



Message #21

“ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS”

Acts 9:1-19

In the 2,000 years since His death and resurrection, countless millions have turned to Jesus. Lives have been transformed. Directions changed. But no conversion is more dramatic than that of Saul of Tarsus. His conversion story is the most famous in church history.

We are first introduced to Saul in **Acts 7:58** when Luke tells us that the witnesses of Stephen's persecution/execution laid their robes at Saul's feet as a sign of his authority over and agreement with the proceedings. Saul may not have thrown the stones at Stephen, but he was certainly morally culpable, and **Acts 8:1** tells of his approval of the killing of Stephen.

The execution of Stephen was just the beginning of Saul's reign of terror against the Christians (followers of The Way).

Then, in **Acts 8:3**, Luke tells us that Saul had one overwhelming mission in life: the stamping out of the spread of the gospel, which meant the destruction of the church.

But the grace of God would soon bring that reign of terror to an end. Acts 9 returns us to Saul's story.

Whose conversion to Christianity has been most astonishing to you? Why?

(Some notable examples of such unlikely conversions include people like C.C. Lewis and Chuck Colson.)

Personal reflection:

Think back to what your life was like before you met Christ. Thank God for the transformation that He has made in you - both your instant rebirth into His kingdom and the gradual remoulding of your character since then.

Read Acts 9:1-9

How would you describe Saul according to 9:1-2?

Acts 9:3-9 describes Saul's conversion experience.

If you were Saul, what do you think it would be like to meet Jesus in this way?

In what ways does Saul's conversion demonstrate the marvellous grace of God?

How would you describe the contrast between the Saul of Acts 9:1-2 and Saul of Acts 9:8-9?

What immediate evidence of transformation do you see in Saul after his encounter with Jesus?

Read Acts 9:10-19

Verse 10 introduces us to a disciple (follower of Christ) called **Ananias**. We do not know anything really about his background, but he was obviously a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

William Barclay calls Ananias “one of the forgotten heroes of the Christian church” (p.74 *The Acts of the Apostles*, Daily Study Bible, 1953).

God “speaks” to Ananias in a vision and calls him to go and find and help Saul.

Obviously, Saul’s reputation as an enemy of the church and his mission of persecution has gone before him. Ananias has certainly heard of him (Acts 9:13-14).

Perhaps, the instruction of the Lord to Ananias to go and seek out Saul might have felt like some kind of “suicide mission”...surely he would be arrested and, perhaps even killed!

It is totally understandable that Ananias would have some hesitancy and apprehension about going to meet with Saul.

Then the Lord explained to Ananias that Saul was a part of His great plan (Acts 9:15-16).

What two things did God reveal about Saul to Ananias?

Then Luke tells us.... “Then Ananias went.....”

In spite of his concern and confusion, Ananias was obedient to the call of God.

Have you ever experienced a time where God was directing you to do something even though you did not fully understand why, or how? What did you do?

So Ananias was obedient to the Lord and sought out Saul (9:17).

What is the significance of Ananias addressing Saul as “Brother Saul” (9:17)?

What can we learn about obedience to God through Saul and Ananias?

What does Saul’s conversion teach us about those in our lives who are most likely “not” to believe?

DISCUSS:

- A lot of people say that it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. What does Acts 9:1-19 have to say about this statement? How would you respond to someone who said it to you?
- For Saul, success and suffering would go hand in hand (Acts 9:15-16). Is this a “rule” of the Christian life? How far is our lack of success because of our fear of suffering?
- Consider the people in your life who are most antagonistic to Christianity. How might God use you to bring them to Christ?

If anything, this passage of Scripture that deals with the conversion of Saul should encourage us to keep praying for those who do not know Jesus as Saviour and Lord. We must NOT give up on them. God hasn’t.