

(Acts) the Conversion of Saul

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon on the conversion of Saul highlights the unexpected ways God can transform lives and the importance of faith in reaching others.

Duration: 52:35

Scripture: Acts 1:8, Acts 7:58, Acts 9:1-6, Acts 9:15-22

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the conversion of Saul, who was persecuting the early church. Saul's transformation from a fierce persecutor to a humble follower of Christ is highlighted as a powerful example of the Spirit of God's ability to change lives. The preacher emphasizes the importance of not underestimating the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in making someone into a completely different person. The sermon also explores the reasons behind Paul's remarkable impact on the spread of the gospel, attributing it to his obedience to the call of God and his submission to the Lord's guidance.

Transcript

Here we are, we're picking up in our study in the book of Acts and we come tonight to the ninth chapter and let's ask the Lord's blessing on the word and then we'll look at chapter nine together. Lord, we do pray now that you'd speak to us as we look at this great chapter and this great event that is recorded in this chapter. Lord, speak to us about how you work.

Speak to us, Lord, about the things that, Lord, you did and the things that you want to do in our lives. We want to learn the lessons from this story. So open our hearts to receive from you now, we pray in Jesus name, amen.

Now, before Jesus ascended into heaven. Perhaps you remember this, he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from heaven to be his witnesses. Their witness was then to begin in Jerusalem and spread out from Jerusalem.

Jesus said, you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth. So the first eight chapters of this book of Acts record for us the gospel going from Jerusalem to Judea and then into Samaria. In the ninth chapter, the stage is being set for the gospel to now go into all the world.

To go into the uttermost parts of the earth, as Jesus said that it would. You see, God, he has chosen to do his work through people. But before God can work through a person, God must work in that person.

So chapter nine begins with a story of the conversion of a man, not just any man, but a man who from all outward appearances would have been the most unlikely man of all. And that is a man named Saul. Now we were first introduced to Saul back in the latter part of the seventh chapter.

Just to refresh your memory, if you want to look back there at the seventh chapter, the 58 verse, here's our first introduction to Saul and our introduction to Saul comes when Stephen was being martyred, when he was being put to death for his testimony. We read in verse 58 and they cast him out of the city, Stephen, and they stoned him and the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. So here's our first introduction to Saul.

He is guarding the clothing of those who are putting to death. Stephen, the first martyr in the church. Now chapter eight, verse one says now Saul was consenting to his death, or you could literally translate this.

Saul had cast his vote for Stephen's death. Many believe based upon this and other statements that Paul was one of the members of the Sanhedrin, which was a 70 member council that ruled Israel and whatever decisions were made, they were made by vote. And that was the group of people that Stephen had actually preached before and they became angry at him and voted to put him to death.

And so it seems that this man, Saul, was probably part of that group. And so he was consenting to the death of Stephen. And at that time, a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem.

And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And we read in development carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, here he is again.

He made havoc of the church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. And so this is where we first met him. The one who's leading the persecution against the church.

Now we come to the ninth chapter and we read. Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest. So this is something that continued.

It wasn't just, you know, something that occurred immediately after the death of Stephen, but it was something that continued to go on for some period of time. And this man, Saul, was the one who was leading the charge against the church. And of course, the attack first broke out in Jerusalem and they were scattered and they went everywhere preaching the gospel.

But now we read that Saul wants to take it to a new level. He wants to go into new areas and he wants to track down those Christians that have fled and he wants to bring them back for trial to Jerusalem. So he went to the high priest and he asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus.

Now Damascus is about a hundred and thirty miles northeast of Jerusalem and probably a week's journey or so. And there was a large Jewish community there. And obviously, word had gotten around that there were many in that Jewish community who were actually believing in the Messiah ship of Jesus.

So Saul is wanting to go to Damascus so that if he found any who were of the way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus and

suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And 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 goats. So as is always the case in the scriptures, a very brief account of a very significant event, a very major event in the history of the church. Here's this man, Saul.

He's just destroying the church. The imagery in the language that's used to describe what he's doing is that of a wild beast just ripping to shreds a body of some sort. And he's breathing out threats and murders.

