

PREACH, PLOT AND PARRY!
ACTS CH9:19b-31

INTRODUCTION

According to David G. Peterson “Like Philip in Samaria, Saul begins a preaching mission in Damascus without prior approval of the apostles in Jerusalem. They have a role in verifying individuals and missions (Ch8:14-17; Ch9:27-28; Ch11:1-18, 22-24), but they are not their initiators or directors. Moreover, Saul begins preaching immediately after his conversion, without apparently being instructed by those who were Christians before him (cf. Gal Ch1:11-24). When he returns to Jerusalem, he is accepted because of the testimony of Barnabas. He assumes the role of Stephen in debating with Hellenistic Jews, who then plot to kill him (Ch9:29; cf. Ch6:9-11). ***In Damascus and Jerusalem, the same pattern of preaching, plot and escape is highlighted (Ch9:20-25, 28-30).*** This whole section shows how quickly the Lord's words about Saul in Ch9:15-16 are fulfilled. The persecutor soon becomes the persecuted! Luke's editorial summary in Ch9:31, with its focus on peace and Church growth following the conversion of Saul, brings a further panel of the narrative of Acts to an end. The Holy Spirit is specifically the agent of growth here, and the Spirit's work in Paul's particular ministry is suggested by the terminology in Ch9:22 (Cited in David G. Peterson, The Acts of The Apostles, pg311).”

SAUL AND HIS PUBLIC WITNESS IN DAMASCUS! V19b-22

V19 - Luke records for us that Saul, the notorious persecutor, spends quality time with those whom he came to persecute! ***Wow! The grace of God!*** The continuity of the ***“Word Ministry”*** – Previously, with Peter (5) - Ch1:15-22; Ch2:14-41; Ch3:6-26; Ch4:8-22; Ch5:29-42; – then Stephen Ch7:2-53 – then Philip Ch8:5 + Ch8:12 – ***continues now with Saul!*** ***This continuity unifies the narrative and keeps the “word ministry” as the main theme in these chapters!***

V20 - Immediately Saul starts to preach in the Synagogues, a place where Saul would have usually gone himself, but not for Christ, whereas now it is for Christ! Saul identifies Jesus specifically as ***“the “Son of God”***, the only place in the whole of the Book of Acts where this title appears! ***Remember, Saul, has found a new God, but he is no longer in rebellion against God, as he now in faith fully accepts that Jesus is God's Son! He is desperate to reach his own people (Ch9:15)!!! V22 – And through the Scriptures proves that Jesus is the Christ!*** Having seen Christ on the road to Damascus, with a new faith, Saul preaches that Jesus is alive and is the Son of God!

SAUL AND HIS PUBLIC WITNESS IN ARABIA! V23-25

Luke uses the phrase “When many days had passed”, which needs to be cross referenced with Galatians Ch1:17-20 which reveals that one, Saul went into Arabia (Modern Syria and possibly Iraq) for three years before two, heading off to Jerusalem for 15 days, until, three, heading off again to Syria and Cilicia! It would be 14 years until Saul returned to Jerusalem (Gal Ch2:1). The following traces out Saul/Paul's life:

A.D. 5-10?	Born in Tarsus as an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin and a Roman Citizen (Acts Ch22:3; 28; Rom Ch11:1; Phil Ch3:5) raised in either Jerusalem (Acts Ch22:37) or Tarsus
15-20?	Trained as a Pharisee by Gamaliel 1 (Acts Ch22:3; 26:5; Gal Ch1:14; Phil Ch3:5-6)
30/33*	Death, resurrection of Christ
31-34	Present at Stephen's stoning, persecuted Christians (Acts Ch7:58, 8:1;

