

Acts 9:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

Analysis

But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? The Damascus Jews' astonishment at Saul's transformation highlights conversion's radical nature and divine power's authentication.

All that heard him were amazed indicates widespread shock—Saul's reputation preceded him. The question *Is not this he who destroyed* emphasizes identity verification—confirming this is indeed the notorious persecutor. The verb *destroyed* (Greek: *portheō*) means to ravage or devastate, capturing the violence of Saul's pre-conversion activity.

Called on this name identifies early Christian practice—invoking Jesus' name in worship, baptism, and prayer. This divine name invocation demonstrates early Christianity's high Christology—treating Jesus as Yahweh. Saul, who persecuted those calling on Christ's name, now himself invokes that Name.

The purpose clause—that he might bring them bound unto chief priests—reminds hearers of Saul's original mission. His about-face from bringing Christians bound to proclaiming Christ freely demonstrates grace's transforming power. No one is

too far gone for God's redemption. This becomes paradigmatic for Paul's later ministry—if God saved Christianity's chief enemy, He can save anyone.

Historical Context

Saul's persecution (Acts 8:1-3, 22:4-5, 26:9-11) had been systematic and violent—entering houses, dragging believers to prison, voting for executions. His reputation extended beyond Jerusalem to Damascus's Jewish community, making his conversion all the more shocking.

The phrase called on this name reflects early Christian worship practice, treating Jesus as divine (Romans 10:13, 1 Corinthians 1:2). Saul's persecution targeted this central Christian confession—that Jesus is Lord. His conversion meant embracing the very claim he'd violently opposed. This transformation around 34-35 CE provided powerful apologetic—if Saul of Tarsus converted, Christianity's claims must be true.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Saul's radical transformation demonstrate grace's power to convert the hardest hearts?
2. What does calling on Jesus' name reveal about early Christian Christology and worship practices?
3. In what ways does Paul's conversion provide apologetic evidence for Christianity's truth?
4. How should believers respond when confronted with dramatic conversions of unlikely candidates?
5. What encouragement does Saul's transformation offer regarding seemingly impossible conversions?

Interlinear Text

ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες τοὺς ἀκούοντες καὶ ἔλεγον
him were amazed But all them which that heard and said
G1839 G1161 G3956 G3588 G191 G2532 G3004

Οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν τοὺς πορθήσας ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ
not this Is them which he that destroyed in Jerusalem
G3756 G3778 G2076 G3588 G4199 G1722 G2419

τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους τοὺς ὄνομα τοῦτο καὶ ὧδε
them which called on them which name that and hither
G3588 G1941 G3588 G3686 G5124 G2532 G5602

εἰς τοῦτο ἐληλύθει ἵνα δεδεμένους αὐτοὺς ἀγάγη
for that came that bound them he might bring
G1519 G5124 G2064 G2443 G1210 G846 G71

ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς
unto them which the chief priests
G1909 G3588 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.

2 Thessalonians 1:10 (Parallel theme): When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.