



# Building the church

*A sermon series on the Gospel of Acts*

## Paul's Conversion

Acts 9:1-19

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,

12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.”

13 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”

15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”  
18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened.

- Acts 9:1-19

# A FIRESIDE CHALLENGE

ENGLAND, 18TH CENTURY

*Two skeptics. One goal: Prove Christianity Wrong.*

*I'll take Paul.*

That conversion in Acts 9...  
It's the weak point.  
I'll show it's exaggerated,  
explained, or made up.

*Let's settle this.*

We'll go deep, follow the  
evidence, and see where  
it leads. If Christianity  
is true, it will survive  
our scrutiny. If it's false,  
we'll prove it.

Then I'll take  
*the Resurrection.*

If that story falls,  
Christianity falls with it.  
I'll expose the truth.

**LORD GEORGE LYTTELTON**

*Statesman. Skeptic. Investigator.*

**GILBERT WEST**

*Writer. Skeptic. Investigator.*

## **Acts 9:1-19**

- **Main Idea:** When you meet Jesus, he turns your world upside down.
- **vs 1-2:** Saul of Tarsus
- **vss 3-19:** The Anatomy of Conversion
  - A Conversion to Christ
  - A Conversion to His body, the Church
  - A Conversion to his mission

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

- Act 9:1-2

# Bio-Sketch:

## Paul of Tarsus

- **Born:** 1-4 AD around the time of Jesus
- **Died:** mid 60's AD as a martyr in Rome
- **Education:** A Pharisee under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (one of the most renowned Jewish scholars of the age)
- **Languages:** Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Latin
- Here is his own description of his pedigree:
- *If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. - Philippians 3:4-6*



*13 'formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent  
opponent'.*

*- 1 Timothy 1:13*

3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- Acts 9:3-9

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

- Acts 9:5

15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

- 1 Timothy 1:15-16

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

- Matthew 16:25

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.  
8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

- Philippians 3:7-8

44“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

- Matthew 13:44-46

6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- Acts 9:3-9

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”  
18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened.

- Acts 9:17-19

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 2:36-38

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- Galatians 2:20

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

- 2 Timothy 4:6-8

# Practical Lessons From Paul's Conversion

**One:** No one is beyond the Grace of God

I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

-Acts 26:14



# Practical Lessons From Paul's Conversion

**One:** No one is beyond the Grace of God

**Two:** Paul's conversion is an example to all of us.

- *16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him.- 1 Timothy 1:16*

# An Anatomy of Paul's Conversion

- True knowledge of Jesus (vss 4-5)
- True knowledge of self (vs. 5)
- Total Surrender (vs 8)
- A new heart (vs 17)
- A new family (vs 17)
- A new purpose (vs 15)

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15