

The Conversion of Saul

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Am I on? Can you hear me? Excellent. So before we read the passage, which is a little long, especially if you've been in Proverbs, you used to probably shorter sections.

But I want to give you a little context while you're opening your Bibles to Acts 9. I have this question for you. Do you like hearing conversion stories?

I do. I really like hearing somebody's testimony, how they came to faith. Maybe they were brought up in a Christian home, and they don't remember a time when they didn't believe in Jesus.

And that's wonderful. Some people have other stories of conversion where they were into drugs and alcohol and just a mess of their life, and yet God grabbed a hold of them and turned their life around, or anything in between.

God has a story for each conversion. And this is a story of conversion in Acts 9.

[1 : 0 9] It was a significant turning point in the history of the early church and in the book of Acts itself. Now, for a little context before we read this, In the last chapter we saw in Acts 8, if you're familiar with the story, Saul was approving of the execution of Stephen.

Stephen was preaching the world. He was evangelizing. He was telling about Jesus. And so the Jews there, who didn't like that, they stoned him. And Saul was there approving of that execution.

And so now we continue the story about Saul after a little interlude with an Ethiopian eunuch, which you'll get to sometime when you go through Acts.

So here we are in Acts 9. And we'll start in verse 1. 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.

Now, as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[2 : 4 1] And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were open, he saw nothing.

So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. And the Lord said to him, Rise and go to the street called Straight. And the house of Judas, look for a man of Tarsus named Saul.

For behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias. Come in and lay his hands on him so that he may regain his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

[3 : 51] And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on your name. 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 children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. 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.

And immediately, something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized. And taking food, he was strengthened.

For some days, he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately, he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, He is the Son of God. And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon his name?

And has he not come here for the purpose to bring them bound before the chief priests? But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who were living in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

[5 : 11] When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him.

But his disciples took him by night and led him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples.

And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord who spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists, but they were seeking to kill him.

When the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.

[6 : 19] And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you have given us this conversion story.

And it is an amazing conversion story. One that changed the course of the early church.

One that you used mightily. Lord, I pray that you would use our conversion stories to one another and to those outside the church.

That they would be used mightily. to bring your good news to others. And help us to recognize the miraculous work that you've done in our own lives.

That you have converted us to love you and have faith in you. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[7 : 24] Amen. Now I'll tell you a little bit about Acts because you're not in the series, but it seems that in every other chapter in Acts, a crisis faces the church.

Just two chapters before, for example, the stoning of Stephen and Saul, even more than just this one man, but Saul was going about ravaging the church in Jerusalem, bringing men and women off to prison.

And now Saul is coming to Damascus to do the very same thing. Here's how I would summarize this passage.

Jesus continues to work through miraculous conversions and build his church. This isn't just a history lesson. This means something to us today.

Jesus continues to work through miraculous conversions and build his church. If there was ever a question of whether God can save someone so hardened against Christianity, Acts 9 answers that.

[8 : 27] The conversion of Saul shows us unequivocally that Jesus can convert the heart of anyone. And I believe that this conversion story is written not here just because it's part of history in the early church, but for our benefit as well, so that we would know that Jesus continues to work through miraculous conversions and build his church today.

So that we would know that Jesus protects his church. And that is my first point here. Number one, Jesus protects his church through the conversion of its most ardent enemy.

Verses 1 to 19. Jesus protects his church through the conversion of its most ardent enemy. Now, a little note for you.

Saul is the Hebrew name for the Apostle Paul. Paul is his Greek name. And so as he ministers to the Jews, where he's from, his own people, he's referred to as Saul, like King Saul.

And then as he ministers more to the Greeks, he's called Paul. It's just his Greek name. It doesn't necessarily have significance for the change of name other than it's what he's focusing on.

[9 : 45] And so now, eventually, he's called the Apostle Paul. But in this passage, he's called Saul. So, I'll use them interchangeably. Paul's story of conversion shows us that God is able to protect his church, even from its most hardened enemies.

