

The Miraculous Conversion of Paul

Acts 9:1-9

In chapter 9 of Acts, Luke begins to give a broader view of what is taking place in the New Testament church. He departs from a careful analysis of apostles' experiences in Jerusalem. We are now seeing the power of the Holy Spirit touch and transform many lives in different areas. Among those transformed is the most unlikely person to become a convert; Saul of Tarsus. We have spoken much about God's determined will in our study of Acts. We have observed how God systematically established His church through the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is especially hard to imagine how God could turn the angry heart of Saul to believe in Jesus Christ. Like every other chapter, our study of Acts 9 focuses not on men or women but on the power of the Holy Spirit. We continue to read with amazement as we see the Holy Spirit transform and empower ordinary people to do things they would never think of doing under their own initiative. One can't help but read Acts 9 and wonder, "Has my life been changed significantly by the power of the Holy Spirit?" "Have I allowed the Holy Spirit to transform me and lead me in paths I would have otherwise feared?" "Or, have I rejected the urging of the Holy Spirit and insisted on my own way?" I suppose for most of us the answer is a little yes and a little no. Perhaps Acts 9 will inspire us to trust in the leadership of the Holy Spirit more.

The Damascus Road: Saul Converted

¹Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." ⁶So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Discussion Questions

Read all three accounts of Paul's life leading up to and including his conversion in Acts 9:1-9, 22:3-11, 26:4-18 and discuss the following questions.

1. What efforts did Saul go to in order to persecute Christians (vs 9:1-2, 22:4-5, 26:9-11)?
2. What explanations can you give for Saul's fanatic hatred toward Christians (6:10-14, 22:3-5; 26:5, 26:9-11)?
3. Why did Jesus ask, "Why are you persecuting me?" (9:4)?
4. What did Jesus mean by "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14)?
5. What question did Saul ask in response to Jesus (22:10)?
6. Why do you think Paul was blinded and forced to go to Damascus in that condition?
7. What are some things that Saul might have thought about during the remainder of his trip?
8. Who is the most outspoken critic of Christianity that you know? What would it take for you to believe that they might believe the gospel?

The story of Paul's conversion teaches us that ...***God is able to convert the most unlikely of sinners and use them as His chosen instruments in the cause of the gospel.***