



# The Church Series

Part 7 – The Terrorist

# Introduction



- As the Early Church began to grow and spread, the antichrist spirit rose up to counter it.
- We see the various ways that this evil spirit tried to stop the Church: threats, greed, racial division, persecution and death.
- In this lesson, we will look at a turning point in the history of the Church – the conversion of Paul or Saul the terrorist.

# Damascus...

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- *Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest*
- *<sup>2</sup> and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*
- *<sup>3</sup> As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.*
- *<sup>4</sup> Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*  
Acts 9:1-4



# Saul...

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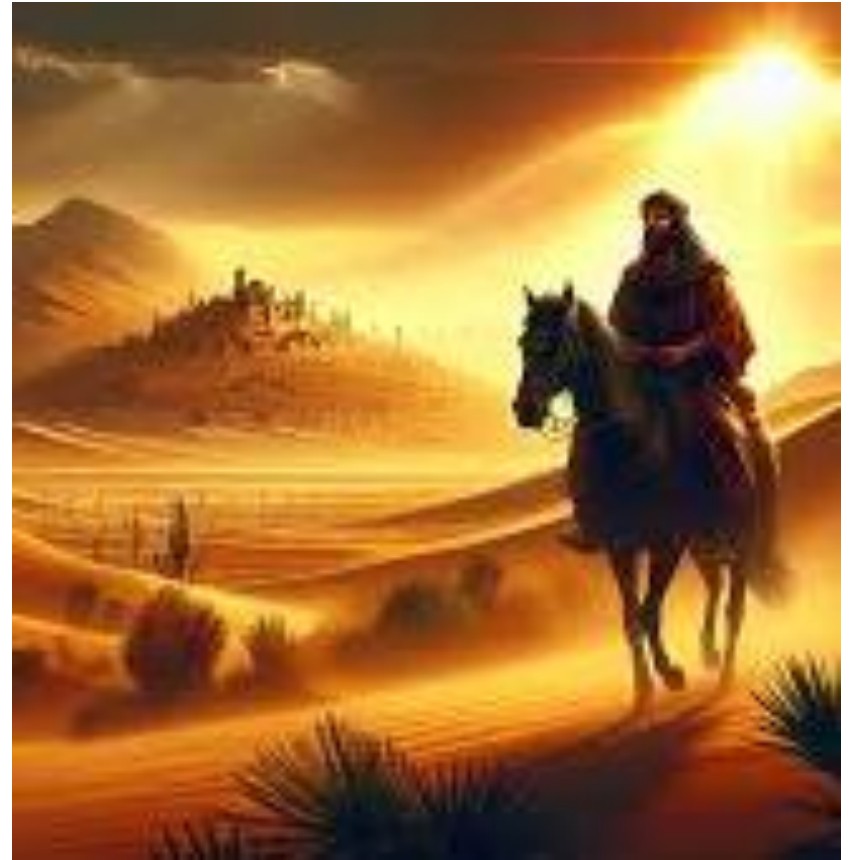
- Saul/Paul was born in the city of Tarsus, which was one of the centers of the Grecian culture. And up until the age of fourteen, though he was Hebrew of the Hebrews, that is his parents were of the Hebrew culture, very strong Pharisees,
- Paul's earliest acquaintances, friends, playmates, were all of the Hellenist culture. So he became acquainted with the Hellenist culture.
- But his parents, in order to shield him from the Hellenist culture, when he was fourteen, rather than send him to university
- there in Asia Minor, chose rather to send him to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where he might sit at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest teachers of that day and a Pharisee.
- Culled from Chuck Smith commentary



# Saul...

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- So Paul became deeply imbued with the Phariseidic culture,
- yet he never did freely get totally free of that Grecian cultural background that he had as a child.
- Perfect instrument that God needed to go out into that world and to reach those of the Hellenist culture
- with the straight truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



# Saul...

- God sees the heart beyond the actions of men.
- *<sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him.*
- *For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*  
*1 Samuel 16:7*
- Despite all the terrible actions of Saul who became Paul, God saw that his heart was right.