And again, there the imagery is that he's like a like a snarling bull. And so here's this man who's just so filled with with hostility and he's filled with real hatred toward this group of people. And now he's been commissioned by the high priest to go to Damascus.

And so he takes his journey. And as he gets near the city, probably a good week's journey or so. Much to his surprise, something happens to him.

And there is this light that shines around him now, later on in his life. And as we go further and further into the Acts of the Apostles, Paul himself will share his testimony a couple of times, and he will shed a little bit more light on this particular event as he describes it to the others that he will share it with later. But he talks about the fact that this light that shined upon him was brighter than the noonday sun.

Now, can you imagine the noonday sun near Damascus is would be a pretty intense brightness. And yet he says that there was a light that was brighter than the noonday sun and it shone around him. And then he heard this voice speaking to him as he's fallen to the ground and much to his surprise, it's Jesus.

But he says, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now, this is an interesting picture of conversion here because it's. It's an unusual conversion in many ways, it doesn't follow the typical pattern.

Of a person, you know, sort of seeking after God, after, you know, maybe a series of events that have occurred that have got them thinking in a new direction now, and, you know, they're on some sort of a journey or a spiritual quest or something. It's not anything like that at all. As a matter of fact, it's almost the opposite of that.

It's a man who's held bent on resisting God and working against God. But yet the Lord confronts this man and saves him. And one of the things that we learn from that is that.

You know, conversion happens in all kinds of different ways. A lot of times we we get sort of a narrow view of conversion and we think that unless somebody goes through, you know, this three step process or something like that, you know, maybe they're not really saved. But yet we find that the Lord has a variety of ways of dealing with people.

Sometimes it's through some human interaction. Sometimes it's through a person actually, you know, sitting and listening to a message and responding to an invitation that's given. Sometimes, like in the case with Saul, it is something that occurs without.

Any direct human mediation. We were so prone to think that unless somebody, you know, witnesses to somebody or unless somebody leads someone in what we call a sinner's prayer, that it's hardly likely that

anyone could be saved. But we need to learn not to limit the Lord and not to think that he's restricted to working in only those kinds of ways that we might have become familiar with here.

The Lord works in a very extraordinary way with this man. Saul. As I as I look at this story again, I just personally reminds me of my own experience in the sense that I never really had any human agency involved in my conversion.

I had the opportunity to do a radio interview. A couple of days ago, I can't remember what day it was because I don't even remember or know what day today is. But it was a few days ago.

Today's Saturday, right? It's the service. So I think it was Tuesday. I had the opportunity to do a radio interview in London.

And this lady asked me to to just, you know, sit down with her. And she she does a program that kind of gives people's backgrounds and so forth. So she was basically asking my testimony.

And as I began to reiterate to her the things that occurred in my life, that brought me to Christ, something that I haven't done in a while. It struck me once again how the Lord worked apart from any human agency. And she asked me and actually her assumption was somebody had told me about Jesus and sort of led me to the Lord.

And I told her, I said, well, you know, as a matter of fact, that did not happen in my life. It was the kind of a situation where the Lord dealt with me independent of any human means. And it was more of a direct encounter with him that brought me to salvation.

And, you know, it seems like, however, a person comes to know the Lord, they tend to. Sort of, you know, emphasize that in their perspective on how other people come to the Lord, I know people that came to the Lord through the classic invitation, altar call, sinner's prayer sort of a thing. And they are very convinced that that is the way to bring people to the Lord.

And it's effective and God uses them to do that. But then there are others who have a different experience, and so they will have a slightly different emphasis, perhaps. But the point that I'm wanting to make to you is that we have to remember that God is not limited to one particular means of saving people.

And here we see an extraordinary situation with Saul. There was no human agency involved. Jesus Christ, he intervened in the life of a man who wasn't even really looking to be saved, but actually in the life of a man who was opposing the work of God.

And here is where the mystery of salvation sort of really, you know, hits us in the face. There's a mystery to it. And we all of us believe in the freedom of choice that God has given us, and we we believe that we make a decision to follow Christ and the Bible teaches that.

But the Bible also teaches something about God choosing. And here's an example of that, that other side of the coin where the Lord is choosing this man. And I would imagine that Saul could have resisted even at this point, but obviously he didn't.

