



World Christian Fellowship

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Galatians

Lesson 07 Defending His Apostleship Conversion

Galatians 1:15- 16, *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,*

One of the great incidents took place in the life of human history! A man named Saul met with Lord Jesus Christ and become Paul.

This conversion changed the Christendom history! As we know his details once again a brief of Saul/ Paul's life.

- By birth a Jew and Roman
- By conviction, a Pharisee
- By education, a Greek
- By grace, a Christian.

After Conversion he became

- ✓ a missionary,

- ✓ a theologian,
- ✓ an evangelist,
- ✓ a pastor,
- ✓ a teacher,
- ✓ a preacher,
- ✓ an organizer,
- ✓ a leader,
- ✓ a thinker,
- ✓ a statesman,
- ✓ a fighter, and
- ✓ a lover of Lord Jesus Christ and
- ✓ all at the same time.

Hence it is very important for us to understand his conversion.

Acts 9: 1-9, *Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."⁷ And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice*

but seeing no one. ⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

There was a large Jewish community there in Damascus. It is estimated by historians that 66 A.D., 20,000 of them were massacred. Damascus had several synagogues with so many Jews. About 160 miles north from Jerusalem. It was, in ancient times, the capital of Syria.

Saul got the word there were Christians in Damascus. They are identified in **Acts 9:2**, as “*belonging to the Way*, both men and women, belonging to the Way.”

From Jerusalem to Damascus is about six days trip by caravans, according to the historians. They have reached the border of Damascus.

Three main points we will see from this.

1. God's Initiative
2. God's Conviction
3. Conversion

1. God's Initiative

Acts 9:3, *As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.*

God takes the first step to meet with Saul.

We can see this over and over again how God initiates the first. The Holy Spirit was making everything happen according to the will of God.

Acts 8 we see Philip and Ethiopian Eunuch.

God's sovereign will and His purpose.

Two passages in the Gospel will show you the grace of god in saving the sinners.

Prodigal son:

Luke 15:11-30

The Prodigal Son represents the worst imaginable sinner who has turned his back on his father, taken his inheritance and wasted it on prostitutes and wild living in a foreign country. When he runs out of the money he ends up trying to eat the food the pigs eat but he can't even eat that.

So, he is in despair and in the middle of a famine. When he came to himself he decides to go home to his father.

While he was on his way back the father sees him as he approaches the village. The Lord Jesus Christ reveals the God the Father in the parable.

Sees him from afar,

- ✓ runs to him,
- ✓ throws his arms around him,
- ✓ kisses him all over,
- ✓ puts a robe on him
- ✓ puts a ring on him and
- ✓ puts sandals on him.

We see in the story that God in Christ has fully embraced the sinner before the sinner can do anything to make things right. That's the gospel of grace.

A remorseful sinner coming to the Father to Christ will receive such grace.

Pharisee and Tax Collector:

Luke 18: 9-14,

Two men in the temple who were praying, one was a Pharisee, and another is a tax collector.

The Pharisee was celebrating his morality and his religiosity before God in his supposed prayer.

The tax collector, open sinner,

- ✓ who wouldn't look up to heaven,
- ✓ he kept his eyes downward,
- ✓ he was beating on his chest in signs of grief, and
- ✓ he prays, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Jesus said, that man went home justified rather than the other.

All people who are saved are saved because of a sovereign work of God, but not all of them have this kind of experience like Apostle Paul.

I certainly didn't have such experience!

Neither did you!!

May be someone!!!

God calls, but He usually calls in a still, small voice. But in the case of Saul, He called with a blazing, smashing, crushing, devastating appearance.

Let us look at the testimony of Paul about this experience which is written in Acts 22nd and 26th chapter.

We can get the following details from this.

It was about noon, midday, sun at the peak.

A light shown above the brightness of the sun, miraculous, supernatural, transcending the brightness of the noonday sun.

Shining around Paul and all those who journeyed with him.

The whole group then falls down to the ground in sheer terror.

It was a light out of heaven.

The men got up, but Saul remained flat on the ground.

They heard the sound, they heard noise, but they couldn't understand.

The others are stunned, crawling around, trying to make sense of it, stupefied, confused.

The light breaks through to Saul and he sees Jesus.

Acts 9:17, *And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 22:14, *Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.*

Paul saw the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:8, *Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*

The salvation of anyone is totally initiated by God. Saul was going one way with no idea of turning to go the other way, and God sovereignly turn him around.

2. God’s Conviction

Acts 9:4, *Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*

Paul doesn’t know what hit him and laying at the feet of his conqueror.

Calling his name is twice like a warning.

“Martha, Martha.”

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem.”

“Simon, Simon.”

“Saul, Saul.”

There’s an emphatic nature to that repetition.

“Why are you persecuting Me? For what reason?”

John 15:25, *But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’*

“Why are you persecuting Me?”

Jesus wasn’t even around, He was back in heaven. But our Lord identifies for us this very significant reality that to persecute any of His people is to persecute Him.

