

Conversions In Acts

Saul Of Tarsus' Conversion

(Ac 22:6-16)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons from the book of Acts on the "Conversions In Acts."
 - a. Last week we looked at "The Queen's Treasurer's Conversion."
 - i. **Ac 8:36-38** "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him."¹
 - b. This week we are going to look at one of the most well known people in the Bible Saul of Tarsus who is better known as Paul the apostle and his conversion.
 - i. **Ac 22:10, 14-16** "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do... 14 And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'"
3. Background on Saul of Tarsus
 - a. Birth
 - i. He was born around the same time as Jesus.
 1. His exact date is unknown.
 - ii. He was born in Tarsus.
 1. This is on the southern coast of modern day Turkey.
 - iii. His birth Jewish name was Saul.
 1. The name Saul means "asked for; demanded...required" (Smith, S., & Cornwall, J. (1998). In The exhaustive dictionary of Bible names. North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos.)
 - iv. His birth Roman name was Paul.
 1. The name Paul means "little" (Ibid)
 - a. Many think God changed his name but there is no indication of that in Scripture.
 - i. **Ac 13:9** "But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him"
 - b. Schooling
 - i. He was schooled in the highest levels of Jewish education.
 - ii. He studied under Gamaliel.
 1. Gamaliel was highly regarded by the Jewish people.

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

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- c. Saul of Tarsus was no ordinary Jew.
 - i. Paul later pleads his case to the Philippians as to why Jews should listen to him concerning Christianity over Judaism.
 1. **Ph 3:5-6** “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”
4. Interesting fact concerning Paul’s conversion.
 - a. There are three places Saul/Paul’s conversion is told.
 - i. **Ac 9:1-19** Luke describes it as it happened.
 - ii. **Ac 22:6-16** Paul recounts his conversion before a large crowd.
 - iii. **Ac 26:12-18** Paul defends himself before King Agrippa.
 - b. This interesting fact of having three different explanations concerning Paul’s conversion is what makes this so important.
 - i. With each account, because of the reason for giving it differed, we get more details concerning it.
5. With these things in mind let us examine our study today concerning the conversion of the mighty Jew Saul of Tarsus.

I. What Led To The Conversion?

- A. Saul was persecuting the church
 1. After Paul approved of the execution of Stephen he went out ravaging the church.
 - i. **Ac 8:1, 3** “And Saul approved of his execution...3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”
 - ii. **Ac 9:1-2** “But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 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.”
 2. Saul was by all accounts a psychopath.
 - i. Webster’s describes this as, “a personality disorder that is characterized by antisocial behavior exhibiting pervasive disregard for and violation of the rights, feelings, and safety of others...” (Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.)
 - ii. Paul admitted this very reality, “...I have lived my life before God in all good conscience...” (**Ac 23:1**).
 - a. I will explain why this information is necessary to know later on.

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- B. Saul on this way to Damascus has a frightful thing happen to him
 - 1. Paul had received permission to go to Damascus and bring charges there again any Christians.
 - i. Damascus is northeast of the Sea of Galilee which is due north of Jerusalem.
 - ii. **Ac 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11**
 - 2. On the way to Damascus Paul was stopped by Jesus with a great light.
 - ii. This great light blinded Saul but not those around him.
 - ii. **Ac 9:4-5; 22:7-11; 26:14-15**
 - 3. Paul was not only stopped by Jesus, Jesus spoke to him.
 - i. Jesus explained why He was stopping Saul.
 - a. **Ac 9:4** "...Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
 - ii. Jesus explained who He was to Saul.
 - a. **Ac 9:5** "...I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
 - iii. Jesus explained where He wanted Saul to go.
 - a. **Ac 9:6** "...rise and enter the city..."
 - iv. Jesus explained what He wanted Saul to do.
 - a. **Ac 9:6** "...you will be told what you must do." (NKJV)
 - b. **Ac 22:10** "...you will be told all that is appointed for you to do."
 - 4. Saul goes as instructed to Damascus.
 - i. He is led by the hand because he is blind.
 - a. **Ac 9:8; Ac 22:11**
- C. Saul in Damascus waits for further instructions
 - 1. Saul while waiting for further instructions prays to God.
 - i. Saul now knew he was a sinner rather than a saint.
 - ii. For three days he prayed not eating nor drinking.
 - a. **Ac 9:9**
- D. The Lord sends Ananias to Saul in Damascus
 - 1. Jesus appears to Ananias in a vision.
 - i. **Ac 9:10**
 - 2. Jesus instructs Ananias to go give Saul back his sight.
 - i. **Ac 9:11-12**
 - 3. Jesus instructs Ananias why Saul was chosen by Him.
 - i. **Ac 9:15** "...to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."
- E. Ananias goes per the Lord's instructions to Saul
 - 1. There he gives Saul back his sight and tells him what he must do and what all he has been appointed to do by God & Saul listened, obeyed and became a child of God.
 - i. **Ac 9:17-18; 22:12-16**
- F. Thus...
 - 1. What led to the conversions...was there anything that got the conversions going...yes it was the teaching of Ananias.

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II. What Was Said To The Non-Christian?

