

A Chosen Vessel

Acts 9



*Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me,
to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children
of Israel*
Acts 9:15

There is something in many of us that particularly fails to forgive and forget earlier mistakes in life—either our mistakes or the mistakes of others. ...

“Let people repent. Let people grow. Believe that people can change and improve”



Saul—Paul (Latin)

He was born in 1-3 AD, the son of Tarsus, and born a free Roman citizen

He was brought up a Jew and trained as a Pharisee under the study of Gamaliel in Jerusalem

He was from the Tribe of Benjamin (Philemon 3:5)

His father was a tentmaker, so more than likely he was too

He was a persecutor of the Saints, took part in the martyrdom of Stephen, then on his way to Damascus was visited by the Lord Jesus and was ‘reborn’

He lived in Arabia for 3 years and came back to begin his mission for the Savior

He traveled to the east and north of the Mediterranean and wrote many letters (Epistles) to specific cities

He died after his 5th missionary journey in 65-68 AD-- tradition says he was beheaded in Rome by emperor Nero (The New Testament does not say when and how he died)



Other family members of Saul

Saul had a sister, and her son saves the Apostle's life (Acts 23:16)



Tarsus

Capital of Cilicia

One of 3 greatest centers
of learning during Saul's
days.



Training and Education of Saul

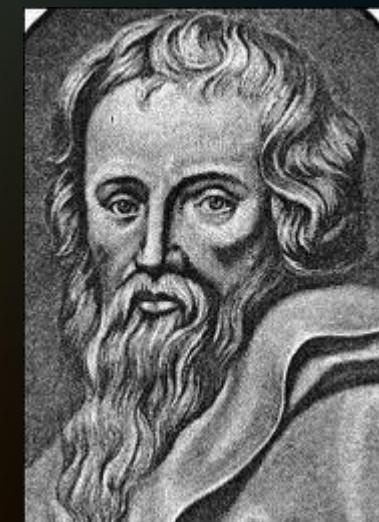
Learned in the Sacred Law

Jewish upbringing with Greek influence.
Hebrew tongue (Aramaic), and Greek

Taught by Gamaliel...a celebrated
Jewish teacher



It was an honor to study in the “Beth Hammidrash” or “House of Interpretation”



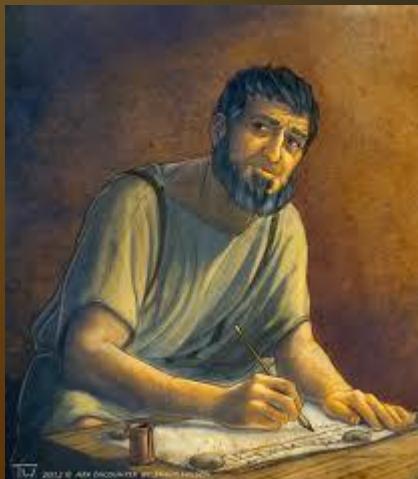
Studies

Halachah—Precepts of the law—legal code



Haggada—historical events of the scriptures, using parables and allegories

Possibly trained as a Rabbi



Meeting Saul---Luke Records

The young man present at
the stoning of Stephen



“...and a witness laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.”

Persecution of the Church Members

“And Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen’s) death.”



“As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”

