

Saul Of Tarsus

January 19, 2025

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Acts 7-8-9

No. 3

Did you know that falling away from God is easy? Not only is it easy, sometimes it happens and we are not even aware of it.

This happens, not so much with sin but with religiosity.

In our series, "Come Back To God," we are going to see Saul of Tarsus, who really thought he was in a relationship with God.

Then he had a rude awakening and realized he was far from Him. But that's ok because he did make his way back.



Saul, formerly known as Saul of Tarsus, makes his first appearance in Acts 7.

One of the first Deacons of the early church, Stephen was arrested for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He gave a phenomenal speech about who Jesus was and what He did. He then rebuked the religious leaders for rejecting and crucifying Him.

Acts 7:54 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.*

v.55 *But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;*

Ha!

Truth is supposed to be our friend, but many people see it as an enemy.

v.57 *But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.*

v.58 *When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

Not a youth but probably in the prime of his life; 30's or 40. Saul was a Pharisee and was visiting Jerusalem and apparently was highly regarded by the other religious leaders.

Saul of Tarsus was a very religious man; a spiritual leader of his day.

He really believed that his religiosity brought him near to God but his actions said otherwise.

That's a good way to examine one's own walk with the Lord.
Look at your life. Does it depict one who is walking with Jesus?

So:

- 1. Saul thinks he is close to God through religiosity**
- 2. He persecutes the Church**

Acts 8:1 *Saul 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.*

It's always been a mystery to me how those who take innocent lives consider themselves close to God,
And we need to also be careful that gossip, slander, lying, cursing and other works of the flesh are not evidence that you are not close to God.

v.3 *But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.*

All in the name of his own religion.
But God is greater and through this persecution, the Church spread and grew!

3. Saul comes back to God

Acts 9:1 *Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,*

This guy is so sold out for his religion that he is seeking to exterminate all those who are not.

I ask you, "Is this the mind of Christ?"

He then got letters from the synagogues giving him authority to round up Christians.

So here he comes!

He is on his way to Damascus to do his dirty work.

v.3 *As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;*

v.4 *and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"*

One man said; (John Gill)

" He knew him as one of his sheep, though straying, and calls him by name,"

As David said in:

Ps 139:16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

OH,

God knows you. He always knew you and will continually know you forever.

v.5 *And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,*

ie.

Saul,
What you are doing to these people, you are doing to Me!

Saul was good at religion but bad as a person.

Which one do you think is better?

But Jesus invites him back!

v.6 *but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."*

Saul got up, but he was blind. He continued his journey to Damascus as the Lord had said.

There was a man in Damascus named Ananias.

v.11 *And the Lord said to him, (Ananias), "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 the rest is history. He went on to be the great apostle.

But I want you to see his resume before he came back to God.

Acts 22:3 I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

His teacher also hated this new Jesus movement.

V.4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

Acts 26:10 And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons

v.11 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.

But, then he said to Timothy;

I Tim 1:13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

v.12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

I thank Jesus, because He put me into His service.

Have you fallen away? Drifter away?

Run away? Come back to God!