And it would have been very difficult to do so. But it just gives us a fuller picture of the whole issue of salvation and the mysterious aspect behind it. A man who's not looking to be saved, but yet the Lord intervenes and saves him.

And Jesus said something to him here that's intriguing. It gives us a little bit of a behind the scenes picture here. He said, it is hard for you to kick against the goads.

A goad was something that a farmer would use to prod the animal to get the animal to pull the plow was a sharp object and he would poke the oxen with the goad. And this was meant to get the oxen moving in a certain direction. But sometimes an ox would just kick against the goad, not respond to it.

But in doing so, the ox would bring injury upon itself. Jesus said to Saul, it's hard for you to kick against the goads. The implication is God had been dealing with him.

Behind the scenes, God had been convicting him, God had been seeking to prod him in a certain direction, but he had been resisting. Now, it's interesting because here's a guy who's completely hostile to the faith and no one would have ever thought that he could have possibly been at all close to conversion. I would imagine.

I would imagine if you took a survey and actually will find out as we read a bit further, no one would have ever expected that this guy was going to get saved. And as we read a bit further, when Jesus instructs a certain person to go and lay hands on him because he saved him, the guy says, oh, no, Lord, I'm sorry, I've heard about this guy. There's no way this guy's really saved.

See, he was a totally unlikely candidate because outwardly he seemed so far away from the possibility of salvation. He was fighting against it with everything in him. But the fact that he was fighting was indicative of the fact that God was prodding him.

God was dealing with him. And that's something that we need to understand ourselves. You know, sometimes we share the Lord with people and they get very angry.

They become hostile. They they're outraged. And we think, oh, my goodness, this person or these this person's certainly going to be lost forever.

Look at that reaction. And they are they're so far from God and there's so much against God. There's no way they're ever going to be saved.

I'm going to back off and forget that person. And then we talk to a person and we share the Lord with them and they they kind of nod and they smile and they say, well, that's really nice. And well, I'm happy for you.

I'm glad you found something like that. And that's wonderful for you. You're thinking, all right, they're close.

That's great. But, you know, actually, it could be the total opposite. You see, the person who is the most.

Annoyed is a lot of times the one that's the closest, and the fact that they're annoyed indicates that because it's showing that there's conviction that they're being convicted. There's this pressure coming upon them, there's a sense of their guilt and they're they're wanting to just, you know, oppose and resist as much as they can. And the other person who says, oh, that's wonderful, that's great.

You know, a lot of times that's a person who's really self-satisfied and they're happy that you found something that's been a blessing in your life. But, you know, they don't really need that because they're doing just fine. So we can misread things a lot of times, and I'm sure that they were misreading this guy because no one thought that he was anywhere close to being saved.

But the Lord had been dealing with him. And as we look back at the history, we could see certain things that God would have been using to deal with them. You know, there is a possibility that Saul had encountered Jesus during his public ministry.

They were relatively close in age. Jesus was probably older, but Saul wasn't much younger. Saul was a rabbinic student in Jerusalem.

He was one of the leading pupils of Gamaliel. Jesus, of course, frequented Jerusalem. Jesus, of course, taught in the temple.

Jesus, of course, was condemned by the Sanhedrin. So if Saul was part of the Sanhedrin, he would have been one of those who cast his vote against Jesus. I don't know that that would have been the case.

It seems like had that been the case, he might have alluded to that. But it is within the realm of possibility that Saul had had some sort of an encounter with Jesus himself in the flesh. That would just be speculation to say that he did.

We don't know for sure, but. We do know that he sat through the entire testimony of Stephen. And I would imagine that he was greatly provoked by the message of Stephen.

You see, Saul was a Pharisee. And remember, there were two groups that were part of the ruling body. There were the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

The Sadducees were the liberals of the day, and they and the Pharisees were not the best of friends. They would have been in opposition to one another to a large extent on many issues. But there were certain times when they would come together for the common good.

And one particular case was against Jesus. But if Stephen stood there and proclaimed the word of God to the Sanhedrin. He would have found favor with the Pharisees to a large degree, a much more so than than the Sadducees.

