

Acts 9:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Analysis

Saul, 'yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter,' actively persecuted Christians with murderous intent. The Greek *empneon* (breathing) suggests this was his very atmosphere - persecution consumed him. He sought letters from the high priest authorizing arrests in Damascus, showing organized, official persecution. From a Reformed perspective, this establishes Saul as the quintessential example of God's sovereign, irresistible grace - transforming the church's greatest enemy into its greatest missionary. No sinner is too far gone for God's electing love.

Historical Context

Damascus had a significant Jewish population and likely an emerging Christian community. Saul's journey (140 miles from Jerusalem) circa AD 34-35 to extend persecution beyond Judea shows the threat Christianity posed to traditional Judaism.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Saul's violent hatred of Christians magnify God's transforming grace?
2. What does Saul's zeal in persecution teach about misdirected religious fervor?
3. Why is Saul's conversion the ultimate example of God's sovereign election?

Interlinear Text

Ὁ δὲ Σαῦλος ἔτι ἐμπνέων ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόνου
G3588 **And** G1161 **Saul** G4569 **yet** G2089 **breathing out** G1709 **threatenings** G547 **and** G2532 **slaughter** G5408
εἰς τοὺς μαθητὰς τοῦ κυρίου προσελθὼν τῷ
against G1519 G3588 **the disciples** G3101 G3588 **of the Lord** G2962 **went** G4334 G3588
ἀρχιερεῖ
unto the high priest G749

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:3 (Parallel theme): As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

1 Timothy 1:13 (Parallel theme): Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Galatians 1:13 (Parallel theme): For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

1 Corinthians 15:9 (Parallel theme): For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Acts 7:58 (Parallel theme): And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Psalms 27:12 (Parallel theme): Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

Philippians 3:6 (Parallel theme): Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

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