

# Acts 9:17-31

## The Chief of Sinners (Part 2)

**Scripture:** Acts 9:17-31

**Memory Verse:** 1 Corinthians 15:9-10a *“For I [Saul] am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am.”*

**Lesson Focus:** This lesson follows on the heels of last week’s lesson where we pointed out that if God can **save** Saul, He can **save** ANYONE. In today’s lesson we will instead point out that if God can **use** Saul, He can **use** ANYONE!

**Activities and Crafts:** Saul’s Escape Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>.  
Craft for 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Saul in a Basket

**Starter Activity:** Unusual Uses Creative Challenge

Consider getting the lesson started with an activity that will cause the kids to think creatively. Bring in a few common items that kids are familiar with. Each of these items should have a use that is generally understood by the children. As you pull out each item, first ask the kids how this item is typically used. But then challenge them to come up with some other ways this item could be used!

As an example, let’s say you bring in a paper plate. First ask the kids what the paper plate is generally used for (i.e. a place to hold your food while you eat). Then ask them to think about some unusual alternative uses for the paper plate. It could be used as a head covering, a frisbee, a fan, etc. Either pass it around for the kids to demonstrate their other use or have them come up in front of the class and show it. Perhaps use a paper plate as your starter example and then challenge them with a few other objects. \*

Please feel free to borrow objects from the resource room for this activity. The object of the game is to get the kids thinking creatively and the expectation is that you will get some surprising uses out of some objects!

Afterwards, transition into the lesson by mentioning how God often surprises us with how He uses people and how we will see that in our lesson.

Last week we learned about what happened to the chief villain opposing the church.  
Q: Who was that? A: Saul of Tarsus. He later referred to himself as the “chief of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15) and yet despite that even he became a believer in Jesus! Well, this week we will see that he didn’t just become a believer, but God surprises EVERYONE with how He uses Saul of Tarsus to champion the gospel. Let’s take a look! \*

## Bible Study:

Let's first review a little bit of what happened to Saul in our text last week. While he was on his way to a city called Damascus on the hunt to arrest Christians, Jesus appeared to him, blinded him, and told him to go to the city and wait for further instructions. And then a believer named Ananias was also told to go and meet Saul and lay his hands on him. That brings us to our text today.

**Acts 9:17-19:** And thus, Saul of Tarsus was no longer persecuting Jesus and His people, but was now friends with Jesus and His people! As we pointed out last week, "if God can save Saul, He can save ANYONE!"

**Acts 9:20:** But God didn't just take Saul out of the way. He is now *using* him in a way that no one expected! \* Remember some of the wacky uses that you came up with for some of those objects at the beginning of our lesson? Well, no one would have expected God to use Saul in this "wacky" way either! Remember he was the chief villain!

Here is a statement that we will repeat throughout this lesson that I want you to say with me: "**If God can use Saul, He can use ANYONE!**" (**Teachers:** Consider writing this on the whiteboard and have the kids say it with you here and throughout the lesson) \*

**Acts 9:21:** Notice how amazed the people were as they see this change in Saul.

Q: What were they all saying? A: "Wait a minute! I thought Saul came here to arrest the followers of this Jesus guy. How can it be that he is now defending and claiming that this Jesus guy actually is the Son of God?" (**Teachers:** Consider bringing out one of those objects you used at the beginning of the lesson and connect one of the wacky uses that a kid came up with to how surprised everyone was to see God using Saul in this way!) \*

**Acts 9:22:** Saul is getting stronger and even more fierce in his defense of Jesus as the Son of God and promised Rescuer.

Q: But how is it he is getting stronger and stronger? \* A: The Holy Spirit! Saul is "fizzing" with the Holy Spirit just like we have seen earlier in the book of Acts with Peter, John, and Stephen. \*

**Acts 9:23:** Saul is so effective in pressing home the truth of Jesus's death and resurrection for sinners that the unbelieving Jews only have one option: Silence him by \* killing him! And remember Saul is himself Jewish. His own people have turned on him!