Confession of Saul

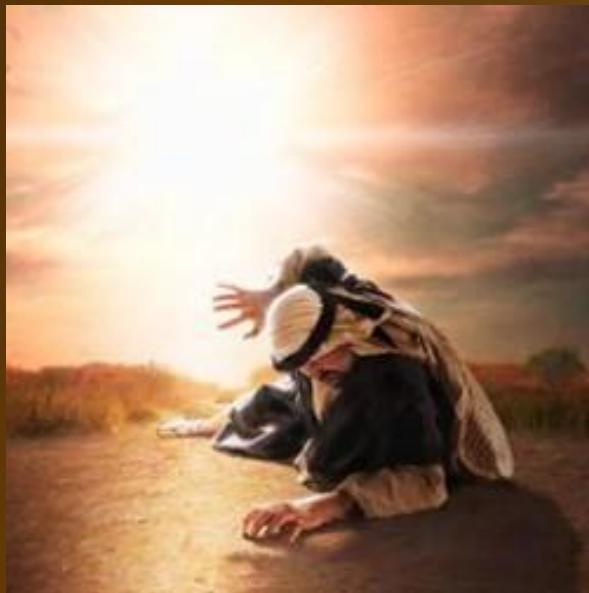
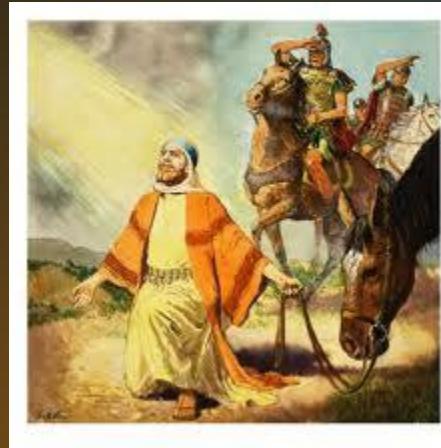
“...and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.”



“And I punished them oft in every synagogue...I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

On the Road to Damascus

Light from Heaven



Falls to the earth

“...Saul, Saul, why
persecutest thou me?”

Are we waiting on the road to Damascus?



“...They stand at the waters of baptism
but do not enter.

They wait at the threshold of testimony
but cannot bring themselves to
acknowledge the truth.

Instead of taking small steps of faith on
the path of discipleship, they want
some dramatic event to compel them
to believe.”



Damascus



Northeast of Damascus



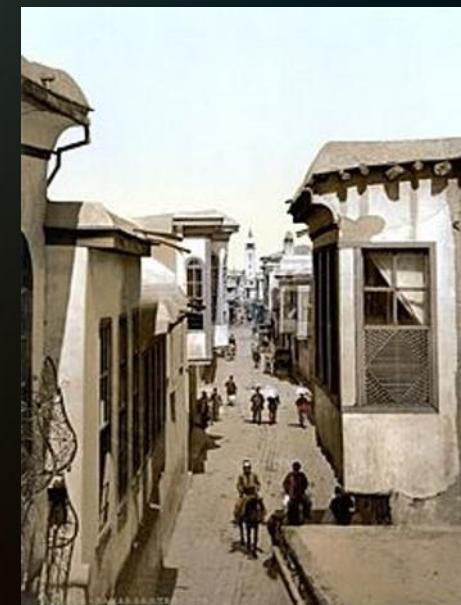
Present Day capital of Syria

A Roman Province of Syria in
days of Apostles

Terminating points for trade in
the Near East

By prophecy (Isaiah) it was
destroyed and then rebuilt

Present day...Christian quarter
located on street named
“Straight”



Damascus--City



Street bazaars



Damascus Steel



Famous treasured cloth “damask”

City wall surrounding City where Paul escapes in a basket (Acts 9:23–25)

Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the saints

Who Art Thou, Lord?

“And the Lord said, I am
Jesus whom thou
persecutest...



Kick against the pricks



During the time of Jesus, many people were farmers and used oxen to till the soil. A prickle, or goad, was a pointed shaft sharpened to a point on one end, much like a metalwork prickle. This was held up to an ox by the driver in such a way that if the ox turned in the wrong direction, it would get pricked. Sometimes an ox would attempt to kick the irritant away, which would only drive it in deeper.

“Goud”

