

Oct 11, 2015



# Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks  
Baptist Church  
Grand Prairie, Texas

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### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:**  
Our testimony is the witness of what God has done for us

**HYMN FOR THE WEEK:**  
I love to tell the story of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love. I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true; It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do. —Hankey

**SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:**  
*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

(2 Cor 3:4-6 NIV)

(From "Our Daily Bread", Oct 10, 2013)

Series: **THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY COMES ALIVE**

UNIT: Giving Bold Testimony

NEXT WEEK

**Breaking Down Barriers**  
(Acts 10:24-38)

## A Dynamic New Witness Acts 9:19-31

### Aim and Application of the Lesson

The lesson explains how Saul became **A Dynamic New Witness**. The **study's aim** is to understand the special challenges faced by the apostle Paul in the earliest days of his ministry. The **study's application** is finding ways of helping new believers be accepted, grow and overcome barriers in their lives.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Lesson Introduction and Background

When we are suspicious that someone will behave as badly as always, we may predict it by citing the proverb, "A leopard can't change his spots." Many who are familiar with this saying are perhaps unaware of its source: the prophet Jeremiah. Frustrated by the depravity of his people and predicting their imminent judgment, Jeremiah said that they had become so wicked that it would be no more possible for them to change their preference for evil than for a leopard to change its spots. So they might as well get ready for punishment (Jeremiah 13:23). Even so, God can change the spots that a leopard cannot! Likewise, God can change the heart of those who repent. This is one of the most distinct features of Christianity. God's grace is so magnificent and his love so powerful that even the most desperate sinner can turn to him and be forgiven. Put another way, the genius of the gospel lies in the foundational premise that even the most hardened sinner can be changed by God's power. The premier example of this principle is the subject of our lesson today: the apostle Paul, initially known as Saul. As seen in previous lessons, the church at first focused its evangelistic efforts on Jerusalem and the surrounding area. The success of these efforts, combined with lingering hostility toward Jesus himself, led the Jewish religious authorities to oppose the church and its message (see Acts 4:1-3, 13-21; 5:17, 18, 40). The situation became more oppressive, however, by an event that took place within four years of Jesus' death. While many Jewish Christians, including the apostles, regularly met and prayed at the temple (Acts 3:1; 5:12-14), others took the debate to synagogues that were frequented by Jews who had migrated to Jerusalem (6:9). The result was the martyrdom of Stephen (7:54-60). The Jewish authorities seemed concerned that the new teaching would get out of hand, so the high priest commissioned a zealous young Pharisee from Tarsus to take the lead in investigating the situation in Damascus, some 150 miles to the north of Jerusalem (9:1, 2; 26:12; compare 7:58; 8:1-3). Luke (the author of the book of Acts) tells us that Saul "began to destroy the church. The depth of Saul's repentance—the extent to which this leopard had his spots changed—is indicated by a small detail in today's text that is easily overlooked. Acts 9:29 indicates that Saul, after returning to Jerusalem and being accepted by the church, began to preach to Greek-speaking Jews—those who probably had moved to Jerusalem from elsewhere in the Roman Empire. At one level, Saul's selection of them as his target audience only makes sense: as a native of Tarsus and himself fluent in Greek (Acts 21:37), he naturally may have felt drawn to Jews of similar background. A closer look, however, suggests a deeper motive. Saul first appears in Acts at the stoning of Stephen, who was killed after he had preached to Jews from Greek-speaking areas (Acts 6:8-14). Stephen had worked among those from Cilicia (6:9), the Roman province in which Tarsus, Saul's hometown, was located. This fact can explain his own involvement in Stephen's death (8:1) and the urgency of his desire to stamp out what he saw as heresy (8:3). If this is the case, then Acts 9:29 may be telling us that Saul not only changed his outlook on Christ but also continued Stephen's work among his (Saul's) fellow expatriates as he tried to undo his earlier damage. By returning to the scene of his earlier crime against Christ, Saul's conversion was truly complete.

*(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

## NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

### SAUL REDEEMED (ACTS 9:19-22)

#### *Redeemed physically (19)*

Physical strength through food (Acts 27:33-35)

Physical strength through strength God provides (Ps 18:32)

Physical strength to do everything (Phil 4:13)

Physical strength from the One who supplies all needs (2 Cor 9:10-11)

#### *Redeemed spiritually (20-21)*

Spiritual strength to protect us from Satan (2 Thess 3:3)

Spiritual strength to keep us blameless (1 Cor 1:8)

Spiritual strength that restores (1 Peter 5:10)

Spiritual strength through God's grace (2 Cor 12:9)

### SAUL PERSECUTED (ACTS 9:23-25)

#### *Plots planned (23-24)*

Plots against the righteous (Ps 37:12)

Plots of injustice (Ps 64:6)

Plots of deception and evil (Prov 12:20)

Plots of iniquity and defrauding (Mic 2:1-2)

#### *Plots foiled through rescue (25)*

Rescued through leadership (Prov 24:11)

Rescued through loosing the yokes of others (Isa 58:6-7)

Rescued through carrying other's burdens (Gal 6:2)

Rescued by snatching from the devil's fire (Jude 1:22-23)

### SAUL HELPED (ACTS 9:26-27)

#### *Initial disbelief and fear (26)*

Fear of man is not wise because what can man really do to us (Ps 56:11)

Disbelief because of what others may think (Gal 2:12)

Fear God, not man, because God can destroy the body and soul (Matt 10:28)

#### *Barnabas intercession (27)*

Intercession because we have been commanded to do so (James 5:16)

Intercession for inner strength for others (Eph 3:16-17)

Intercession by bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2)

Intercession by bearing with one another through forgiveness (Col 3:13)

### SAUL'S BOLD WITNESS (ACTS 9:28-31)

#### *Bold witness opportunities (28-30)*

Opportunities to work while Jesus' light is available (John 12:35)

Opportunities to work because the days are evil (Eph 5:15-16)

Opportunities to work to make the most of every opportunity (Col 4:5)

Opportunities to do good especially to other Christians (Gal 6:10)

#### *Bold witness results (31)*

Results in a peace that comes from having a Savior who overcame the world (John 16:33)

Results in a peace and edification (Rom 14:19)

Results in walking according to God's word (Ps 119:1-3)

Results in walking in a manner worthy of the calling of God (Eph 4:1-3)