

Series: *Walking by Faith* # 6
The Conversion of Paul
Acts 9: 1-9

Over the past several weeks we have considered various accounts of those who walked by faith and received the abundance of the Lord. Our text today also reveals a walk of faith. While this encounter is much different than the previous accounts we've considered, it was a walk of pure faith also. In fact, I believe this account of faith deals with the greatest journey one can take by faith.

We have read of man by the name of Saul. You are probably more familiar with the new name he was given – Paul, the great apostle of Christ. The verses we have read deal with the encounter Paul had with Christ, leading to his salvation by faith. As we will discover, Paul was forced to abandon much he held dear in this life in order to receive salvation. His obedience in salvation was the beginning of a long and prosperous ministry for the Lord. His conversion offers hope for all who stand in need of salvation.

As we conclude our series today, I want to examine [stages](#) of this walk of faith while considering: [The Conversion of Paul](#).

I. A Time of Delusion (1-2) – These opening verses reveal the state of delusion Paul lived in prior to his conversion in Christ. While particular circumstances vary, all are in a state of delusion apart from salvation in Christ. Notice:

A. The Persecution (1) – [And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest.](#) Prior to his salvation, Paul was a man who promoted and encouraged violence against all who professed Christ. He was a devout Pharisee, viewing those who preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ as promoters of heresy against the Word of God. He was committed to doing all he could to hinder and destroy the promotion of the Gospel. He was present when Stephen was stoned, consenting to his horrific death. At this moment, he continues to threaten those who profess Jesus as the Christ, seeking not only their punishment, but their death as well. Paul was opposed to anything connected to Christ and the Gospel.

- While the average unbeliever is not as violent as Paul was in opposing the Gospel, prior to salvation, we too rejected Christ and had no desire for any fellowship with the church. We wanted nothing to do with this man named Jesus or those who sought to serve Him. There was little compassion or support for those who professed Christ.

B. The Pursuit (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.* Working in conjunction with the high priest in Jerusalem, Paul sought to prosecute believers wherever he could find them. He was not content with efforts to prevent the spread of Christianity in Jerusalem; he wanted the Gospel message removed from the world. Having permission from the high priest, Paul is making his way to Damascus, hoping to find those who professed Christ there. He intended to arrest them for their faith, and bring them to Jerusalem to stand trial.

- Satan is committed to working against the church wherever she exists. He has those who seek to hinder and defeat the work of the Gospel throughout the world. Countless people are being used of Satan, persecuting the church and all who profess Christ.
- Keep in mind that Paul was devoutly religious. He actually thought he was sincerely committed to the work of the Lord. Organized religion is often one of the greatest hindrances and sources of opposition to salvation. Many religious people believe they have all they need. They are depending on their works for acceptance to God. Religion cannot save. Salvation requires a personal relationship with Christ!

II. A Time of Conviction (3-5) – Here we discover Paul's initial encounter with the Lord, leading to conviction of his lost condition. Consider:

A. The Illumination (3) – *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.* As Paul made his way to Damascus, he encountered a great light from heaven. Paul would later testify this happened around noon. As he journeyed, the Lord appeared unto him with a great light that shined brighter than the noon-day sun. The Lord was determined to get the attention of Paul.

- This is always the beginning stage of one's salvation. The Lord will illuminate our path, revealing our sinful ways and need for Him. It is impossible to receive salvation apart from an awareness of our depravity and need for Christ.

B. The Confrontation (4) – *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* As Paul encountered this great light, he heard a voice confronting him in regard to his persecution. The Lord wanted Paul to understand that his persecution of believers was a direct attack on Him as well. Paul was confronted about his sinful ways.

- This is the second stage of one's salvation. Once the Lord reveals Himself to us, the Spirit begins to confront the sin in our lives, convicting us of our transgressions. One cannot comprehend or receive salvation if there has been no conviction of sin. We must realize our depravity and admit the sin within our lives. (Few today are willing to admit their sin.)

C. The Realization (5a) – *And he said, Who art thou, Lord?* At this moment, Paul has not yet received salvation, but he has recognized Jesus as Lord. He has confessed with his mouth that Jesus is the Christ. While he may not be fully aware of all that is transpiring at the moment, he does realize that he has encountered the living Lord.

- This is also essential for salvation. One must recognize Jesus as the Christ, Savior and Redeemer of men's souls, and confess their faith in Him. He is the only means of salvation. There is no other way. If one is to be saved, there must be a recognition of Christ and a profession of faith in Him. You must realize the He alone can provide for your salvation.

D. The Confirmation (5b) – *And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* Jesus confirmed that He was the Christ, the one Paul was persecuting. A prick was a rod or goad used to guide wayward animals. Jesus affirmed it was difficult for Paul to work against the Spirit dealing with his heart. There could be no doubt at this moment that Paul had encountered the Christ.

- This is always a critical moment for the unbeliever. As the Spirit deals with people, He reveals their sin and need for Christ. The Spirit reveals Jesus as the risen Lord, Savior of men's souls. At that moment, the Spirit is leading in salvation. This is the moment to respond in faith, repenting of sin, and believing on Christ for salvation!

III. A Time of Conversion (6-9) – Here we discover the salvation of Paul, the moment when he was delivered from a life of religious pride and sin, receiving eternal life in Christ. Consider:

A. His Reverence (6a) – *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Some debate that Paul's salvation was not complete until Ananias came and the scales fell from his eyes, but I am convinced this is the moment of Paul's salvation. He had dealt with the sin in his life and is fully surrendered to the Lord. He reveals that he is ready to go and do whatever the Lord desired of him.

- When one is truly saved, there is an immediate recognition of the Lord and a surrender to follow Him. If you have never confessed Jesus as Lord and surrendered unto Him through conviction of sin, you have not met the biblical requirements for salvation. Receiving salvation is more than an awareness of who Jesus is. It requires admission of our need, recognition of His deity and provision through total surrender of self. The old man of sin must die in order to be resurrected a new creature in Christ. At that moment, salvation is complete. (Illus. Mindy's salvation experience.)

B. His Guidance (6b) – *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Following his salvation, the Lord provided instruction for Paul. He was not saved and left to navigate life alone. From that moment on, Paul would enjoy a constant companion and guide.

- Those who are in Christ have the benefit of His continual guidance. If you are His, He will guide your life. He doesn't speak audibly to us like He did Paul, but He does speak and guide our lives. He speaks through His Word and the Spirit imparting truth to our lives. He also uses His church to offer guidance for the saved. One thing is certain – He will speak to those who are His, and you can rest assured that He will never lead you contrary to the Word.

C. His Obedience (8-9) – *And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.* ^[9] *And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.* Paul's life was radically changed from that moment on. He arose from the ground unable to see, and yet he followed the direction of the Lord. He went to Damascus and waited for the Lord. He no longer sought to fulfill his agenda, but lived in total submission and obedience to Christ.

- I would never teach that we are living perfect lives following salvation. As long as we live in this body of flesh we are prone to sin and failure. However, once you are saved, there will be a compelling desire to please the Lord. You will respond in obedience to His voice and follow His direction. If you have never surrendered to the Lord, following His guidance in obedience, I would question whether there was ever a change in your life. Those who are in Christ will not live as before. Your desires will change and there will be a hunger to follow the Lord and please Him.

Conclusion: For me, this is the greatest walk of faith anyone can take. I began this journey many years ago, and I haven't regretted it one moment. Have you received Christ as Savior and begun this walk of faith with Him? If not, you have heard the truth presented. Why not respond by faith, repent of sin, and be saved today?