A sharp spear used to
prick the hides of animals
to make them move
ahead

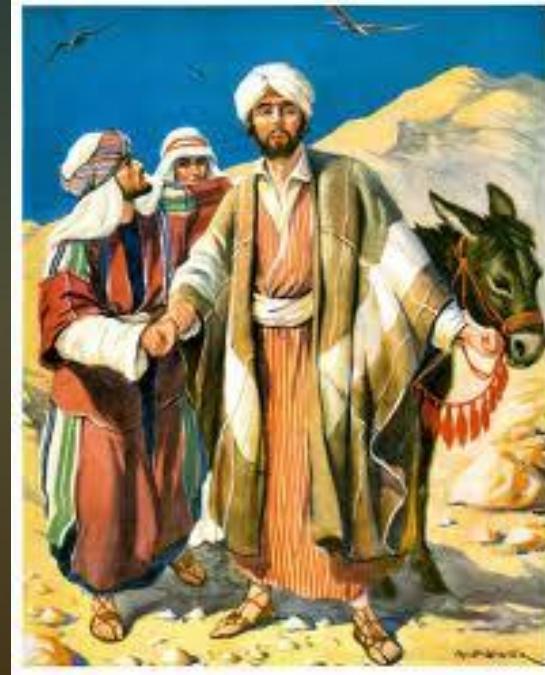


The tendency when kicked
is to “Kick back”, to
retaliate

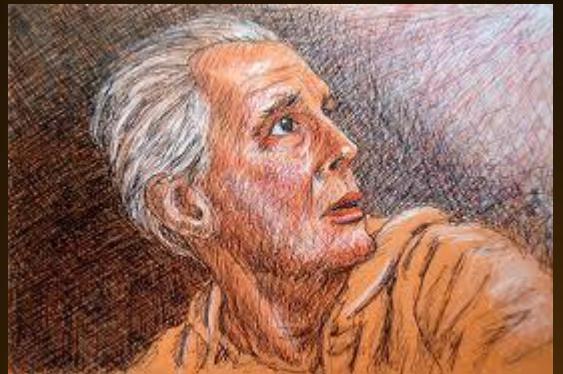
What wilt thou have me to do?



“...Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”



Men with him are speechless



Ananias a Disciple

Has a vision

“Behold, I am here, Lord.”



“...Go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul...”

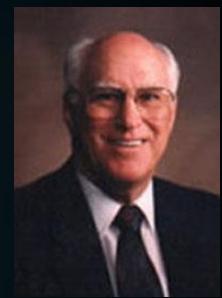
A Chosen Vessel

Ananias has heard about
the persecution by this
man, Saul



“...Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:”

Saul's Companions



In this account, we are told that Paul's associates heard the voice of Jesus.

However, a later account of Paul's conversion conflicts with this version. Paul stated that they 'saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me'.

...surely the voice and message of the Lord was for Paul alone, although his companions in travel might be permitted to see the light and thereby be assured of the unusual event that was taking place."



Saul is Blinded—3 Days

We are taught by latter-day scriptures that the impure cannot withstand the presence of God.

Moses declared, '*mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence*' (Moses 1:11).

Furthermore, the scriptures declare that the priesthood is necessary in order for a man to see God the Father.

Yet remarkably, Saul was allowed to see the Son without being destroyed—even though his actions had been wicked and he held no priesthood.



But Saul could not withstand the presence of the Son unscathed—there had to be an effect upon his physical body.

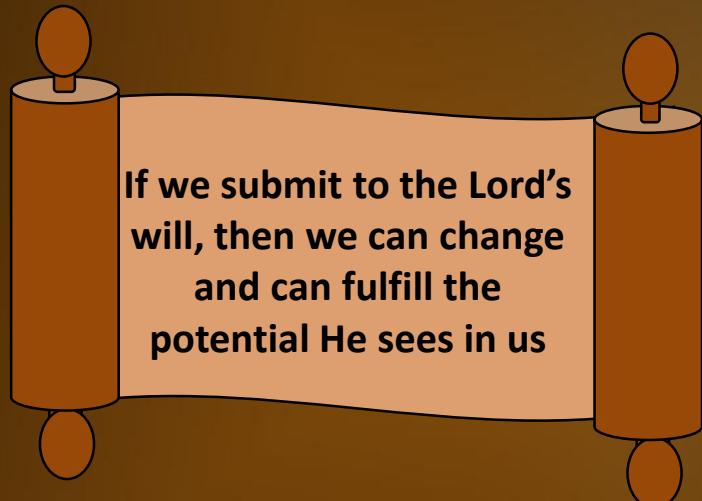
Using Priesthood Authority

“...Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

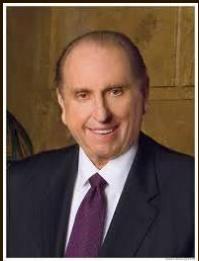


Sight Restored

“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales...



“and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”



“When the Savior was to choose a missionary of zeal and power, He found him not among His advocates but amidst His adversaries.

The experience of Damascus’s way changed Saul.

