience*. See newspring.cc/blog/devotionals/delayed-obedience-or-disobedience-day-92/ and note David’s exhortation that is applicable for today’s believers **“for obedience to the faith”** Romans 1:5.

“I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” Psalm 119:60. Note further that Christians should be as least as prompt as the Devil in obedience to God.

There’s no **“Lord...me first”** Luke 9:59, 61 or **“not so, Lord”** Acts 10:14, 11:8 with Satan when God commands him.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD” Job 1:12.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” Job 2:6-7.

8. *Why do you think Saul’s conversion was so dramatic?
In what way is every conversion the same as Saul’s?*

Saul’s conversion was dramatic because **“light from heaven”** Acts 9:3 was needed to overcome the darkness. **“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”** Matthew 6:23.

That **“light from heaven”** Acts 9:3 now comes by means of **“the gospel of Christ”** Romans 1:16.

“...his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began...is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” 2 Timothy 1:9-10.

Every conversion is like Saul’s in that it results in **“a new creature.”**

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Every believer today should remember that in order **“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”** Colossians 1:10.