	22:4a; 26:9-11; 1 st Cor Ch15:9; Gal 1:13)
33/34*	Converted, called and commissioned on the way to Damascus (Acts Ch9:1-19; 22:6-11; 26:12-18; Gal 1:15-16)
33/34-36/37	Stays in Damascus a short time (Acts Ch9:19b); leaves for “Arabia” (i.e., Nabataean Kingdom; 2 nd Cor Ch11:32; Gal Ch1:17); returns to Damascus (Gal 1:17; Acts 9:20-22?); Jews and the governor under King Aretas try to arrest and kill him, Paul escapes through the City wall (Acts 9:23-24; 2 nd Cor 11:32-22).
36/37*	Meets with Peter (and sees James) in Jerusalem (Acts Ch9:26-30; Gal 1:18; Hellenists seek to kill him and he flees to Tarsus (Acts 9:28-30; Gal 1:21)
37-45	Ministers in Syria/Cilicia (2 nd Cor Ch11:22-27?)
42-44	Receives his “thorn in the flesh” (2 nd Cor Ch12:7-9)
44	Herod Agrippa dies (Acts Ch12:20-23)
44-47*	Spends a year ministering with Barnabas in Antioch (Acts Ch11:25-26) Second visit to Jerusalem ; Time of famine (Acts Ch11:27-30; Gal 2:1-10)
46-47	First Missionary Journey (Acts Ch13:4-14:26) 1.5 years?
48*	Paul and Barnabas spend “no little time” in Antioch (Acts Ch14:28;cf. Gal 2:11-14); Paul; writes letter to the Galatians
48-49*	Returns to the Jerusalem for the Apostolic Council (Acts CH15); Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (Acts Ch15:30-33), but a dispute over John Mark causes them to part ways (Acts Ch15:36-41)
48/49-51*	Second Missionary Journey (Acts Ch15:36 – Ch18:22): 2.5 years?
49	Edict of Claudius (Acts Ch18:2). Paul and Silas travel to southern Galatia through Asia Minor, on to Macedonia (notably Philippi - 1 st Thess Ch2:2; Thessalonica - 1 st Thess Ch2:2; Phil 4:15-16; Berea – Acts Ch17:10-15, Achaia notably Athens - 1 st Thess Ch3:1 and Corinth - 2 nd Cor Ch11:7-9)
49-51*	Spends 1.5 years in Corinth (Acts Ch18:11); Appears before Gallio (Acts Ch18:12-17); Writes 1+2 Thessalonians
51	Returns to Jerusalem? (Acts Ch18:22)
52-57*	Third Missionary Journey (Acts Ch18:23-Ch21:17); 5 years?
52	Travels to Antioch, where he spends “some time”; then travels through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts Ch18:23)
52-55	Arrives in Ephesus (Acts Ch19:1; 1 st Cor Ch16:8); ministers there for 3 years (Acts Ch20:31) and writes 1st Corinthians in the spring, near the end of his ministry there; makes brief, “painful visit” to Corinth (2 nd Cor Ch2:1), then returns to Ephesus and writes “tearful, severe letter” (now lost) to Corinth (2 nd Cor Ch2:3-4; Ch7:8-16)
55-56*	Travels North to Macedonia, where he meets Titus (Acts Ch20:1; Cf 2 nd Cir Ch2:12-13); writes 2nd Corinthians
57*	Winters in Corinth (Acts Ch20:2-3; Cf 2 nd Cor Ch9:4), writes letter to the Romans from Corinth; travels to Jerusalem and is arrested (Acts Ch21:27-36)
57-59	Imprisonment transferred to Caesarea, where he stays for 2 years (Acts

	Ch24:27)
60*	Voyage to Rome; shipwrecked for 3 months on the Island of Malta (Acts Ch28:11); finally arrives in Rome
62*	Under house-arrest in Rome (Acts Ch28:30-31), writes Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, Philemon
62-67	Released from house-arrest in Rome, extends his mission (Spain?), writes 1st Timothy (from Macedonia?) and Titus (from Nicopolis): is re-arrested, writes 2nd Timothy from Rome shortly before his execution
64-67*	Martyred in Rome

Luke, is highlighting a pattern – **Preach** v20 + v27 + v28. **Plot** v23 + v24 + 29. **Parry** (evading/escaping) v25 + v30! For Saul, he was not meant and stay and be martyred at that point, like Stephen Ch7:59, but it was made possible for the disciples v25 + v30, to help Saul parry the threat of being killed! The very brothers he once tried to kill, are now the means of his escape! **Let us not only keep praying for Mohsen, Elnaz and Kian, but let us be open to being used by God in them parrying the threats linked to being returned to Iran!**

SAUL AND HIS PUBLIC WITNESS IN JERUSALEM! V26-31

So how will Saul be received by his now Christian brothers in Jerusalem? Not great! Initially the disciples were all afraid v26! Apart from Barnabas! Remember Barnabas?

- Ch4:32-37 – Barnabas (meaning – son of encouragement) a Levite from Cyprus, sold a field and laid the money at the feet of the apostles! **What an example!** - Barnabas' giving was in keeping with his name and his character, as we will see through Luke's recording in later chapters!
- Ch9:27 – Stuck up for Paul in front of the early Church! (Galatians Ch1:18)
- Ch11:25-26 – Found Paul and took him to Antioch!
- Ch13:1-6 – Sent out by the Antioch Church!
- Ch13:46 – Speaking boldly with Paul!
- Ch14:4+14 – He is an apostle or had an apostolic ministry?
- Ch15:36-39 – Had a huge disagreement with the apostle Paul over John Mark!
- Colossians Ch4:10 – A cousin of John Mark!
- 1st Corinthians Ch9:6 – Like Paul, never took the rights of an apostle!
- Galatians Ch2:9-14 – Gentile missionary work, but easily misled! Whenever the apostle Paul mentions Barnabas, it is always with words of sympathy and respect!

V27 – **Even believers who have experienced the power of God in their own lives, can doubt God's ability to change others!** Only because of the testimony of Barnabas did the disciples receive Saul! Sometimes you not only need a Christian buddy like Ananias Ch9:17, praying and laying hands on you, but you also benefit from a “son of encouragement” who stands with you, when no other Christian will!

As Saul is accepted within the Gospel Community in Jerusalem, he then preaches boldly against the Jewish unsaved Hellenists. He is so bold, that they too now plan to kill Saul. **Saul is no longer Stephen's opponent, but through God's grace becomes like him, delivering the same Gospel Message, that Jesus is alive and He is the Son of God!**

APPLICATION

Being a Christian is being a public witness for Christ, proclaiming that He is alive and that He is the Son of God!