Of him the Lord declared, ‘He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

Saul the persecutor became Paul the proselyter.”



Saul Leaves For Arabia

We learn in Galatians that after Saul's conversion he left Damascus and journeyed to Arabia.

It is not recorded why Saul went there, but he may have gone for study and reflection.

or he may have fled there for safety



He sojourned in Arabia for as long as three years. While there, Saul likely deepened his understanding of how Jesus Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. After his time in Arabia, he returned to Damascus for a short period of time before journeying to Jerusalem to see Peter and other Church leaders.

Barnabas—Tribe of Levi

He sold property to the church.

He welcomed Paul, the former persecutor of the Saints.

He was sent to Antioch

Church leaders in Jerusalem sent him to minister in Antioch (in Syria) because a large number of people there had been converted to the gospel.

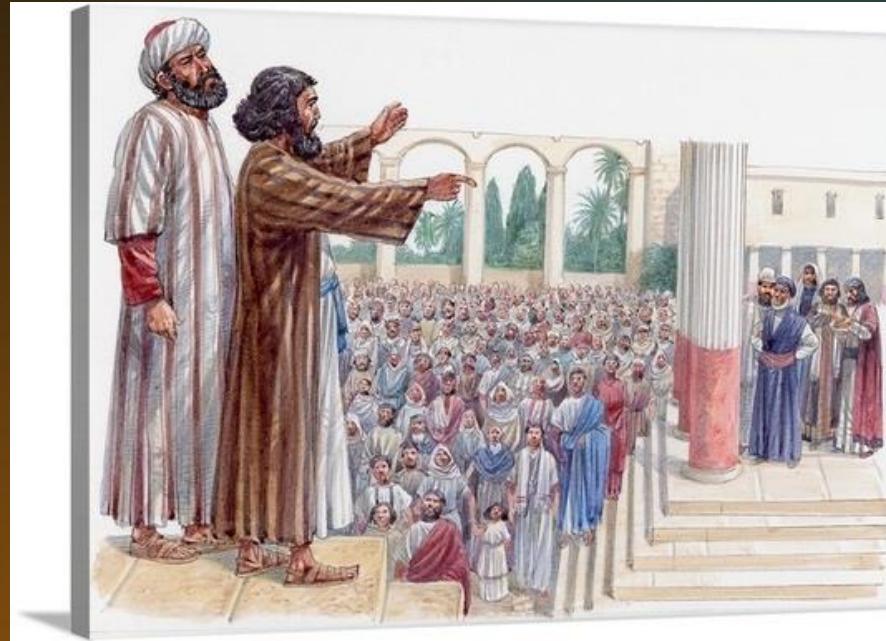
These conversions occurred because Church members who were persecuted in Jerusalem after Stephen's death fled to Antioch and preached there.



* Note that Acts includes references to two different Antiochs—Antioch in Syria and Antioch in Pisidia. Both Antiochs lie within present-day Turkey.

Barnabas Seeks Saul

From Antioch, Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to seek Saul, for Saul had fled there to escape persecution in Jerusalem, and the two men returned to Antioch to teach the gospel.



They were chosen to take donations from the Saints in Antioch to members of the Church in Judea, who were suffering during a famine.

Barnabas later became Saul's missionary companion during his first mission.

Peter Heals

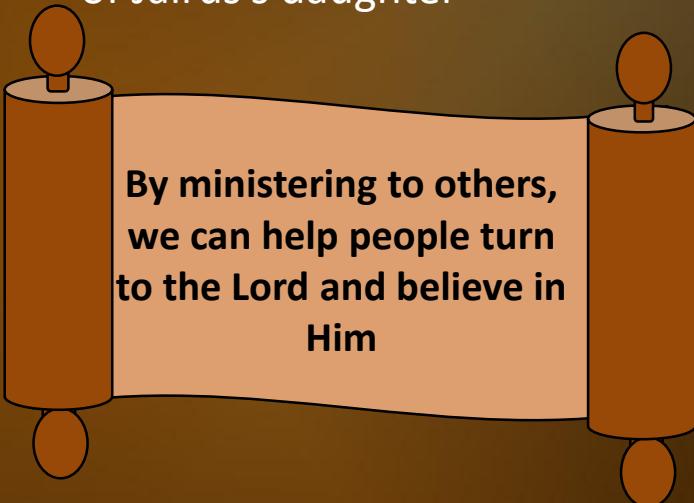
While ministering in Lydda and Joppa, Peter healed Aeneas and Tabitha (also called Dorcas)



Luke's care in recording these similar events reflects one of his purposes: to affirm continuity between Jesus Christ and the Church and show a continuation of Jesus Christ's power and authority in Peter.