It's also a picture of what we were like before our conversion. If you were converted, this is true of you. What Paul says in Romans 5, 10.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. That's true of us.

We were enemies of God before our conversion. We may not remember that. We didn't necessarily feel like that. We weren't going around murdering people like Saul was.

[10 : 52] But it's still true. We were enemies before God converted us. Saul was introduced to us back in chapter 7. This is a man who approved of the stoning of Stephen.

This is a man who went from house to house to drag disciples of Christ into prison. Let's read back at verse 1. 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.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Saul is this man who was breathing threats and murder against the disciples. He got permission from the high priests to do this.

And do this to go to Damascus and imprison the Christians there. Damascus, if you don't know, was outside of Israel, north-northwest, I think.

[12 : 08] And it's the first, according to record, it's the first city outside of the land of Israel noted as having Christians. And Saul was there to put a stop to that.

He wanted to put a stop to the spread of Christianity. But, what if he had been successful? But it's because God intervening that Saul was converted and stopped.

After the loss of Stephen, the great evangelist that Stephen was becoming, God gave the church Saul, who would take the gospel to the ends of the known world.

And what happened to him? Now, as he went on his way, verse 3, he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him and falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Many tell this story where Saul's on a horse and he's knocked to the ground. I don't think he was on a horse though. This bright light shone around him and you can picture maybe the majesty when an angel comes to earth.

[13 : 23] As we see in the gospels at times, people are falling to the ground and they can't stand the light. There's too much. It's too much brightness. They can't handle it. They feel unworthy as well.

I think that majesty is what knocked Saul off his feet to the ground. Appropriately so. And Jesus says, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Saul asks, who are you? Verse 5. And Jesus replies, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. You see how Jesus says this.

I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Those who persecute Christians are persecuting Jesus. That's a scary thought.

A fearful position to be in persecuting God himself. And Saul here does not protest.

[14 : 32] He doesn't even speak after Jesus identifies himself. In verse 6, Jesus tells Paul to rise and enter the city and you will be told what to do.

I read a story recently which tells of a Persian migrant who arrived at a refugee center at 6 a.m. visibly upset. He told his story to a Persian pastor who was there.

He said this, during the night he saw someone dressed in white raise his hand and say, stand up and follow me. The Persian man said, who are you?

The man in white replied, I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the way to heaven. No one can go to the Father except through me.

He began to ask this Persian pastor, who is he? What am I going to do? Why did he ask me to follow him? How should I go? Tell me. In response, the pastor held out his Bible and asked, have you seen this before?

[15 : 43] No, he replied. Do you know what it is? No. The pastor then opened to the book of Revelation and said, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The man started crying and said, how can I accept him? How can I follow him? And so the pastor led him in prayer and peace came over him. The pastor then gave the man a Bible and told him to hide it since the Muslims in the camp could cause him trouble.

But the man replied, the Jesus that I met today, he's more powerful than the Muslims in the camp. And he left. And about an hour later, he returned with ten more Persians and told the pastor, these people want a Bible.

No one had to teach this man an evangelistic strategy. This is just what he did because he was converted. And this isn't an isolated story.

A study done by a missions frontier of some 600 Muslim converts shows that about 25% of them experienced a dream that led to their conversion, not unlike the story that I just read.

[16 : 58] God sometimes works in mysterious and miraculous ways. And it seems not uncommon that he works wondrous ways to those who are most ardent against him.

But Paul's experience, it wasn't just like a dream like this Persian man. Those who were with Saul saw something amazing too.

Though they didn't experience exactly the same thing, they saw something happen. It was physical, at least partially. Verse 7, Saul's made blind.

His eyes were opened. He saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank.

Saul's made blind. He has to be led by the hand, another reason I don't think he's on a horse, into the city of Damascus. He fasted, for he knew the gravity of this situation.

[18 : 11] His blindness though, I don't think was a punishment from the Lord. I think it was an illustration of his spiritual state prior to his encounter with Jesus.

