

## CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

(Acts 9:1-19)

A. The **conversion** of Saul is unique in some ways, but in other ways it serves as a model of every true conversion (turning around & toward) to Christ.

1. It is the uniqueness of it that causes some to misunderstand God's purpose in revealing it.

a. It was not revealed to show us that Jesus speaks directly to people today.

b. It was not revealed to demonstrate that salvation comes by a personal experience with God.

[In our study today we will delve into these matters & discuss how this occurrence was unique to Saul, & also how his conversion is a model for every true conversion.

**Read Acts 9:1-9]**

## I. SELECTION

A. **Saul's efforts** to overthrow the cause of Christ went to the extreme (22:4-5; 26:9-12), but Jesus brought Saul's plan to a halt & brought him to his knees.

- Saul was on the road to Damascus at high noon (Acts 22:6, 26:13).
- He saw a great light from heaven shining around him, brighter than the sun (Acts 22:6, 26:13).
- This light was also seen by those who were with him (Acts 26:13).
- They all fell to the earth (Acts 26:14).
- But Saul alone heard a voice in his native tongue saying, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 26:14).
- Saul responded, "Who are you, Lord."
- The voice replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).
- Saul answered, "Lord, what do you want me to do" (Acts 9:6)?

B. **Jesus had** both long & short term plans for Saul.

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**Long Term: Acts 26:16-18** – But rise & stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister & a witness both of the things which you have seen & of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, & from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins & an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

**Short Term: Acts 9:6** – Arise & go into the city, & you will be told what you must do. **22:10** – Arise & go into Damascus, & there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.

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### C. A few lessons to this point:

1. To persecute the church is to persecute Jesus.
  - a. When we are persecuted for His cause (word, truth), then we know He feels the pain too.
2. Sincerity alone will not save anyone; a good conscience does not always result in God's approval.
  - a. Paul told his fellow Jews that he lived with a good conscience (**Acts 23:1**), & yet he was sincerely wrong.
3. God may use the most unlikely of people to accomplish His will.

- a. The Lord took His greatest opponent & turned him into His greatest advocate (**Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 1 Tim 1:12-13**).
4. Jesus explained the reason He appeared to Saul (**Acts 26:16-18**), but the Lord did not tell Saul what He must do to be forgiven of his dreadful sins & to be saved.
    - a. In other words, Saul was going to be saved like everyone else – through preaching (**Acts 2:40; 11:14; Jas 1:21**).

## II. SORROW

A. **Repentance** is a prerequisite to forgiveness & salvation (**Acts 2:38; 3:19**).

1. But before one can repent, he must feel sorrow (remorse, regret, contrition) for his sins (e.g., **Psa 51**).

B. **Saul felt contrition** for three days; during which time he was also blind, fasting & praying (**Acts 9:9**).

1. In Scripture, the number three is associated with a period of suffering & punishment.

- Egypt was without the sun for 3 days of darkness ([Exo 10:22](#)).
- God punished Israel was punished with 3 days of pestilence because of David's sin ([2 Sam 24:13](#)).
- Jonah was in the belly of the fish for 3 days & nights ([Jonah 1:17](#)).
- Esther called for 3 days & nights of fasting ([Esther 4:16](#)).
- Jesus' body was in the tomb for 3 days ([Mark 8:31](#)).

2. In Scripture, blindness was often a punishment from God for sin.

- The evil men of Sodom were struck with blindness ([Gen 19:11](#)).
- Blindness made one unfit for the OT priesthood ([Lev 21:18](#)).
- Blindness was a curse reserved for the disobedient ([Deut 28:28](#)).
- Elisha smote the Syrian army with blindness ([2 Kings 6:18](#)).
- Elymas was later punished with blindness by Saul ([Acts 13:11](#)).

3. In Scripture, fasting & praying were done when the most serious matters had to be considered; it was a customary way to express sincere sorrow.

- David fasted when his child was ill ([2 Sam 12:16](#)).
- Samuel had Israel fast when the nation had sinned ([1 Sam 7:6](#)).
- Nehemiah fasted & prayed when he heard about Jer ([Neh 1:4](#)).
- Paul & Barnabas fasted & prayed before their first journey ([Acts 13:3](#)).
- Fasting & praying were done when ordaining elders ([Acts 14:23](#)).

4. Saul prayed & suffered through a period of blindness & fasting for three days as he considered the evil he had done against Jesus ([Acts 9:9](#); [22:11](#)).

C. Another lesson to this point:

1. Regardless of what great work God has planned for someone; to come to Christ he must feel a deep sense of sorrow for his sins against God – *otherwise he will not repent.*

- a. Jesus wanted Saul to be aware of the gravity of his sinful attitudes & actions & the need turn from them.
- b. He did that by letting Saul “stew in his own juices” for three days.
- c. And Saul still had to prove the nature of his sorrow, would it be a sorrow of the world or a godly sorrow leading to repentance & salvation (2 Cor 7:10).

### III. SALVATION

A. The next several verses in Acts 9 describe the completion of Saul’s conversion (Acts 9:10-20).

1. Later in Acts we find a fuller account of what Ananias said to Saul.

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**Acts 22:12-16** – Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, 13 came to me; & he stood & said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. 14 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, & see the Just One, & hear the voice of His mouth. 15 For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen & heard. 16 And now why are you waiting? Arise & be baptized, & wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

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B. A final lesson in this study.

- Even though Jesus had appeared to Saul & spoken directly to him.
- And even though Jesus told Saul that he was a chosen vessel to be a minister of the gospel & a witness of Jesus to the world.
- And even though Saul was extremely sorry for his sins, causing him to fast & pray for three days.
- Saul still had sins to wash away.
- And they were washed away in the blood of the Lamb at Calvary, Jesus Christ, when He (Saul) invoked the name of the Lord as Ananias baptized him (cf. Matt 28:18-19; Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5).

## CLOSING

### A. Why was God willing to show such mercy to a man so willfully opposed to His Son?

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**1 Tim 1:12-16** – And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, & an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith & love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying & worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 ***However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.***

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1. Oh what love, matchless love, Jesus demonstrated to Saul.
2. Such a great love is available to us for the same reason: everlasting life.

### God's Plan For Our Salvation:

**Hear the gospel of Christ:** Acts 2; 5; 13; Rom 10:17

**Believe Jesus to be the Son of God, Savior, Lord, Christ:** Jn 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31

**Repent of sin:** Acts 2:38; 17:30; 1 Jn 3:4; Acts 3:19

**Confess faith in Christ:** Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

**Baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins:** Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-4; Acts 2:38

**Be Obedient to Christ:** Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 Jn 9; Rev 2:10; Jn 12:48