

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

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To Study: Acts 7:58-60; 9:1-25; 26:4-5, 9-18. Philippians 3:4-14.

To Read in class: Acts 9:1-9.

Memory Texts:

Younger: 1 Timothy 1:15 "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Older: 1 Timothy 1:15 "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

OBJECTIVES: To teach that:

- 1. God seeks the sinner, even though he may have committed serious sins.
2. God knows the name of each sinner, where he is, and what he has done.
3. When a person is saved, God expects that person to submit himself immediately to Him in obedience.
4. When someone is newly saved, other Christians are interested in them so they might grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. (2 Peter 3:18).
5. The steps that follow conversion are: Obedience, Prayer, Baptism, and Fellowship with other believers.

SCENE 1. VISUAL AIDS: Outside the city of Jerusalem, Saul observes while others stone Stephen.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Saul was born in Tarsus, and went to Jerusalem to study in the School of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).
- Gamaliel was one of the most respected rabbis of the first century. See Acts 5:34-40.
- When Stephen was stoned, Saul was present, giving his approval to what was being done. He stood guard over the clothing of those who were throwing the stones.
- Saul was young at the time, possibly between 23 and 24 years of age.
Cns. What would have been the effect on Saul when he saw Stephen's face, radiant like that of an angel?
Cns. What would Saul have understood when he heard Stephen ask for God to pardon those who were stoning him?
- Saul had good knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, but it seems he hadn't stopped to think of what it was revealing to him about the identity of the Messiah.
Cns. Just to have knowledge of the Word of God does not mean that a person is saved. Knowledge must be accompanied by faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is of Christ that the Scriptures speak. See Hebrews 4:2; John 5:39.
Apl. God works in the hearts of people for months and sometimes years.

SCENE 2. VISUAL AIDS: Figure of Saul before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing body, requesting letters authorizing him to search for Christians in Damascus.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Saul continued to hate the believers in Christ, even after the death of Stephen.
- As a faithful Jew, he believed it was necessary to persecute and eliminate people he considered to be a false sect.
- Saul went from synagogue to synagogue looking for believers in Christ, and through torturing them, tried to force them to blaspheme the name of Jesus.
- If they confessed that Christ Jesus was God, they were considered blasphemers.
- Many followers of Christ were jailed in Jerusalem by Saul, and when they were being condemned, he voted in favour of the death penalty.
- Saul's persecution of Christians was not limited to the city of Jerusalem, but extended to foreign cities also.
- Saul asked for a letter of introduction from the High Priest to present to the Jews of Damascus.

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- He promised to bring back to Jerusalem any man or woman of “the Way” that he might find.
- "The Way" seems to be a name given to the followers of Christ. Would this be because they insisted that Jesus was the Only Way of salvation? See Acts 19:23; 22:4.
- Later on, Paul related how he was “exceedingly mad against them” (Acts 26:11).
- Satan uses cruel men with strong personalities to try to destroy the work of God.

SCENE 3. VISUAL AIDS: Road to Damascus. Figures of Saul kneeling, accompanied by others. A bright light is shining on him. Words saying “Saul, Saul, why persecutest though Me?”

DEVELOPMENT:

- God allowed Saul to act in his mistaken pursuit only up to a certain point, and then at midday, He caused an extraordinary event to take place (Acts 26:13).
- Apl.** God in His mercy allows certain events to take place in the life of an individual, events that make him conscious of his sin and of his Creator, before whom he is responsible.
- Cns.** Saul paid attention to the One who spoke to him. Many ignore the voice of God.
- Four to six days were required to go from Jerusalem to Damascus.
- When the moment arrived and God spoke to Saul, he could not ignore the voice he heard speaking.
- The light from heaven, and the voice repeating his name twice over, convinced Saul that he was in the presence of a Divine Person.
- "Why do you persecute Me?" The question must have startled Saul.
- To persecute the “followers of Christ” is the same as persecuting the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.
- In his reply to the voice that spoke to him, it is apparent that Saul is a God-fearing man, even though he was very mistaken in his ideas.
- "**I am Jesus,**" said the voice. Saul realized that it was Jesus of Nazareth that was speaking, the very same person Who died on the cross, and that in truth, He was resurrected and alive!
- It also proved that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. He was the One Whom the Jews were expecting, and therefore He was the Son of God.
- The people who were with Saul heard the voice, but didn’t understand what was being said to him.
- Led by the hand, Saul was taken into Damascus as a blinded man, a very different arrival to the one he had anticipated.

SCENE 4. VISUAL AIDS: House of Judas and figures of Saul seated, without sight, and Ananias standing in the doorway. Sign with words of Ananías, “Brother Saul.”

DEVELOPMENT:

- Left alone in the house of Judas on Straight Street, Saul had nothing to eat or drink for three days.
- When the Lord called Ananias to go and visit Saul, he was reluctant to go on account of what he knew of the man.
- The Lord gave Ananías a sign by which to identify Saul, “Behold, he prays.”
- The Lord revealed to Ananias something of the future of Saul, the kind of work he would do among the Gentiles, and what he would have to suffer for the sake of Christ.
- When Ananias put his hands on Saul, he received his sight immediately. Then he was baptized, which is expected of every true believer in Christ.
- Apl.** Some conversions are spectacular, others quite simple. What is important is that every true conversion is the result of faith in Christ, the resurrected Saviour and Lord.