He would have his message would have been very appealing to them with with the exception of a few things. So as Saul sat there and listened to Stephen, there would have been a sense of bearing witness to much of what he was saying. But then, of course, when he went to the point of telling them that they had condemned God's Messiah and so forth, that's where they would have drawn the line.

But you know for sure that Saul would have been moved by the message and then he undoubtedly would have been moved by the boldness of Stephen. In his execution, how he stood unflinchingly and how there he simply proclaimed, I see heaven open and the son of man standing on the right hand of God. And all of this would have left a lasting impression upon Saul.

And who knows what other testimony he might have heard as he was going about persecuting the church. But the implication here is that the spirit of God was dealing with him. And the more the Lord dealt with him, the more he resisted that he was kicking against the goads, but he was injuring himself in the process.

That's what Jesus is telling him. It's hard for you to kick against the goads. A lot of times this happens when the spirit of God begins to convict a person instead of responding, we rebel against it.

And like I was saying a moment ago, that sometimes is the explanation for the great hostility that a person manifests toward the faith. So don't write those people off completely. Know that they might be closer than you think and realize that the people that we deem least likely to be converted might be the very people that will indeed be converted.

While, on the other hand, the people that we think are easily going to respond to the message might be the ones that never do. Back in what is known now as the 18th century revival in England with John Wesley and Charles Wesley and George Whitfield and others, Whitfield was one of the great preachers in that revival, and he had many antagonists. There were many that opposed the work that they were doing, and they were often attacked and they were persecuted and mocked and ill-treated and, you know, all kinds of things happened to them as they sought to spread the word of God.

And there was this particular band of men who followed Whitfield wherever he went, and it was their sworn duty to harass him as much as they possibly could. And so as he was preaching, they would throw tomatoes at him. They would throw actually, they were very barbaric.

They would rip apart animals and throw animal body parts at him while he was preaching and things of that nature, just unbelievable stuff that they would do. But one of the men in this group, he had developed the ability to mimic George Whitfield, so much so that if you closed your eyes, you would think you were listening to George Whitfield and he would go from place to place following Whitfield and in following him, he would sometimes jump up on the platform and he would begin to mimic him. And he did this on and on and on and on, and, you know, very much in an irritant, as you could imagine, to any evangelistic campaign.

But this guy who was the ringleader of this group of rebels that was attacking Whitfield. On one occasion, he went into that mimicking mode and as he was mimicking Whitfield preaching part of one of his sermons, he came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. And he got converted right on the spot.

The greatest antagonist of all the ringleader got converted and later on became one of the greatest supporters of Whitfield's ministry. Now, I'm sure in the early days that Whitfield would have never dreamed that this person would one day be an ally and one day be one of his chief supporters. But you never know what God is going to do.

And that's what happened here in this early history of the church with Saul. And so. It's hard for you to kick against the goad, so he I love the response, trembling and astonished, trembling.

And astonished, he cannot believe it. He was so certain that he was right. You see, his reasoning would have been.

Among everything above everything else, his reasoning would have been that Jesus could not possibly have been the Messiah because he was crucified. You remember, the law declared that anyone who hanged upon a tree was cursed by God. So no matter what he had said or the miracles he performed or any of those claims about Jesus in Saul's mind, he couldn't have possibly been the Messiah because he was clearly cursed by God.

And that was evidenced by the fact that he was hung upon a tree. But you see what this man Saul would later discover and what he would declare himself when he wrote to the church in Galatia that he was made a curse for us. Yes, indeed, cursed is everyone who is written or cursed is everyone who is hanged on a

tree as it is written, but it's also written, cursed is everyone who does not continue in all of the things that are written in the law to do them.

And so he came to understand later that because mankind was under a curse for our failure to keep the law, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, he had to become a curse for us to redeem us from the curse of the law. And that's why he was hung up on a tree. But you see, at this moment, all of this stuff is now beginning to break through to him.

And so he's trembling and he's astonished and he says, Lord, what do you want me to do now? The word translated Lord is the Greek word kurios. And that word is the same word. That is used for God when the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek.