The raising of Tabitha parallels the Savior's raising of Jairus's daughter

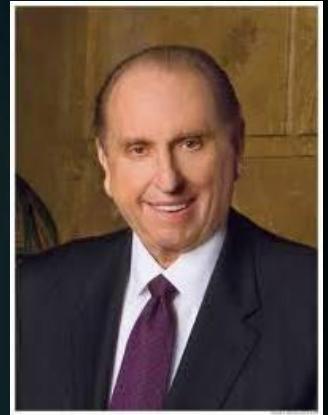


Tabitha's "good works and almsdeeds" likely included the sewing of clothing for the poor.



Caroline Augusta Lord

"To me the scriptural reference to Tabitha, which describes her as a woman 'full of good works and almsdeeds,' defines some of the fundamental responsibilities of Relief Society; namely, the relief of suffering, the caring for the poor, and all which that implies."



Acts 8-11 Events

Acts 8:5-25

Acts 8:28-38

Acts 8:1-3;
Acts 9:1-2

Acts 9:3-19

Galatians 1:17



Acts 9:30

Acts 10:9-18

Acts 10:24-33

Acts 11

Acts 11:19

Sources:

Suggested Hymn: #101 Guide Me To Thee

Videos:

The Road to Damascus (5:22)

The Healing Ointment of Forgiveness (1:13)



1. New Testament Institute Student Manual Chapter 31
2. *Who's Who in the New Testament* by Richard J. Allen pp. 134-136
3. *Paul's Life and Letters* by Dr. Sidney B. Sperry
4. Bible Dictionary
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf "Waiting on the Road to Damascus" April 2011 General Conference
6. *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles* pg. 246-247, 256-258
7. Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith Memorial Sermons*, p. 10
8. President Thomas S. Monson ("Choose You This Day," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 69). ("Be Thou an Example," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 99).
9. Gospeldoctrine.com

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

About A.D. 1–3	Born in Tarsus of the tribe of Benjamin—a Pharisee and a Roman citizen by birth	Acts 9:11; 22:3, 27–28; Philippians 3:5
About A.D.19–29	Taught by Gamaliel in Jerusalem	Acts 22:3
A.D. 33	Witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen and persecuted Christians in the Jerusalem area	Acts 7:54–8:4; Philippians 3:6
A.D. 33	On the road to Damascus, saw a vision of Jesus Christ, was converted, and preached of Christ in Damascus	Acts 9:1–25
A.D.33–35	Fled Damascus to Arabia	Galatians 1:17
A.D. 35	Returned to Damascus and briefly preached the gospel	Galatians 1:17
A.D. 35	After three years visited Jerusalem and spoke with Peter and James, the Lord's brother	Acts 9:26–29; Galatians 1:18–19
A.D.35–49	Spent 14 years in Syria-Cilicia (part of that time on his mission with Barnabas). Tarsus, Paul's hometown, was located in Cilicia.	Acts 9:30; 11:19–26; Galatians 2:1, 21
A.D.46–49	First missionary journey (with Barnabas)	Acts 13:1–14:28
A.D. 49	Attended the Jerusalem Conference	Acts 15:12; Galatians 2:1–2
A.D.49–53	Second missionary journey	Acts 15:36–18:20
A.D. 53	Visited Jerusalem	Acts 18:21–22
About A.D.54–58	Third and final mission	Acts 18:23; 19:1–20:38
About A.D. 58	Farewell visit to Greece; traveled to Jerusalem to deliver offerings for the poor	Acts 21:1–16
Spring A.D. 58	Reported to presiding Brethren in Jerusalem, had misunderstandings at the temple, and was arrested	Acts 21:17–23:22
Spring A.D.58–60	Imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 23:23–26:3
Fall A.D.60–Spring A.D. 61	While under arrest, traveled by sea to Rome. Shipwrecked and spent winter months on the island of Melita (Malta) just south of Sicily.	Acts 27:1–28:1
About A.D.61–63	Under house arrest in Rome	Acts 28:16–3
A.D.63–66	Possible ministry in Rome and other locations in Italy	Acts 28:30–3
	Second Imprisonment in Rome	
About A.D. 68	Died	