- A. Ananias showed Paul that what he was about to tell him was God's Word
1. He performed the miracle on Saul's eyes making him able to see again.
 - i. **Ac 9:17-18** "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." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight..."
 - a. **Ac 22:12-13**
 2. Keep in mind the purpose of miracles was to confirm the Word spoke by men was from God.
 - i. **Mk 16:20** "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs."
 - ii. This is why there are no miracles today because we have the completed Word and it no longer needs confirmation as being from God.
 - a. **I Co 13:9-10** "For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away." (NKJV)
 - b. **II Pt 1:3** "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence"
 - c. **Ja 1:25** "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." (NKJV)
- B. Ananias then told Paul what He "must" do to become a Christian
1. Notice what Ananias did not tell Saul.
 - i. He did not tell Saul he had been saved (had his sins removed) already.
 - a. Remember Saul had faith in Jesus.
 1. He believed Jesus was God the Son as he literally saw Him and talked with Him.
 2. He was obeying Jesus by doing what he had been told to do, go and wait for further instruction.
 - b. Remember Saul had repented.
 1. He had been praying for three days and nights.
 - i. He had not eaten or drank anything during this time.
 2. He understood he had sinned against God and thus was praying as a sinner.
 - i. This is the closes anyone can come in the Bible to finding the sinner's prayer as it is commonly called. However that doctrine fall on its face in light of what we find with Saul in his conversion.

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- c. However after having faith in Jesus, repenting (willing to give his life over to Jesus), and praying as a sinner Saul did not yet have his sins removed and thus was not a Christian yet.
 2. Notice what Ananias told Paul he must do to be saved.
 - i. **Ac 22:16** “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (NKJV)
 3. This is in line with everything we have seen up to this point.
 - i. Peter after quoting Joel about how everyone must call on the name of the Lord to be saved, told the crowd they must be baptized to be saved.
 - a. **Ac 2:21; 2:38**
 - ii. Ananias following this same example told Saul he must be baptized calling on the name of the Lord.
 - a. **Ac 22:16, 9:18**
- C. Thus...
 1. What was said to the non-Christian...was there any specific doctrine mentioned...yes Saul was told to call on the name of the Lord through baptism to have his sins washed away and become a Christian.

III. What Was The Mentality Of The New Convert?

- A. Unlike with the Ethiopian eunuch there is much to read concerning the aftermath of Saul’s conversion
 1. Paul immediately begins, in Damascus, to preach Jesus to the people there proving Jesus was the Christ.
 - i. **Ac 9:19-20, 22** “and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God...22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.”
 2. Paul then goes down to Arabia and preaches then back to Damascus.
 - i. **Ga 1:17** “nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.”
 3. Three years later Paul returns to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and James, the Lord’s brother.
 - i. **Ga 1:18-19** “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother.”
 4. Paul would then go on three different missionary journeys.
 - i. 1st missionary journey **Ac 13-14**
 - ii. 2nd missionary journey **Ac 15:40-18:23**
 - iii. 3rd missionary journey **Ac 18:23-21:15**
- B. Thus...
 1. What was the mentality of the new convert...was there anything surprising after his conversion in his attitude or actions...absolutely, Saul began preaching and teaching immediately.

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IV. How Does Knowing This Help Us Help Others?

- A. Knowing this will help us understand what will lead people to obeying the gospel
 - 1. It is taking the opportunities that present themselves to us.
 - i. Ananias had to be persuaded by God to take this great opportunity.
 - 2. Today far too many Christians would need God to do the same to them.
 - i. They are afraid of teaching the lost because of how they might react to them.
 - ii. We must not allow fear to control us but rather gather strength in Christ to proclaim salvation to everyone taking hold of every opportunity.
- B. Knowing this will help us understand what needs to be said to help others obey the gospel
 - 1. It isn't seeing Jesus personally that leads to conversion.
 - i. Judas saw Jesus day by day and witnessed His miracles but was not converted.
 - 2. It isn't telling people all they have to do is have faith in Jesus to be saved.
 - i. Paul had all the faith one can have yet he still did not have his sins washed away.
 - 3. It isn't telling someone to "pray until you're saved."
 - i. Paul prayed for three days and nights but was not saved.
 - 4. It is preaching that part of the plan of salvation that is "still" needed in order for one to be saved.
 - i. If someone already has faith in Jesus, is repentant, and confessed Jesus by mouth then all that is left is to obey the gospel.
 - a. **Ro 6:3-5** "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."
 - 5. Sometimes all we need to go over is that which is lacking.
 - i. We don't always have to go over every step if they are not in need of each and every step.
 - a. This is where it becomes important not to be tied down to any particular "method" concerning teaching how one is to become a child of God.
 - b. Example: A preacher told me one time how when someone was studying with him before he became a Christian. This person used a common method known as the "Open Bible." The reason he did not get through the lessons was because it offended him. He already knew Jesus was the Son of God and knew he was a sinner and going several studies over that was to him just offensive. He said, "It made me feel like the person teaching me thought I was stupid."

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- C. Knowing this will help us understand that young Christians need to get active
 - 1. Those that are not actively involved right away have a much greater chance of falling away.
 - i. The feeling of not “knowing enough” only ends if they get up and get active and we let them.
 - 2. Being active means...
 - i. Letting newly obedient men participate in every aspect of worship or any other needed place biblically acceptable.
 - a. Leading prayers, Lord’s supper, leading singing, teaching...
 - b. Helping with the keep up of the grounds, preparation for the services...
 - ii. Letting newly obedient women participate in the teaching of kids or any other need place biblically acceptable.
 - a. Helping the current teachers or even teaching themselves.
 - i. They can be supervised by the current teacher but they need to not just help but teach as this breeds confidence and knowledge.
 - b. Helping with the keep up of the grounds, planning of the many different activities that go on...

CONCLUSION

- 1. Brethren what a treasure trove of information we have from the great biblical account concerning the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.
 - a. Let it be said of us that we take these things we have learned today and apply them.
- 2. Question: Are you taking opportunities, teaching truth, and/or helping the young Christians as you should?
 - a. If so continue therein and grow thereby.
 - b. If not why not?
- 3. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Have Faith In Jesus **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**