**Acts 9:24:** So, this game of cat-and-mouse begins. The people that sent Saul to hunt for Christians are now on a hunt for him!

**Acts 9:25:** Isn't this such a surprising turn of events? As he was approaching Damascus at the beginning of this chapter he was planning to arrest Christians. Now those who he was going to arrest are helping him escape the city by hiding him in a basket!

**Teachers:** Consider inviting several volunteers up to act this scene out. We will leave a large container “basket” for you to use as well as a heavy-duty trash bag. \* Consider inviting a couple of kids to stand guard at a doorway. Invite a smaller kid to be Saul and see if he/she fits into the container. If not, have him/her climb into the trash bag sitting in the container. Finally, have a few other volunteers carry “Saul” out in the container pretending to take the trash out to “fool” the guards! \*

**Acts 9:26:** So, while Saul was able to escape Damascus, he did not receive a warm welcome back at church headquarters in Jerusalem. \*

Q: Why not? A: Remember this is where Stephen was martyred not too long ago! And this is also where Saul was “going house to house dragging off Christians to prison” (**Acts 8:3**). Some of those Christians might still be in prison! \* They all probably thought that he was just pretending to be a believer so he could strike from the inside!

**Acts 9:27:** But then Barnabus stands up for Saul and convinces all of the believers in Jerusalem that Saul can indeed be trusted! In a way, Barnabus reminds them that, **“if God can use you, He can use Saul!”**

Q: Have you ever been welcomed or encouraged by someone when you were the new kid that didn’t know anyone? What a great guy Barnabus must have been! His name means “Son of Encouragement”. \* Or how much better would RMC be if we, like Barnabus, looked out for the new kids and welcomed them in when we see them! Remember: **“if God can use Saul, He can use ANYONE!”**

**Acts 9:28-29:** So just as Saul was finally making friends with those who he once wanted killed (the Jerusalem believers), those who used to be his friends were now the one’s who wanted to kill him (the Jewish leaders)!

Q: Why? Because he continued to boldly speak the truth about Jesus!

**Acts 9:30:** And just like as happened in Damascus, Saul is rescued by the believers and is sent out of the city to safety. He steps out of the story for now, but he will be back!

**Acts 9:31:** This verse closes the first part of the book of Acts. The church has grown into the regions of Judea and Samaria just like Jesus said it would in **Acts 1:8**. While the church is now enjoying a time of peace, it has yet to fulfill this last part of Jesus’s mission: to reach “the ends of the earth”! The rest of the book of Acts will chronicle how God will use Saul and others to truly bring the gospel to the ends of the earth!

**Key Point:** What lesson are we to learn from all of this? **“If God can use Saul, He can use ANYONE!”** More specifically, He can use **YOU!** \*

Ask the Lord to use you for His glory this week. Maybe there are some newer kids at school without any friends that you can be a “Barnabus” to this week?

If you aren’t a believer in Jesus or you think your sin is too great for God to forgive, remember that if God can save Saul, He can save **YOU!** Trust in Jesus for salvation today and let God use your life in a way that surprises everyone!

# FIND THE TREASURE

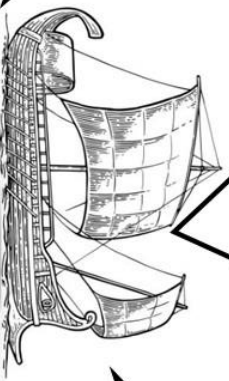


Scale of Miles  
0 50 100 200 300

**Mediterranean World**  
Countries or Areas and Islands

**Read Acts 9:26**  
Why were the believers in Jerusalem afraid of Saul?

**PARENT CHALLENGE**  
If God can use Saul, He can use you! How might God use you this week?



**Read Acts 9:27**  
Who is someone that you can be a "Parnabus" to this week?