

CONVERSION ALWAYS LEADS TO DRAMATIC CHANGE (vv. 17-19)

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

1. How does Paul’s receiving his sight symbolize one of the most dramatic changes that had just taken place?
2. What will be the catalysts for ongoing change in the life of Paul?
3. How would Paul’s life change as a result of his encounter with the living Christ?
4. How should our lives change as a result of our encounter with the living Christ?



You would be hard pressed to find a more dramatic conversion story than that of Saul of Tarsus. We will come to know him by his Greek name, Paul—or even more formally, in our study of Scripture and Church history, as the Apostle Paul.

Luke introduces us to Saul in chapter seven where he is lending his approval to the stoning of Stephen. In chapter eight, he is described as destroying the church by dragging men and women out of their homes and throwing them into prison. Luke offers us a window into the depths of Saul’s hatred for the church in chapter nine, where he describes Saul as “breathing murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.” Luke tells us, Saul could scarcely draw a breath without venting his hatred for all things Jesus.

There were rumors that the Jesus movement was taking root in Damascus, so Saul is on his way to Syria to completely destroy it. He will go anywhere, and do anything to wipe out every memory of Jesus.

A funny thing happens on the way to Damascus. Saul has an encounter with Jesus. He is literally knocked off his horse and blinded by the glory of the risen Christ.

Saul’s story takes a dramatic turn. In a matter of days he will find himself in intimate fellowship with the body of believers he was determined to destroy. The church’s most ruthless enemy will soon become her most passionate defender.

While Saul’s story may be drastically different from ours, we have far more in common than you might think. While we may not have been knocked off our horse, our conversion is no less dramatic.

CONVERSION INVOLVES A RADICAL INTERVENTION (vv. 1-4)

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

1. How did God intervene in Saul's life to bring him into a personal relationship with his Son?
2. How does God intervene in our lives to bring us into a personal relationship with his Son?
3. Why is radical intervention necessary?

CONVERSION INVOLVES AN ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST (vv. 5-9)

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

1. What did Saul learn about Jesus in his brief encounter with the risen Christ?
2. What does Christ's identification with the suffering of the church tell us about our relationship with Christ and our relationship with his church?
3. How did Saul respond to Jesus?
4. Read the following passages; Matthew 11:28-30; John 1:11-13; Acts 3:19. What do each of these passages tell us about how we should respond to Jesus?
5. How would you describe the difference between "believing some basic truths about Jesus" and "believing in Jesus?"

CONVERSION IS ACCOMPANIED BY A CALL (vv. 10-16)

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

1. How does Luke describe Paul's call to ministry?
2. What are some of the major differences between Paul's call to ministry and our call to ministry?
3. In what ways is our call to ministry similar to Paul's call to ministry?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. How does Paul describe what it means to live as a "called person" in this passage?
5. What are some of the things we may have to suffer for the sake of the gospel?
6. Why does God allow his people to suffer?