He was blind. This combined with his fasting was a time for reflection and prayer. all of Saul's knowledge and the studies of scripture, this was a man who knew the Hebrew scriptures well, had studied them all his life.

It produced nothing but blindness in him prior to his conversion though. It doesn't tell us exactly what he was doing during the three days when he prayed, but you can be sure that after experiencing seeing the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, he was meditating and praying on what had just happened and what it meant.

To help Saul to welcome him into the church and to restore his sight, he provided Ananias. Verse 10. I'm going to read this section here.

Look at the kindness of God here. Look at the kindness of Ananias. 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.

[19 : 31] And the Lord said to him, Rise and go to the street called Straight. At the house of Judas, look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. For behold, he is praying, 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. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

And hear his authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on your name. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. So Ananias departed and entered the house, and laying his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized, and taking food he was strengthened. So first, this is a real story because you see that God must convince Ananias to go because Ananias is afraid of Saul.

[20 : 57] Pretty understandable since Saul was there to bind the Christians, bring them off, maybe murder them. But God assures him, tells him of Saul's destiny to witness and to suffer, and maybe that helped Ananias a little bit to know that Saul would suffer.

I don't know. Verse 17, though. laying his hands on him, he said, brother Saul. That's the first thing Ananias says to him.

Brother Saul. Isn't really pertinent to my point here, but we can learn something from Ananias' treatment of Saul, who was up to this point the disciple's biggest enemy.

And yet, Ananias, without even a word from Saul, greets him as brother. It's welcoming him into the church. Welcoming him as a brother, as family.

What forgiveness Ananias has for this man. And so Saul is healed of his blindness. He's filled with the Holy Spirit, and he's baptized.

[22 : 10] It's really no coincidence that his blindness is healed as part of being filled with the Holy Spirit and being baptized. Saul was blind prior to his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Now he can finally see spiritually. Even the most religious in the world are blind prior to their encounter with Jesus.

We must have Jesus to see the truth. like the Ethiopian eunuch that you can read about in the previous chapter who was brought from the wilderness from being outcast.

He wasn't allowed to enter the temple, but Philip brought him the temple experience, being with God. And so Ananias as well lays his hand on Saul, says brother, and welcomes him into the temple experience.

Saul had been to the temple in Jerusalem many times, had worshipped there many, many times, but had never experienced the true temple of God.

[23 : 27] It's not a place. Though places can be impactful. The Holy Spirit filling Saul is the true temple experience.

God's, this is part of his conversion. This is part of our conversion. If you have been converted, you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

He has filled you. He has indwelt you. And though we can be filled more, we are encouraged to be filled more. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit.

And so how were we to apply this section? I think one, we recognize our state before conversion and grow in appreciation for God for saving us even while we were enemies.

Though Paul's conversion seems insurmountably miraculous, your conversion too was miraculous. Maybe not so dramatic, but it was miraculous to take a heart of stone and turn it soft so they see that you see Christ for who he is.

[24 : 44] Secondly, I think we need to learn from Paul's response. He is met with Christ. And so he repents, he prays, and even fasts.

Maybe you haven't had a conversion experience yet. Maybe not sure if you have. Like I said, it's not always dramatic, but it is no less miraculous.

Do you believe in Jesus? He's the one true God. He is the one that can take your sins away. Do you believe that?

Repent. Repent. Have faith in him. Trust him that he is the only way to see the father. And you will be converted.

Pray that you will be converted. I pray that you do have an experience that you know for sure that you have been converted, but not everybody gets that.

[25 : 52] Some it's more like a sunrise. At one point you weren't a Christian, but now you are. Thank God for that. Not every story has to be amazing.

And yet every story is amazing. I thank God for every story. A third way to apply this section is that we need to have confidence that God can convert anyone.

If God can convert Paul, this man so hardened against Christianity, he can convert anyone. Whether it be someone who is hostile to Christianity.

