

The Apostle Paul – Lesson 4: From Crawling to Running

Matthew 11:10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Did we learn our lesson? Study Questions from lesson 3 (The Introduction of the New Creature)

1. According to Acts 9:9, what was Saul's physical condition?

Answer: Blind (without sight).

2. According to Acts 9:13-14, why was Ananias afraid to go to Saul as the Lord requested?

Answer: 1. How much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem, 2. He hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name

3. According to Acts 9:15, what reason does the Lord give Ananias for reaching out to Saul?

Answer: For he is a chosen vessel unto me (to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel).

4. According to Acts 9:18, how did Saul respond to receiving his sight?

Answer: Arose, and was baptized (submitted to the Lord).

5. Complete the following scripture:

1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

True / False

False The children of Israel received the promised land due to their righteousness (DEUT 9:6)

False Pride will lift a person up (PROV 29:23)

False After conversion, Saul avoided fellowship (ACTS 9:19)

True Studying greatly helps a Christian grow in Christ (2TIM 2:15 / 1PET 2:2)

Lesson 4: From Crawling to Running

Home, job, school – Each of us have a starting point, and then progress on to be adept to our environment. However, there is a difference between those who choose to prepare and those who simply allow events to unfold and merely react to them. The ones who invest, through a measure of preparation, are frequently in a better position to succeed. This is no secret – it is not a magical discipline that only a select few can use. Two old Navy sayings (by old Navy Chiefs)

1. Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance
Planning (preparation) aligns one for success

2. The ignorant shall be educated, and the stupid shall be punished
To make a mistake – You will be taught. To willfully act against sound doctrine – You will have pain

Saul became a new creature in the last lesson – A grown man, but a babe in Christ.

In this lesson, a look at the Paul's transformation to marathon runner!

Background from Lesson 1 – Saul is religiously educated

Philippians 3:5 – Saul’s self-description

(5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

- Pharisee: Intimate knowledge of Mosaic law to where interpretation (in the form of traditions) is as important as the law itself (it is the mechanism of judgement within their religion)
- Also key knowledge of scriptural prophesy – Specifically regarding the Messiah

Acts 9:20 – The revelation of Christ fills the gaps of Saul’s knowledge – He reacts

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

- Saul is fed, nurtured and strengthened by the believers in Damascus – He immediately began to glorify God in His gift of the Christ to humanity

That he (Jesus of Nazareth) is the Christ, the Son of God!

Many believers come to Christ with little or no religious knowledge, just a yearning for the truth, and cannot quickly leap into a conversation to demonstrate how Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled scripture as the Christ to reveal He is the Son of God.

However, Saul is not like most believers – He is a ‘chosen vessel’ (ACTS 9:15):

- Saul’s knowledge and zeal (PHIL 3:6) make him an ideal candidate for God’s message

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 – Know your audience

(23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

- Stumbling block to the Jews – Their tradition has them waiting for the Messiah to arrive as a King
 - o Not taking into account humanity must first be reconciled to God (they failed to accept the Messiah as Christ, who will indeed return as King of Kings, Lord of Lords)
 - o Seeking signs – The sign was given, but not recognized (Jonah)
- Foolishness to the Greeks – All their gods are stories / fables, all accounts of any god are viewed the same, the Greek accepts no god as lord

(24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

- The believer (whether Jew or Greek) is not bound by these obstacles, because the truth of God has created in them a new creature – Not restricted as before

Saul has the ability to couple the reality of Christ to the promise of God (all scripture and prophesy) to demonstrate that the promise of God was indeed fulfilled with Christ (all humanity is blessed as promised to Abraham in GEN 12:3)

Acts 9:21-25 – What happened? Where is our Saul?

(21) But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

- Those that traveled from Jerusalem with Saul must have been in shock – This is not the agenda they signed up for! The expectation was that this gang would be aggressively rounding up dissenters, and it’s not happening!
Imagine one day you and your ‘friends’ are criticizing believers, and the next day you are reviewing scripture with those believers – Your friends would be confused.

(22) But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

- Saul the Pharisee was foolish in religion – God chose Saul to confound those who professed to be wise in their hate.

(23) And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

(24) But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

(25) Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

- Just as Saul was commissioned to pursue those who professed Christ, his expatriates now sought opportunity to eliminate Saul:

John 5:18-19 – This world loves only its own

(18) *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

(19) *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

- Saul, a new creature in Christ, is no longer receiving the adoration of the 'world', and is a target for - Not because Saul is not pursuing believers, but because he now professes Christ as Son of God.
- When the believer does nothing with their faith, the world does not care. It is when you stand for Christ that the world will take notice and target you.

Galatians 1:15-18 – Saul spends time with God

(15) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

(16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

- Saul leaves Damascus, his former companions seeking his life – He has not confided in any yet with regard to the mission Christ had commissioned him with.

(17) Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

(18) Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

- Arabia is a very broad geographical description. It is most likely the area of Coele-Syria west of Damascus, where Saul reconciled his vision, the charged commission, and from whose authority it was issued (Christ, whom he now realizes is the Son of God).
- Saul returned to Damascus and spent three years there before departing for Jerusalem.

Many sources differ whether Saul went immediately to Arabia or spoke in Damascus and fled in pursuit after witnessing. The most compelling argument for the latter:

- Acts 9:20 -- immediately after receiving his sight and nourishment – professes Christ
- The men he travelled with would not have waited for three years in Damascus

Saul was prepared with scriptural knowledge to confidently defend Jesus of Nazareth as Christ and Son of God, but many today are not. As with any challenging task, prepare yourself to meet the work.

Recommendations include scriptural studies (2TIM 2:15) and getting involved in ministries (GAL 6:2)

Next Lesson: The Warm-Up

Lesson 4: From Crawling to Running

Study Questions

1. According to Acts 9:20, what was Saul's first activity?

2. According to 1 Corinthians 1:23, what is Christ to the Jew and to the Greek?

1. _____ 2. _____

3. According to Acts 9:21, what was the reaction of Saul's former colleagues?

4. According to Galatians 1:17, where did Saul go after leaving Damascus?

5. Complete the following scripture:

John 5:18 If the world _____ you, ye know that it _____ me before it _____ you.

True / False

T F Saul's confidence weakened when first witnessing.

T F Saul's former colleagues wanted to know more about Christ.

T F God chooses 'foolish' to confound the 'wise'.

T F The world loves believers because they are peaceful.