# Saul...

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- There are many people deceived by false religions or philosophies yet whose hearts are genuinely seeking God.
- “The Lord knows those who are His...” is a very deep statement.
- May we see as the Lord sees so that we can discern the Apostle hidden within a terrorist or the Evangelist lodged within a gangster



# Saul the terrorist..

- *went to the high priest ,<sup>2</sup> and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus,*
- *Saul was very meticulous and followed protocol. He was patient enough to get an appointment with the necessary authorities to support his mission.*
- *There was a network of religious orders in every region and he was willing to work with those of high office. A trait which would follow him into ministry.*





# Suddenly...

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- *<sup>3</sup>As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven*
- *God the God of SUDDENLY!*
- *You think you have your plans all figured out until, God shows up and changes everything.*
- *This moment changed the history of the Church and its momentum.*



# Off his horse...

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- *4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*
- *When God shows up everybody bows to the ground.*
- *You become aware of microphones in your heart, you never knew existed as you hear the VOICE of God!*
- *Why are you persecuting me?*
- *is DEEP!*
- *It means if you treat a child of God wrongly, you are doing it to God Himself!!*



# Who are you...

- <sup>5</sup> And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”
- Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”
- <sup>6</sup> So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”
- Then the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”



# Who are You...?

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- Saul did not know the voice of God.
- He was supposedly serving a God with whom he had no personal connection.
- This was how I felt as a young muslim when I was praying to a God who had never spoken with me!
- The authority in the voice made Saul add the word LORD to his enquiry.



# I am JESUS...

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- God identifies Himself to Saul with His Name.
- Whom you persecuting...
- The Lord repeats the claim that Saul was persecuting Him!
- The phrase our LORD uses is interesting; “hard to kick against the goads”
- Dual meaning – you cannot succeed and it will only cause pain.
- OR – You cannot fight your conscience.
- Many ministers believe that the Lord had been stirring Saul’s conscience for some time.





# Arise...

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- Saul was told by the Lord that he would be told what to do.
- All arrangements had been made by Heaven without his awareness of input
- Astonished and trembling..
- This is the state of all human beings before the Majesty Himself.
- God has plans for all of us. May He knock us off our high horse to fall before Him and ask “ what must I do LORD?”



# Blind...

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- <sup>7</sup> And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.
- <sup>8</sup> Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no one.
- But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus.
- <sup>9</sup> And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.



# Blind

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- Even the men with him heard a voice but did not understand what was being said.
- When he arose he was blind.
- This showed up his true spiritual state.
- “I was blind but now I see”
- Everyone who has not received Christ is blind and in darkness
- His entry into Damascus was in weakness rather than in his own strength.
- He needed help to travel into the city!
- He fasted for three days without drink or food. This would have been a time of deep reflection and repentance.



# Ananias...

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- <sup>10</sup> Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.”
- And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”
- <sup>11</sup> So the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight,
- and inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.
- <sup>12</sup> And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him,
- so that he might receive his sight.”



# Ananias

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- The Lord takes delight in using anonymous people.
- We never know what great thing God will use ordinary people for to Glorify Himself.
- We never hear of Ananias after this yet he is someone who is walking closely with the Lord.
- There are many hidden giants in our midst. Those who have done and are doing great things that nobody knows about.





# Vision...

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- As Saul is praying, he is shown a vision of the future where he sees Ananias praying for him.
- We do not know what was happening to Saul during those three days but they signify the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus which was three days.
- Taking time to be with God in prayer and fasting has great spiritual significance



# Ananias

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- <sup>13</sup> Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.
- <sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”
- <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children<sup>[c]</sup> of Israel.
- <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”



# Ananias...

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- Ananias' interaction with Jesus is very revealing and refreshing.
- It shows that we can bring our doubts and questions before the Lord without fear.
- The Lord does not rebuke him but reassures him that all is well.
- If God told you to go and lay hands on Osama Bin Laden when he was alive, you would feel the same way!
- Knowing Jesus and being able to interact with Him is the normal Christian life!



# Ananias...

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- <sup>17</sup> And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said,
- “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”
- <sup>18</sup> Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.
- <sup>19</sup> So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.





# Ananias...

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- Ananias obeyed the Lord and went.
- Ananias was divinely guided to the right house by the Spirit!
- Ananias calls him “Brother Saul”...which shows the Grace upon Ananias to embrace an enemy as a brother
- Saul is healed, Filled with the Spirit and Baptised.
- Ananias has the incredible honour of ushering in a new chapter for the Church and then disappears into anonymity!!
- All those crying out for the stage and limelight, take note!!





# Memory Verse

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- *<sup>10</sup> Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias;*
- *and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.”*
- *And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”*
- Acts 9:10