Someone who makes fun of you or thinks down upon you for sharing about Christianity. To those who are simply apathetic. They don't need God.

They're doing well. They have all that they need in this life. God can convert them. He sure can. So have confidence to not avoid sharing with somebody because you think they're too far from the Lord.

[26 : 58] No one is too far from the Lord. Let's move on. Right away, Saul goes to work. He's converted. He can't keep his mouth shut about Jesus, though.

He goes from wanting to murder the disciples to proving that Jesus is the Messiah in the synagogues. He encounters people like he was. So the second point here is that conversion by the gospel leads to proclamation of the gospel.

If you have been converted, this should lead you to proclaim the gospel. I know it's scary at times. But this is one of the reasons we're here.

This is one of the reasons that you have been converted. Conversion by the gospel leads to proclamation of the gospel. Verses 20 to 30. It shouldn't surprise us or discourage us when we encounter opposition to the gospel.

Right after Saul's conversion, this is what happens in 19b. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, He is the Son of God.

[28 : 13] All who heard him were amazed and said, Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon his name? And has he not come here for the purpose to bring them bound before the chief priests?

But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul.

They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him. But his disciples took him by the night and led him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. I can't imagine what it was like to be confronted with the guy who was supposed to carry off all the disciples of Jesus to prison, yet he's here instead proclaiming Jesus is the Christ.

Christ. It must have felt surreal to these Jews in the synagogues.

But Saul didn't waste any time. If Jesus is the Messiah, then he was determined to proclaim him. And it's interesting to note that Saul didn't need any training on how to prove Jesus was the Christ.

[29 : 33] Verse 22. He just did it. He knew the Old Testament scriptures well. Once his eyes were open, he applied that knowledge to Jesus, and it all started to make sense to him.

Though he knew much about the Messiah, he suppressed the truth that Jesus was the Messiah. That's how it can be with us, how it can be with the world today. Deep down, they recognize there is a God out there.

They see it in nature. Those who have heard the gospel before but don't believe it, I think deep down, they know there is some truth out there.

Yet they suppress it. They don't want to believe. That's what makes us enemies of God before our conversion. We didn't want anything to do with him.

We want to sin, be our own king. Yet in our conversion, our eyes are opened to see all the things that we learned before and see them in light of the truth that Jesus is the Christ.

[30 : 39] Jesus is the one who died for your sins. There is no other way to heaven but through Christ. That is the truth that you must recognize.

Saul knew that it was not his own righteousness that had saved him but the mercy of Christ. See, Saul lived a life that was as perfect as you can get in devotion to God according to the Old Testament.

And yet he was an enemy of God. There is no amount of good works that you can do, no amount of putting off of sin, putting off wrongdoing that you can do to earn heaven.

You will not make it. God's standard is high. So high that if you commit a single sin, you will not make it.

Sin against an omniscient, omnipotent God is worthy of punishment. You say, but God's love.

[31 : 52] Yeah, he's love. How did he love us? God provided Jesus Christ to take our place on the cross, to take the sin, the punishment for sin that we deserved, that placed upon him.

So Jesus took that. If you want that forgiveness, you must repent and believe in Jesus Christ. It's not about your own works and your own endeavor to be a good person.

It's about Jesus and what he did for you. And this is what Saul proclaimed. Saul proclaimed Christ, the Messiah, the only way to the Father.

The Jews planned to kill him, though. So Saul's disciple got him out of the city. And what does he do once he gets back to Jerusalem? In verse 26. And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord who spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

[33 : 12] So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. Amen. After meeting the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem, Saul goes right back out and he preaches Christ again.

Is he a glutton for punishment? He knows that he'd just come from Jerusalem about three years prior. He had spent about three years in Damascus. Now he's coming back to his hometown that he was living in Jerusalem for a while.

And he's preaching there. He knows that they're going to oppose him, but he does it anyways. He just can't help but tell others about Jesus.

