

Saul Earns Credibility

Key Verse:
***“Straightway he
preached Christ in
the synagogues,
that he is the
Son of God.”***
—Acts 9:20

Selected Scripture:
Acts 9:19-31

IN PREVIEWING OUR LESSON we first note that it was the custom of the Apostles, who themselves were Jews, to go to the synagogues to preach. The message they gave was to call upon their Jewish brethren to first repent from their many failures under the Mosaic Law and turn their hearts back to

God. Then they would be in a condition in which they could properly receive the message of the Gospel, and by accepting it, be freed from their bondage to a law they could not keep.

Paul, whose name was Saul prior to his missionary journeys, used every opportunity afforded him to speak the Gospel of Christ. This is shown in his words, “I [am] determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” (I Cor. 1:17-25; 2:2) He later tells us in the same epistle, “Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”—chap. 9:16

Paul received a commission from the risen Lord, who spoke these words concerning him upon his conversion, “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15) Under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, he faithfully carried out a life of devotion

and service to God. (II Tim. 4:6-8) From the moment of his conversion until his death, Paul was not satisfied except by doing all in his power to make known the message of Christ to those having “ears to hear.”—Matt. 13:9,16; Isa. 55:3

Although he continued to preach in the Jewish synagogues, Paul’s missionary efforts were directed of the Lord mostly to the Gentiles. He is called the “apostle of the Gentiles.” (Rom. 11:13) After completing three missionary tours, Paul returned to Jerusalem. He had matured fully as a follower and apostle of Christ, and with complete faith now stood before King Agrippa and other Jewish and Roman authorities. (Acts 22-26) Following this, Paul was sent as a prisoner to Rome, and there continued to bear witness to the Truth.—II Tim. 4:16-18

Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews particularly stands out as being a fundamentally important part of God’s message to all “Israelites indeed.” Many Jewish Christians still felt obligated to features of the Law Covenant, and needed to untangle themselves by properly discerning between Old Testament types and shadows, and New Testament fulfillments. (Heb. 8:5; 10:1) Doing so would permit them to see the grand superiority of Christ and his work as the antitypical priest, king, and mediator of a New Covenant—all for the blessing of Israel and all the families of the earth in his Messianic kingdom.—Heb. 6:13-16

Most importantly, Paul’s message to the church was that they, whether Jew or Gentile, be faithful to their calling. He noted our privilege of being “partakers of the heavenly calling,” that it is “not according to our works,” but by God’s “purpose and grace.” (Heb. 3:1; II Tim. 1:9) With all seriousness he then reminds us of the need to “press toward the mark [along the line] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, . . . be thus minded.”—Phil. 3:12-15 ■