

Week 48: Paul's Conversion - From Persecutor to Preacher

A Sabbath Family Bible Study

Introduction

Few transformations in Scripture are as dramatic as the conversion of the Apostle Paul. Before he was a preacher of Christ, Paul (then called Saul) was a persecutor of the Church. He was zealous, educated, and convinced he was serving God. His zeal was misdirected, and his actions opposed the very truth he believed he was defending.

Then, on the road to Damascus, all that changed. He was confronted by Christ, who exposed Paul's error, and redirected his life. This account teaches us that no one is beyond God's reach. It also warns us that sincerity is not the same as truth, that a person can be deeply committed and still completely wrong. True transformation can only begin when a person encounters Christ, humbles themselves, and submits to His authority.

Scripture Reading

(Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9:1-2, Acts 9:3-9, Acts 9:10-18, Acts 9:20-22, 1 Timothy 1:12-16, Psalm 34:4-6)

Acts 8:1–3 - The Zeal of Saul

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Acts 9:1–2

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

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.

Commentary

Saul was not indifferent. He was aggressive, intentional, and convinced he was right. He persecuted believers, entered homes, and imprisoned men and women. His zeal was intense, but it was directed against God.

Many people are passionate about what they believe. But being passionate does not make something right, genuine truth is determined by God's word. Families must teach discernment. A person can be confident, educated, and sincere, and still be in grave error.

Acts 9:3–9 - The Encounter on the Road

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 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.

Commentary

Saul's encounter with Christ was very humbling. He is confronted: "Why persecutest thou me?"

Then Jesus identifies with His people, because to persecute the Church is to oppose Christ. Saul is struck blind, and the man who thought he saw so clearly is now unable to see at all. This physical blindness is reflective of his previous spiritual blindness.

His response changes immediately: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Because true conversion is marked by instant and complete surrender. Saul does not argue or defend himself. He submits fully and immediately, this is a great lesson for us, that encountering Christ requires humility. Pride resists correction, while true faith responds with obedience.

Acts 9:10–18

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight and enquire in the house of Judas for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Acts 9:20–22

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Commentary

God chooses Saul, not because of his past, but for His purpose. Ananias hesitates, knowing Saul's reputation. Yet God's command is clear: Saul is a "chosen vessel." Immediately, Saul begins to preach Christ and the transformation is undeniable. The same man who once opposed the truth now defends it boldly.

In this we can see that God not only forgives, He repurposes. A changed life is evidence of real conversion. Past sin does not disqualify someone from future usefulness when true repentance has occurred and is clearly evident in their actions.

1 Timothy 1:12–16

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Commentary

Paul never forgot who he was, even referring to himself as the "chief" of sinners.

In a clear recognition of grace, his life becomes a testimony: if God can save Paul, He can save anyone. Grace is not an excuse for sin, but the power that transforms a life. Families must teach that no one earns salvation. It is given by God's mercy. And when it is received, it produces real change without exception.

Discussion Questions for All Ages

Young Children

- What was Saul doing before he met Jesus?
- What happened to him on the road?
- Did Saul change after meeting Jesus?

Older Children & Teens

- Why was Saul so confident even though he was wrong?
- What does Saul's blindness represent?
- How does real change show that someone has met Christ?

Adults

- Are there areas where zeal has replaced truth in your life?
 - Have you fully surrendered to Christ's authority?
 - Does your life reflect real transformation?
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Psalm Reading: Psalm 34:4–6

4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Commentary

God hears those who cry out to Him. Saul's transformation reflects this truth, when he turned to Christ, he was heard, changed, and his life redirected. God does not reject those who come in humility. He rescues and restores them.

Hymn: "Take My Life and Let It Be"

By Frances Ridley Havergal (1874)

1.

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;

Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

3.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

4.

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

5.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

6.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Family Application Points

1. Test Beliefs by Truth

Teach your family that sincerity must be aligned with God's Word.

2. Respond to Correction Quickly

When confronted with truth, humility should replace defensiveness.

3. Trust God's Power to Transform

No person is beyond redemption when they turn to Christ.

4. Use Your Life as a Testimony

A changed life should point others to God's grace.

5. Submit to God's Calling

Like Paul, be willing to go where God directs and do what He commands.

A Sabbath Feast Prayer

Father, we thank You for Your transforming grace. As we sit at this table, bless this food before us and bless the loving hands that prepared it. Remind our family that no one is beyond Your reach. Teach us to walk in humility, to respond quickly to Your truth, and to live as testimonies of Your mercy. Shape our lives according to Your purpose. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank You for the example of Paul's transformation. You turn darkness into light and rebellion into obedience. Search our hearts and correct what is wrong within us. Give us humility to follow You fully. Let our lives reflect Your grace and truth. May our home stand as a testimony of Your power to save and transform. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.