His conversion led him to proclamation. Let's back up a little bit in verse 26 and 27. When Paul first arrives in Jerusalem, the disciples are afraid of him, just like Ananias was afraid of him.

I mean, he was there approving of the stoning of Stephen just three years prior. They hadn't forgotten that. But good old Barnabas, probably young Barnabas, I don't know how old he is.

[34 : 25] We were introduced to him back in chapter 4. He had donated a field to the church. Didn't say a lot more about him. But if you read the rest of Acts, you'll see Barnabas come in again.

He is an encouragement. That's what his name means. Son of encouragement. He's an encouragement. So we see him here testifying of what Paul preached in Damascus.

And just as Ananias did, the disciples welcome him in. They forgive him, showing tremendous forgiveness for the one who was responsible for the death of their friend Stephen.

This is what the gospel enables. Forgiveness for every sin, even the most heinous. Wherever Saul goes, though, he preaches the gospel.

And wherever he preaches the gospel, he is opposed. Though he knows he'll be oppressed or even killed, he still proclaims the gospel. So we, too, should not be surprised when we're opposed when we mention God or the Bible.

- [35 : 39] You don't know what God will do when you share about Christ. But if you've been converted like Paul, this will lead you to proclaim the gospel to others.
- Maybe share your conversion story with others. Now, after Saul preaches Christ in Jerusalem, he gets into trouble again.
- So the disciples send him to Tarsus. So he goes from Jerusalem outward. And this should make you think of something when you see this in Acts.
- Somebody goes from Jerusalem outward. Acts 1.8 says this, You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.
- That is something that Jesus told his disciples. That is something that's true for us today. We are his witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.
- [36 : 40] Not everyone in this world has heard about Jesus yet. Not everyone in Cambridge has heard of Jesus yet. And maybe they have heard of Jesus, but they haven't really heard the gospel.
- They think Christianity is just like all the other religions out there. No, this is the true religion. This is the truth that you cannot make it to heaven, but through Christ.
- So the author of Acts, Luke, is writing this question and trying to answer this for Theophilus, who he is writing for.
- This is the question that surrounds the book of Acts. What accounts for the rapid expansion of the gospel? What accounts for the rapid expansion of the gospel?
- It's this. The power of the word preached. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the persecution of the preaching of the gospel. The power of the word.
- [37 : 48] The presence of the Holy Spirit in the persecution of the preaching of the gospel. Persecution has led to the spread of the gospel.
- This brings me to my third point. Jesus continues to build his church even through opposition.
- Verse 31. Jesus continues to build his church today through opposition. Sometimes I think we can feel like the church is in decline.
- From a certain perspective, it certainly seems that way. This part of the country used to be full of churches, full of people who called themselves Christians. They were devoted to their churches, to reading scripture, to raising their children according to the Lord.
- And now, for many of us, it's surprising when we find another Christian in the course of our normal day. The threats are all around.
- [38 : 50] The culture doesn't appreciate Christianity in their schools or in their sphere. People are less and less inclined to attend church on a Sunday morning.
- And that even includes Christians and Christian leaders and a more devoted folk. We just don't find the value in gathering with God's people.
- Churches are closing left and right in the Northeast. And the problems aren't just here, though. The government in China seems pretty successful in ridding their entire country of missionaries.
- OMF, as far as I know and am aware, has no official missionaries in China. OMF was founded to do missionary work in China.
- That's not to say there aren't any missionaries in China. We know one. Siobhan McLaren, Bailey's sister, who's doing work.

[39 : 54] And a great number of Middle Eastern nations have prevented most missionaries from even entering or doing missions work in their nations. Missionaries that do make it in have to be very careful and secretive about sharing Jesus Christ.

Now, I don't personally feel like I have enemies like the first century Christians did. I don't think you probably don't feel that way either. But there's no denying that Jesus' church today has enemies in this world.

But we shouldn't be afraid of opposition. I know we're not threatened with death because we share Christ. We're threatened in other ways, more subtle ways.

