

begin in Jerusalem, look up Luke 24:47.

Thus, in this short portion of scripture we are told how to begin the Christian life. Have you made a good beginning?

## **GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

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### **Study 2**

#### **FIRST STEPS IN THE NEW LIFE**

Scripture Portion: Acts 9:1-31

In the verses before us we have the dramatic account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who was so wonderfully brought face to face with the risen Lord Himself. Saul's conversion was striking it was sudden, and there is a very real sense in which it was a sample conversion; it is an example of the kind of thing that God can do and is doing today, look up the last phrase in Acts 2:47. But it is the post-conversion experiences of Saul that we are to study, the things that happened immediately after his conversion. What was the first thing that happened after he became a Christian?

#### **1. HE MADE AN OPEN CONFESSION OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Verse 18 tells us that he "arose, and was baptized ..." Some few years previously John the Baptist had baptized in the River Jordan, and he baptized the Lord Jesus, Matt. 3:13-17. The disciples of Jesus baptized, John 4:1-2, and before He went back to Heaven the Lord Jesus said, Matt. 28:19. Consequently, on the Day of Pentecost, when those who had been convicted by Peter's preaching asked: "What shall we do?", Acts 2:37, Peter replied, Acts 2:38; and the result was Acts 2:41! Thus, in obedience to the Lord's command, believers were baptized; they believed first, and then they confessed their faith in Christ by baptism, look up Acts 8:12 and 36-39; 9:18; 10:47:48; 16:14-15 and 30-34; 18:8 and 19:5. This is not a denominational matter; it is a New Testament matter, look up John 14:15. How quick Saul was to confess his new found faith in Christ!

#### **2. HE LINKED UP WITH THE LORD'S PEOPLE**

Verse 19 indicates that immediately after his conversion he united in fellowship with the Christians at Damascus, and then later on with the Christians at Jerusalem; and right on through his Christian life, wherever he was, Saul of Tarsus, Paul the apostle, sought the fellowship of God's people. It is God's plan for His children to unite with a local assembly of His people for the enjoyment of worship and for employment in His service. Some Christians do not believe in joining a church, but God does not want us to be spiritual gypsies. He would have us follow the example of the early Christians, as recorded in Acts 2:41-47.

### **3. HE PREACHED CHRIST WHEREVER HE WENT**

We are told, in verse 20, that immediately after his conversion Paul "straightway . . . preached Christ in the synagogues", and afterwards he did so wherever he went. He had looked upon the Lord as an imposter, but now he proclaimed Him as the risen and exalted "Son of God"! It is the privilege and responsibility of every new born soul to make known the saving grace and the keeping and satisfying power of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an interesting thought here. Those who heard Paul preach Christ were amazed and said: "Is not this he that destroyed them ...?", verse 21. What is the answer? It was the same man, and yet it was not, look up 2 Cor. 5:17.

### **4. HE GREW IN GRACE AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS LORD AND SAVIOUR**

We are told that "Saul increased the more in strength ...", verse 22, and the reference is to spiritual strength. Compare verse 19, where he received physical strength. How important it is for the new born soul to grow in grace, 2 Pet. 3:18! There is one reference which gives us a clue to the amazing rapidity with which this man grew, look up Gal. 1:17-18. All those whom God has used greatly have had an

"Arabia" experience. Think of Joseph, Moses and Elijah, and of the Lord Jesus who spent thirty years in Nazareth before the three years of His public ministry. We must not neglect prayer and Bible study, otherwise we will never grow!

### **5. HE ENCOUNTERED TERRIFIC OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION**

Look at verses 23, 24, 25 and 29, and see what the Lord said concerning His servant in verse 16. If we are going to be really faithful to the Lord it will cost us something, look up Luke 14:26, 27 and 33, and compare Mart. 5:11-12; John 16:33; Acts 5:41 and 2 Cor. 11:24-28.

### **6. HE HAD TO FACE AND OVERCOME INTERNAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS**

Verse 26 tells us this. It was one thing to be misunderstood and persecuted by those who were not Christians, but here were God's people holding him under suspicion, yet how natural it was! Can we not picture the Jerusalem assembly as Paul, who had so recently been the enemy of the Church, came in to take his place at the Lord's Table? Thank God, large-hearted, generous-hearted Barnabas was there! See verse 27. Paul was eventually welcomed into that fellowship of Christians at Jerusalem, and in verse 28 we have a picture of real fellowship, "with them coming in and going out." That is fellowship! Look up 1 Cor. 1:9. Where else can we find such wonderful fellowship? Nowhere else in the world!

### **7. HE WENT BACK TO TARSUS, THE HARDEST PLACE OF ALL!**

Verse 30 tells us that the Christians in Jerusalem sent him home to his loved ones and friends, compare Mark 5:19 with Luke 8:39. Have you gone back to your home, your loved ones and your friends and witnessed for your Saviour? That is what it means to