Now, in the Old Testament Hebrew text, you have the name of God in our English translation. It is identified by Lord in all capital letters. Whenever you come across the Lord in all capital letters in your Old Testament, that is the name of God.

And because there are no vowel indicators, we don't really know the exact pronunciation, but it's either Yahweh or Jehovah or something like that. When they translated the Old Testament into the Greek language, they took the name of God and they translated it by kurios. When we come to the New Testament, Jesus.

When he is spoken of as Lord, the Greek word kurios is used as well. And Paul certainly would later on use that word to identify Christ as God. Perhaps even at this moment, it is already dawned on him that that is indeed who he's dealing with.

And so he says, Lord, who are you? Or Lord, what do you want me to do? First, Lord, who are you? I think he already knew by the fact that he said, Lord. Now he says, Lord, what do you want me to do? Then the Lord said, Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do. This was the secret of the success of this man.

You know, we look at this man. And I know for myself, I'm a great admirer of Paul and I look at him and I ask the question, how was it that this man could have done so much for the kingdom of God? How is it that he? Outdid his contemporaries, how is it that he traveled farther and suffered more and yet spread the gospel further than anyone else? And of course, a lot of that is answered just in the call of God upon his life. But it's also answered in his response to the Lord by referring to him as just that, Lord, what would you have me to do? You see, one of the keys to his success was that he was a man who recognized throughout his entire life the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Every failure of ours can be traced back to a failure to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. You see, Paul said, what do you want me to do, Lord? He's acknowledging right there. My life is no longer my own.

My life belongs to you. I'm submitted to you. What do you have for me? And that is really a key question that each and every one of us need to ask, Lord, what would you have me to do? The emphasis being on the Lord.

It's no longer my life. It's no longer my decision about my future. It's no longer what I've planned.

It's no longer what I think is best for me. It's now, Lord, you're the Lord. What would you have me to do? That's what this man did, and that is one of the explanations for the great success that we see in his life as

a servant of God.

And so it says, Arise and go into the city and you will be told there what you must do. And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no one. Then 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. And he was three days without sight and neither ate nor drank. You know, you think about that.

And I would imagine that during those three days, not eating a thing, not drinking a thing, I don't think that he decided I'm going to go on a fast. I think that this man was so moved. As it said, he trembled and he was astonished.

He was so impacted in the very depths of his soul that he couldn't eat or drink. He couldn't do anything. He had to just sit for three whole days and take in all that he had just experienced.

And I would imagine that during that time, there was a great sense of grief. Over his own stubbornness and his pride, I would imagine there was a great sense of shame over how he had been resisting God and how he had been actually attacking the people of God and in his arrogance standing up against. The very God he claimed to be serving.

I would imagine that all of those things were weighing so heavily upon him, along with the amazement at the mercy of God. And I think what we see here in this abstinence from food or drink, again, not anything planned, but it's just the natural result of having come under the deep conviction of sin and under the grace of God and the deliverance that comes through that grace. I think he was so impacted in his soul that he, for a brief period of time, had no interest in the things of the flesh.

They just meant nothing to him. They were just completely irrelevant at that time. I wonder if.

It might be. That we don't take time to really ponder things, we don't take time to really think so much about the goodness of God. We don't think so much about our own sinfulness and how he's had such great mercy on us.

I wonder if it's because we don't do that, that we don't have that sense of astonishment. We don't have that real profound gratitude for our salvation a lot of times. And I think it would help us at times to just sit and ponder the fact that we're saved.

To just sit and think about where we would be if it were not for the grace of God, to just think about how much God has done for us, the mercy that he's shown us. And I'm certain that that's what was going on in Saul's life at the time. Now, there was a certain disciple at Damascus.

This is a fellow that we were talking about earlier. His name was Ananias. And to him, the Lord said in a vision, Ananias, and he said, Here I am, Lord.

So the Lord said to him, Arise and go to the street called straight and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying. And in a vision, he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight.

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard many things about this man, how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all those who call on your

name. But the Lord said to him, Go, don't argue, go.

