



## **The Conversion of Saul**

### **Acts 9:9-16**

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, *I am here*, Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

### **Acts 9:1-6**

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

I. The average caterpillar sheds its outer skin 5 times as it grows.

- A. The whole purpose of a caterpillar's life is to eat, shed and grow.
- B. There is no change other than it is bigger.
- C. At some point it stops eating, spins a cocoon and goes dormant.
- D. In this dormant stage its body is restructured.
  - 1. It grows wings.
  - 2. Its physical appearance is completely changed.

E. What emerges is something desired by collectors.

1. One butterfly caught and sealed in acrylic can be worth up to \$235.00.

F. No longer does this caterpillar have to crawl on the ground.

G. Now it can fly freely to where it wants to go.

II. The conversion experience is similar.

A. People will try many things to change themselves.

1. Programs, jobs, counseling, self help books and tapes, education and interest groups.

B. All these things provide distractions but never allow us to experience that ever elusive change.

C. Just as the caterpillar sheds its outer skin...it is never changed...just bigger.

1. So all these distractions do not change us....sometimes they make us worse.

D. We need to experience what the caterpillar goes through.

1. It stops eating. We need to stop feasting on the pleasures of sin by repenting.

2. It spins and buries itself in a cocoon. We need to be buried with Christ in baptism.

3. It emerges changed and flying. We need to emerge from our baptism in newness of life...receive the Holy Ghost....quit crawling in the dirt of this world and fly on the wings of holiness.

E. Conversion is more than just a superficial growth spurt.

1. It is a change that penetrates the very core of who we are.

F. Conversion is a radical change.

G. It is a complete make over of personality, thoughts, words, desires and actions.

III. Today we are looking at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

A. Saul was a Pharisee.

B. He was taught by Gamaliel.

C. He was zealous in the Mosaic law.

#### **Acts 7:58**

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

D. Saul hated anything that was not based on the truths of the Torah.

E. We find the first mention of Saul in Acts 7.

#### **Acts 8:1**

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

F. Then again in Acts 8.

G. This word consent means he was pleased with the death of Stephen.

1. Another meaning is to applaud.

- H. Saul must have thought these teachings about Jesus was heretical.
- I. This new doctrine threatened all his traditions and previous teachings.
- J. This teaching of Jesus was bringing such a radical change, Saul wanted to destroy it.

#### Acts 8:3-4

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

K. After doing everything possible to disrupt the church in Jerusalem, he received letters empowering him to arrest and kill anyone professing Christ.

agging

#### Acts 9:1-2

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

L. Saul learned traditions could never change him.

1. The law could not change him.
2. His zeal could not change him.
3. His prayers could not change him.
4. His synagogue attendance could not change him.
5. He needed a conversion experience with Jesus Christ.

IV. On his way to Damascus, there was a light that shone bright enough to blind him.

- A. Saul fell to the ground.
- B. The Lord spoke and said, "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?"
- C. Saul responded with, "Who art thou Lord?"

1. When Saul used the term Lord, he was recognizing the supremacy of the one to whom the voice belonged.
2. Yet with all Saul's education, he still did not know who the Lord was.
3. With all his traditions and religiosity, he did not know whom he served.

D. The response from the Lord was simple.... "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

1. Jesus then said, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

a. The term pricks denotes an iron goad used for urging and herding oxen and beasts of burdens.

2. Jesus was saying it was hard for Saul to resist the urging of the and goading of the message.

- E. Jesus told Saul to go to the city and he would be told what he needed to do.
- F. Saul spent three days fasting and praying.
- G. Jesus spoke to a man named Ananias and told him to go to Saul.

1. Ananias resisted because he was afraid of Saul the persecutor.

2. Still Ananias went and laid hands on Saul and prayed for him.

3. I wonder if Ananias expected Saul to kill him as soon as he received his sight.

H. Saul received the Holy Ghost and was baptized.

I. Saul's reputation must have preceded his arrival.

1. I wonder if everyone was expecting Saul to begin sweeping the town of these followers of Jesus.

### **Acts 9:20-22**

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

2. I imagine when he walked in the synagogue, the elders expected to hear him begin railing against the believers.

J. What a change!

1. This caterpillar has now become a butterfly.

K. The elders became angry and tried to kill him.

L. Saul escaped and ran back to Jerusalem.

1. The apostles did not readily accept him.

2. They would not allow him to fellowship with them.

3. They were afraid of him.

4. This is how vehement his hatred for the church was.

5. However, he was finally accepted, not because he said he was changed and converted...but he proved it in action.

M. Acts 13:9 is where we find Saul's name changed to Paul.

1. Here is the significance of the name change; Saul means desired...Paul means little.

2. This Pharisee went from being puffed up and arrogant to little in his own eyes.

N. Not only did Saul repent, get baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, he was fully converted.

V. You do not join the church.

A. You must be born again.

B. Just as the caterpillar is born again from the cocoon, so we must be born again through repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and receive the Holy Ghost.

C. This is the only true conversion experience that can save us and change us.

### **Romans 8:1**

*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

D. No wonder the great persecutor of the church could write:

**Philippians 3:4-10**

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

VI. The product of true conversion is no condemnation.

A. I'm not what I used to be.

B. I've been changed.

C. When you are born again of the water and the Spirit, old things are passed away...behold all things are become new.