Damascus:

"Claiming to be the world's oldest city having continuous habitation, Damascus, present-day capital of Syria, was also in the Roman province of Syria in the days of the apostles. Situated some 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem and approximately 65 miles from the Mediterranean Sea, Damascus lies in the heart of a fertile plain.

"The supremacy of Damascus among ancient cities is clearly found in the fact of its location. It was the terminus point for three principal trade routes of the ancient Near East. Its close proximity to Jerusalem made Damascus a city of great importance to ancient Israel and Judah." (*The Life and Teachings of Jesus & His Apostles*, (1979 Institute Manual), p. 257)

The Roman ruins in the desert oasis of Palmyra to the towering Crusader castle known as the Crac des Chevaliers near the Mediterranean coast. The nation's capital, Damascus, is also one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world.

"Kick Against the Pricks" Acts 9:5:

We must remember that the King James Version of the Bible was written in 17th century English. Hence, the meaning of certain phrases requires some explanation. 'To kick against the pricks' is an expression meaning to persecute the Church (see DC 121:38). That it was 'hard for [Saul]' doesn't mean that he lacked the tendency or the natural ability, but that his efforts were hard *on him* in ways he did not yet understand. In essence, Saul's efforts were destroying himself more than they were destroying the Church.

'.. Those who kick at the goad, that stifle and smother the convictions of conscience, that rebel against God's truths laws, that quarrel with His providences, that persecute and oppose His ministers, because they reprove them . . . and fly in the face of their reprovers, they kick against the pricks, and will have a great deal to answer for.' (Commentaries by Henry M. Scott.)

"A goad is defined as a spear or a sharp pointed stick used to sting or prig. The burro who kicks the sharp instrument with which he is being prodded is kicking at the pricks. His retaliation does little damage to the sharp stick or to him who wields it but brings distress to the foot that kicks it.

"I well remember in my youth a neighbor who moved about some days on crutches. He was evasive when asked the cause of his misfortune, but an ear witness told me, as he chuckled: 'John stubbed his toe on a chair in the night and in his quick, fierce anger, he kicked the chair and broke his toe.' The rocking chair rocked on and on, and perhaps smiled at the stupidity of man." Spencer W. Kimball (*Conference Report*, April 1955, p. 94.)

"In this figure of speech is captured the essence of rebellion against God; we can only hurt ourselves. If one is pricked by a goad and angered by the pain, he may foolishly strike out at the source of irritation, only to suffer even more." (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 305.)

An enemy to the Church:

"Saul was foreordained; nothing he had done on earth qualified him for what was ahead; but his native spiritual endowment, nurtured and earned in pre-existence, prepared him for the coming ministry." Elder Bruce R. McConkie (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:91).

The Chosen Vessel Acts 9:15:

"It is given to but few to wield a more powerful influence over Christian history than to Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor who became a prophet, the Pharisee who became the apostle to the Gentiles. The life and teachings of the Apostle Paul stand as bright reminders of the power of Christ to transform the souls of men and women, to remake the human heart, and to refocus one's misdirected zeal into the way of the Master. When the risen Lord appeared in vision to Ananias of Damascus and instructed him to send for the stricken and blinded Saul, Ananias answered: 'Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.' The response that followed bespeaks the Redeemer's insight into the wonders that would be done at Paul's hand: 'Go thy way: for *he is a chosen vessel unto me*, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel' (Acts 9:11-15; emphasis added)....[Paul] taught with a power, a persuasion, and a holy zeal known only to those who, like Alma and the sons of Mosiah, have gone from darkness to light and whose whole soul yearns to lead others to that same light." (*Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series*, p. 69.)

Saul's' Physical Appearance by Joseph Smith:

"[Paul] is about five feet high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembles the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator" (in "Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book," p. 4, Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University; copy in Church History Library, Salt Lake City).