As though the Lord didn't know any of this stuff, you know, and as to saying, wait now, Lord, I think you got the wrong guy because have you heard about this guy? Jesus assures him, go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine. Amazing, a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. He's a chosen vessel of mine, you know, as you look at this man and remember the context here is the gospel is now about to be sent out into the uttermost parts of the earth.

It's about to go out into uncharted territory. The gospel is about to go out to the Gentiles, but to get the gospel to the Gentiles, God needs the right man. And Jesus said he is a chosen vessel of mine.

And it's interesting as we get to know this man, Saul, and as we look at his background, as we look at his upbringing, as we look at his education, as we look at his life experience, we see that he was very much the man for the job. He was known here as Saul of Tarsus. Tarsus was one of the leading cities in the Roman Empire, a city that was very much known for its learning and its culture.

It was an educational center, a cultural center. It was a place where he as a young boy would have basically connected with the Hellenistic culture. And of course, that's where the Lord's going to send him.

He's going to send him out to the Jews that are dispersed among the the Greeks, but he's also going to send him to the Greeks. So he chooses a man who has that sort of background as part of his experience. But, of course, not just the Hellenistic background, but he's very much a Jew and he's very much the rabbinic scholar.

But he's all of these different things that are going to factor into what God is going to want to do in the future. And, you know, we see that over and over again in history. We see it over and over again in the lives of people.

How God will take. Our our lives, not just from the point of conversion on, but even going further back, and as Paul would say later, he spoke of himself as being separated to the gospel from his mother's womb. He could see his whole life.

Even prior to his conversion, he could see all of his life as preparatory for the calling that God had upon him. You know, maybe you look back on your life and there are things that are unpleasant to think about or things that maybe you're ashamed of or things that you're embarrassed over. Some of them might be bad things.

Some of them might not be bad. They might just be humbling and, you know, a sense. So you don't want anybody to know where you really grew up, because if they knew you're from that town, they probably wouldn't associate with you because it's just a little town or something.

You know, the kind of weird hangups we can get about things like that. But all of those things. Can be part of what God uses to make us the people that he wants us to be, to impact the people that he has us to impact in the future.

So don't despise those things. Don't underestimate those things. And even the bad things that have happened to us.

God can take those things and he can use those bad things that have happened to us so that we can minister to other people. And I think many of us have had those kinds of experiences already. I know that many of the difficulties that I've gone through, although they haven't been pleasant for me, I could see how the Lord uses those things so I can encourage somebody else.

I can relate to them. I've been there. And that's always encouraging to someone when they find out that you've actually gone through a similar experience.

So this man was his chosen vessel. Specifically crafted. Through his experiences to be the person that God would use to get the gospel out to the Gentile world.

And so he says he's going to bear my name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. And then I will show him the great things that he must suffer for my name's sake. It seems that Saul had a unique dispensation of suffering.

Now, it's interesting as we read through the book of Acts, as we read through the various epistles and so forth, the other apostles who served the Lord and had their challenges and so forth, they didn't seem to have the same intensity in the area of suffering that this man did. And it would seem that there was almost a certain dispensation given to him, as Jesus said here, to suffer for the gospel. And perhaps that was in relation to the fact that he had persecuted the church.

And the Lord would now allow him to suffer as he had caused others to suffer. Whatever the case, he didn't complain about it. He trusted God through it.

He learned the blessing of dependency through the whole thing. And so Ananias, then he went his way and he entered the house and laying hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales.

And he received his sight at once and he arose and was baptized. And so Ananias is the one to bring word to. Saul now.

About the Lord's plan for him, and so. He's filled with the spirit. And he's baptized.

And when he had received food, he was strengthened. And then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. A completely different.

Outcome then had been anticipated. Heading to Damascus to arrest. The Christians.

But now we find him lodging in Damascus, fellowshiping with the saints. It's amazing what a moment in time can do, how radically it can alter the course of a person's life. And the last thing I want to say about this before we close tonight.

Is I want you to notice. The instantaneous transformation of this man's life. And you see, that's what conversion is.

Conversion is an instantaneous transformation. It takes you from being one thing. A sinner in rebellion to God, and it turns you into.

A child of God. One yielded to his will and looking for his purpose to be fulfilled in your life. And that's what we see here.