I think in some ways they're maybe more effective for suppressing the spread of the gospel. We shouldn't be afraid to speak about God and Jesus in the gospel.

But we must use wisdom and care for people in telling them about Jesus. Like Saul, we shouldn't be able to keep our mouths shut about the greatest news in the universe.

[41 : 01] I'm serious. This is the greatest news in the universe. That Jesus lived a perfect life, came down from heaven, lived a perfect life, went on the cross for our sins, died a death that we deserved and was raised from the dead.

That is the most important news in the universe. Do your friends, do your co-workers know this? Now, I know I'm preaching this to myself too because I know I'm not nearly as bold as I was when I was a teenager.

I was saved when I was very young. But as a teenager, I had zeal. Zeal without knowledge or humility. Everyone around me knew about Jesus.

Everyone around me also knew of my arrogance. My goal now, though, is that everyone around me will know about Jesus in the gospel.

But they will not be assaulted with my arrogance. They will feel my love for them, my care for them, not treating them like a project, but as a friend.

[42 : 13] One who shares because I care, not share because I'm on some project. to save the whole world.

People feel when you're disingenuous. So you want to be genuine with them. Share with wisdom. Share out of friendship and care.

But share. What Acts shows us is that no one is too far from his reach. From the church's greatest enemy, Saul, to the Ethiopian eunuch, who's not allowed in the temple, he can save anyone.

And think about today. The Ethiopian eunuch would have been one that the religious leaders looked very much down upon. Oh, that's not a religious person at all.

And you can think of people today that religious people look down upon. Who think, oh, they would never turn to Christianity. community. They don't fit with going to church.

[43 : 22] Share with those two. No one is too far from the gospel. No one is too far gone that God cannot save them. There's no problem too great for God.

No problem that will crush the church that he is building. He is building it. And it will never decrease. It will always increase. Jesus ascended to heaven and left his disciples.

What are they to do? He gave them the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. And in language barriers in Acts 2, they spoke all different languages and yet God spoke to them through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in all languages.

There was the Jewish council. There was physical need. There was dishonesty from Ananias and Sapphira. There was internal conflict in Acts 6.

There was the death of Stephen by stoning in Acts 7. Nothing can crush the church for God turned Saul from one who approved of Stephen's death to one who would spread the news across the known world.

[44 : 36] And in Acts you'll see continued time where there's a threat to the church. God overcomes it again and again and again. And He does the same today.

He will overcome everything that threatens the church. Verse 31. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.

And walking in the fear of the Lord in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it multiplied. George Littleton a British lord in the 18th century said this the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone duly considered was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation.

the conversion of Paul itself was sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine religion. He's right I think.

Has there ever been such a dramatic conversion where someone was persecuting a group for their beliefs and that led to him being changed around completely and leading the charge and proclaiming what that group was believing.

[46 : 02] Now maybe that has happened somewhere I don't know. It's not the only reason that we believe. But this is evidence for how God has worked in history.

These are true things. We saw Paul he's recorded in other books convert to sharing the gospel everywhere.

Now in conclusion if you've been converted if you've been saved by Jesus you have been forgiven even for the most heinous of evil in your life.

Just as Saul was forgiven for his part in the death of many Christians. But we haven't been converted so that we can simply live a life like the world does.

We haven't simply been converted so that we can have success in life and so that we can have peace of mind. We haven't been converted so that we can just enjoy the weekends with our family.

[47 : 01] Not so that we can just have great vacations. Save up for retirement. Enjoy the good things in life.

I enjoy these things too. God has given us many wonderful gifts. Give me a family. Give me many joys in this life. God has done that's not why I was converted though.

He has brought us here for a purpose. And one of the main purposes God converted you is so that you will tell others about Jesus.

If you are reviled, if you are persecuted, if you are laughed at, if people get angry with you, know that they do these things to Christ, when you are embarrassed, when you are afraid to speak, he identifies with you in your suffering.

And he's present with his Holy Spirit who has indwelt you to help you. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[48 : 12] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.