

Saul's (Paul's) Call and Conversion Experience (late 34)

Acts 9:1–19a	Acts 22:6–16	Acts 26:12–18
<p>1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,</p> <p>2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.</p> <p>3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus,</p> <p>and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;</p> <p>4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,</p> <p>“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”</p> <p>5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He <i>said</i>, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,</p> <p>7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.</p> <p>6 but get up</p>	<p>6 But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus</p> <p>about noontime,</p> <p>a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,</p> <p>7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me,</p> <p>‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’</p> <p>8 And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’</p> <p>9 And 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.</p> <p>10 And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up</p>	<p>12 While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,</p> <p>13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.</p> <p>14 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.’</p> <p>15 And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.</p> <p>16 But 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,</p>

but also to the things in which I will appear to you;
 17 rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,
 18 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.'

and enter the city,
 and it will be told you what you must do."

8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing;

and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias;

and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11 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,
 12 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."

13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;

and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'

11 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.

12 A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”

15 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;

16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him 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.”

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight,

and he got up and was baptized;
19a and he took food and was strengthened.

13 came to me,
and standing near

said to me, ‘Brother Saul,

receive your sight!’

And at that very time

I looked up at him.

14 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.

15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.

16 Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

Chronological Notes

- 1) My chronological framework for the life of the apostle Paul follows Carson & Moo / Kostenberger for the period of 33 to 49 (both place Paul's conversion c. 34), and Kostenberger / Finegan for the period of 49 to 67 (both place Paul's arrest in Jerusalem c. 55).¹ I differ from Steinmann / Finegan over the identification of Galatians 2:1–10 with the council of Acts 15 (the current majority view).² I prefer to connect Galatians 2:1–10 with the famine visit of Acts 11.³ In support of this view are the following points from Marshall⁴ and Schnabel:⁵
- Galatians 2:1–10 is a private meeting, not a public one as in Acts 15.
 - Galatians 2:1–10 is connected to a revelation, which best corresponds to Agabus' prophecy of the coming famine in Acts 11:27–28.
 - If Galatians 2:1–10 is equivalent to Acts 15, then Paul left unmentioned the famine visit of Acts 11:27–30. This makes no sense in light of Paul's intent in providing the autobiographical detail in Galatians 1–2.
 - Peter's fear of the men from Jerusalem in Galatians 2:11–14 makes no sense if the incident occurred *after* the Council of Acts 15.
 - Why, if writing to the Galatians *after* the Council of Acts 15, did Paul make no mention of the decision which had been reached? This makes no sense in light of the fact that when he returned to the Galatian churches on his second missionary trip, he made a point of sharing the decision with them (see Acts 16:4).
- 2) On the dating of Paul's escape from the "ethnarch" (*ethnarches*, 2 Cor 11:32–33; cf. Acts 9:23–25) of King Aretas, see Douglas A. Campbell, "An Anchor for Pauline Chronology: Paul's Flight from 'The Ethnarch of King Aretas' (2 Corinthians 11:32–33)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121.2 (2002): 279–302. Campbell argues for a six month window between late 36 and early 37 for Paul's escape. Steinmann agrees, but argues for a larger window between 36 and 38, mainly due to his view that Galatians 2:1–10 is equivalent to Acts 15.⁶

¹ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament—Second Edition* (Zondervan, 2009): 359–369; Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (B&H Academic, 2009): 397–403; Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Rev. Ed., (Hendrickson Publishers, 1998): 390–402.

² Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 306–320. See also Moises Silva, *Interpreting Galatians*, 129–139.

³ I find myself in good company: Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990): lxxiii–lxxxviii. See also Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Chronological Problem of Galatians 2:1–10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120:480 (Oct 1963): 335–340; Paul R. Trebilco, "Itineraries, travel plans, journeys, apostolic parousia," in *Dictionary of Paul & His Letters*, G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid eds. (Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993): 446–456; Joe Morgado, Jr., "Paul in Jerusalem: A Comparison of His Visits in Acts and Galatians," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37.1 (March 1994): 55–68; David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 33–39; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010): 28–29; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1988): 86; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, (Eerdmans, 1998): 13–18; Timothy George, *Galatians*, New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman, 1994): 136–137; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Paternoster, 2002): 43–56.

⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary Vol. 5, (Sheffield Academic Press, 2003): 258–262.

⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Volume 2, Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004): 988–89.

⁶ Steinmann, 301–303.