

# From Church Persecutor to Church Planter: The Conversion of the Apostle Paul

Acts 9:1-9

## Introduction

There is no greater demonstration of God's grace and power than in the transformation of Saul to Paul.

- I. **Saul the Pharisee: Law-Keeper, Law-Enforcer (vv1-2);**
- II. **Divine Intervention (vv3-4);**
- III. **Divine Revelation and Confrontation (vv5-7);**
- IV. **Divine Transformation and Conversion (vv8-9).**

## I. Saul the Pharisee: Law-keeper, Law-Enforcer (vv1-2)

Philippians 3:4-8

Saul was a zealous Pharisee, exceptionally rigid and legalistic.

An aggressive fighter, contentious contender, a relentless competitor, Saul rigorously pursued positional advancement in Judaism.

Galatians 1:13-14

Acts 6:9-10

*"letters"* i.e., 'extradition papers.'

*"the Way"* 'the Way of salvation'; 'the Way of life'; popular name at the time for Christianity.

*"men or women"* Saul wanted to annihilate Christianity entirely – every man, every woman.

Saul was zealous for the Law, he was fully convinced that Christians were blasphemers of God.

Acts 26:11

Living contrary to God's will with a heart filled with toxic levels of hatred and hostility is a hard way to live:

*"It is hard for you to kick against the goads."* Acts 26:14

## II. Divine Intervention (vv3-4)

### God's Sovereignty in Salvation

Galatians 1:15-17

Acts 22:14-15

### **III. Divine Revelation and Confrontation** (vv5-7)

#### **Divine Revelation**

*"I am Jesus"*

**This time it was Paul's turn to see the vision of Christ.**

Acts 22:14-15

Acts 22:9

Simply put, it was not their conversion. It was Paul's.

Paul indicates elsewhere that he actually saw the risen Christ on this occasion (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:16; Acts 9:27).

#### **Divine Confrontation**

*"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."*

How is that possible?

Because the Spirit of the living Christ lives in every true believer. When you strike one of them, you strike Him directly.

*"From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."* Galatians 6:17

*"we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings."* 2 Corinthians 1:5

Colossians 1:24

### **IV. Divine Transformation & Conversion** (vv8-9)

Dumbstruck, much like Zechariah in Luke 1, no doubt this was meant for a time of serious personal reflection.

God finds occasions when it is necessary to get the undivided attention and *close the mouths* of the guilty.

Job 5:13-16

The men "stood speechless," (v7); "he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand" (v8); "for three days he was without sight" (v9).

#### **A Sign of True Conversion**

*"And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?'"* Acts 22:10

*"rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."* v6

A complete change of mind leads to a complete change of heart that leads to a complete change of life.

**Paul acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus Christ and submits to His will. This is true repentance.**

**Paul tore down the kingdom of his own will and religious ways and never returned to rebuild it!**

Galatians 2:18-20

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Romans 10:4

“*end*” Gk telos; ‘goal’ or ‘terminus.’

**There is now in Christ no more place for the law in man’s approach to God.**

Christ became for Paul the end of law-keeping as means of justification.

“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”

Galatians 3:24

Paul was not commended by Jesus for his fastidious law-keeping. He was granted mercy for persecuting the Christ who is the fulfillment of the law.

**Amazingly, Paul met *grace* not judgment.**

1 Timothy 1:12-17