And that's the glory of conversion. Now, some people have the mistaken idea that conversion is something that takes place over a long period of time. And sometimes you'll talk to a person and you'll say, are you a Christian? They'll say, well, I'm hoping to be I'm working at it.

But anybody who's trying to be hoping to be or working at it doesn't understand what it is to be a Christian. Now. There is a process.

We talked about it already in Saul's life, it was that process of conviction where he was kicking against the goads and there are things that lead up to conversion. God works in circumstances, he brings people into our life, they speak to us, he allows us to go through circumstances that get us to start thinking about things beyond this life and start wondering about the reality of God and so forth. And he challenges us and he brings us along.

But then he brings us to a point like he brought Saul to where it's that conversion point. And although there's a process that builds up to that point. At any given time in the process, a person can stop and respond, you see, the end, the implication of Jesus to Saul is that you've gone way too far with this.

You're now damaging yourself, you're kicking against the goads. In other words, Jesus is saying you could have done this a long time ago and it would have been a lot easier. So don't think that you have to go through this process that brings you to some crisis or some disaster in your life before you can be converted.

No, that's the extreme case that you sort of force yourself to go to. Some people literally force themselves to go all the way to the bottom of the pit before. They look up.

You don't have to do that, the minute you fall in the pit, you can say help before you ever get near the bottom and the Lord will snatch you right up. It's the stubborn person, the foolish person who persist and goes all the way. But whatever the case, the point is this.

Conversion is instantaneous. The moment I say, Lord. And genuinely mean it.

I'm saved. And in being saved, I'm changed instantaneously, I'm given a new heart, a new life, a new nature. And there is this immediate transformation that takes place, and we see that so powerfully here.

One moment, Saul is a ferocious beast going to devour the Christians. Three days later, he's there like a gentle lamb among them, worshiping God with them. Never underestimate the power of the spirit of God to change a life.

Never underestimate the power of the spirit of God to transform a person and to make them into an entirely different person. That's what the Lord does. And he does it that fast.

Now, that's not to say that we don't have growth that needs to take place. It's not to say that we don't make mistakes later on down the road and have to learn some lessons and things like that. But the overall direction of our lives has changed and the overall passion of our hearts has changed.

That's the glory of conversion. In the biblical sense, it is the impartation of a new life. If any man be in Christ.

He is a new creation. Old things have passed away, everything becomes new, and we see that so beautifully exemplified in the life of this man here. He's a new person and.

We know him now, historically, not really so much as Saul of Tarsus, the self-righteous Pharisee who persecuted the church, but we know him primarily as the great Paul, the apostle, the greatest advocate of Christianity in the history of the world. All because of the grace of God. And that grace is available to us as well.

It's simply a matter of saying, Lord, what would you have me to do? And I just want to encourage as we close tonight, that's the key to everything. It's making Jesus the Lord. He is the Lord already, but we have this strange ability to resist his lordship somehow.

But that's the foolish thing we need to submit to it. And as we do, we find that beautiful plan that he has. Being worked out in each of our lives, let's pray, Lord, we thank you for your plan.

We thank you, Lord, for your grace that brings us into that plan. And Lord, we thank you that there's not a single person. That is beyond your grasp, that there's not a single man or woman.

Out there that. Is beyond the grace of God. And as we look at this man, Saul, the most unlikely candidate for salvation and apostleship, especially.

But yet, Lord, he was your chosen vessel. And Lord, we even pray now. For those that maybe we know.

That we think. Are impossible cases. But yet, Lord, it might be that they're the very ones that you're going to save.

And work through or help us to be faithful in prayer, help us to be faithful in our witness. And Lord, just like you saved Saul, we pray that you would save many in these days. Lord, just literally arresting people, knocking them off of their.

Horse, so to speak. Humbling them before you and bringing them. Into submission to yourself.

And Lord, we thank you that through this man, you set forth an example as he would later say that. In being the chief of sinners, you set forth an example that. Your patience and long suffering with him.

Would be displayed in the lives of others as well. So, Lord, for those that are kicking against the goads tonight. We pray that you would.

Help them to see the folly and to turn to you. And to receive your salvation in Jesus name. Amen.

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