Jesus is inseparable from His people. He is bound together with all the members of His body so that every stroke which is directed against us is a blow that falls on Him. Jesus is truly identified with us.

Persecuting us is persecuting Jesus.

Saul was delivering blows to Jesus. Paul says in **Galatians 6:17**, *“I am accepting now the blows that were meant for Him. I bear in my body the marks of Christ.”*

Every member of the body of Christ is a member of Christ, is one with Christ, the glorious head of the body. And if one believer

is touched on earth, that touch is felt in heaven. That's how identified we are with Him.

1 Corinthians 16:22, *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!*

The work of the Holy Spirit is convicting the sinner of not believing the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 16:9, *of sin, because they do not believe in Me;*

That is the crime of all crimes.

That is the unpardonable sin,

The unforgivable crime.

Saul is literally smashed with that indictment that "You are persecuting the Son of God." That's the conviction that must reside in the heart.

V 5, *"Who are You, Lord?"*

He had never seen Jesus before, but even if he had seen Jesus before, this was not going to be the same because Jesus was not the same in His glorified form.

He is now acknowledging that He is Lord!

Acts 22:8, *So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'*

Jesus has captured Paul's attention, filled him with the fear of conviction, and presented the truth concerning Himself that "*I am Jesus of Nazareth.*"

Paul (Saul) knew very well the Christian gospel. He was a highly educated theologian. It was because of the heresy that he was killing these people.

Paul knew what they were saying.

- ✓ He knew they were proclaiming
- ✓ this Man as the Messiah,
- ✓ this Man as the Son of God,
- ✓ this Man is God's chosen to sacrifice for sin,
- ✓ this Man rose from the dead, and
- ✓ this Man has been anointed by God as the Righteous One.

He heard when Stephen's last words before he was killed.

Until Paul met with Lord Jesus he was thinking that this was heresy and blasphemy. They claimed that He had risen from the dead, and now he know He has.

Jesus is alive.

He is the Son of God.

He is the Messiah.

He is the One from glory who was standing at God's right hand.

Now Saul was shattered, repentant, broken, now lying down the conquering Christ needing mercy.

One side his heart is broken in repentance and sorrow, and at the other side, healed in faith.

Paul describe what happened inside his heart to his beloved spiritual son Timothy.

1 Timothy 1:12-17, *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 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. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

What happened in Acts 9 is external!

He confirms what happened internally in his letter to

Philippians 3:7-11, *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things*

loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain^[b] to the resurrection from the dead.

His conversion completed there! We can clearly understand this from his testimony.

Acts 22:8-10, *So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'*⁹ *"And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me."*¹⁰ *So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'*

What is the first response of a true conversion?

Submission/ Obedience and confessing Jesus as Lord.

Now he has a new master!

He called Him Lord. He recognized the truth that Jesus is Lord.

Acts 9:6-9, *So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

⁷And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

What did he do?

What did he do for three days?

Paul had communed with his new Master.

- he is helpless
- he is friendless
- his friends who are now enemies

What happened at his conversion?

Galatians 1:15, *“But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb,”*

God had predetermined the salvation of this man?

Yes, God predetermines the salvation of every person.

When a man is going headlong in one direction and suddenly reverses, and stops, and goes the absolute opposite direction, there must be a divine explanation.

God saved him.

God broke into his darkness, transformed his life.

This is initiated by God because he was chosen by God.

He was set apart even from his mother’s womb.

The very moment of his conception in the womb of his mother, God's purposes for him began.

"And God call me"

that's an effectual call to salvation on the Damascus Road.

"through His grace."

Initiated by God through His grace

"was pleased to reveal His Son to me,"

why?

"so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles."

Purpose revealed.

This is the work of God.

- ✓ God chooses,
- ✓ God regenerates through the effectual call by grace,
- ✓ God reveals His Son so that faith is born,
- ✓ attached to the Son of God,
- ✓ become a preacher to Gentiles, and
- ✓ becomes a preacher of the one he persecuted.

3. Conversion.

This was not a work of men.

My pre-conversion state proves that I didn't receive this from men.

My conversion is all about God.

What am I doing on the Damascus Road?

I had papers from the high priest to persecute the Christians.

I was heading to Damascus for the purpose of imprisoning believers in Jesus.

I am not some second-hand apostle.

Nobody gave me the message.

Jesus showed up on the Damascus Road.

1 Corinthians 1:1, *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.”*

That is why Apostle Paul was able to say that when God was pleased, He called me.

The Lord who had set me apart from my mother’s womb, chose me and began to work on me when I was conceived in my mother’s womb. Amazing!

Same is said of John the Baptist!

Luke 1:15, *For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.*

Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah.

Isaiah 49:1, *“Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The Lord has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.*

Jeremiah 1:5, *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*

Chosen before they were ever born to be proclaimers of the true God.

Acts 9, Paul was chosen.

Acts 13, he was set apart.

He was marked off before he was born, he had nothing to do with it.

This wasn't brought about by men, it was done by God.

God called him, God gave him life, and he responded.
