

¹ Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² 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. ¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." ¹³ Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." 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." ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰ Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. ²¹ Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" ²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Text: Acts 9:1-22 A 7/19/26 Revelation 5:11-14 John 21:15-19 Psalm 26 Responsive Psalm: 96
Hymns: 1, 540, 498, 15

JESUS CALLS SINNERS TO SALVATION AND SERVICE

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Who are you and I, that God should have brought us sinners to believe in Jesus, our Savior, and given us the wonderful privilege of telling the world about Him? Today from God's Word we will see that **JESUS CALLS SINNERS TO SALVATION AND SERVICE.**

Our text tells us about the conversion of Saul, the Christ- and Christian-hating Pharisee, to the Apostle Paul, who loved Christ and Christ's people, and devoted his life to serving Christ. Our text begins when he was still Saul. Saul had been present to show his approval and support when Stephen was stoned to death for preaching about Christ (Ac. 7:58). As far as Saul and his fellow Pharisees were concerned, the Christians were blaspheming God by claiming that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah from the Jewish race.

Saul was traveling on his way to persecute more Christians when suddenly, a bright light flashed around him and he fell to the ground. He heard a voice say to him, *“I am Jesus.”* Jesus spoke directly to Saul, and converted him.

Romans 10:17 says, *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”* It’s only by hearing God’s Word that someone can come to believe in Jesus. It can be so frustrating and discouraging when we’re talking to someone about Jesus and he doesn’t want to hear it or it just doesn’t seem to be getting through. After Saul was converted and became the Apostle Paul he said, *“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”* (Ro. 1:16). As we have opportunity, we share passages from the Bible with others that deal with their questions and objections. As much as we want someone to believe, we can’t make him believe. Later, as Paul preached and witnessed to others, he said, *“I planted, ... but God gave the increase”* (1 Cor. 3:6). As we share God’s Word with others, it’s completely in God’s hands to bring them to hunger and thirst for it, and believe it. Don’t give up hope! Remember the Lord’s conversion of Saul.

Jesus told Saul, *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”* What a shock to Saul! By persecuting Jesus’ people, Saul was also persecuting Jesus Himself. Saul had sincerely believed he was serving God by persecuting the Christians, only to learn that they were right and he was wrong, and that they were serving God and he had been fighting God.

Jesus knocked Saul to the ground and blinded him for three days. During that time Saul needed other people to lead him around. The Lord knows how to get through to us. One commentator observes, “It is often a part of God’s specific plan to lay inactivity upon some person, by sickness or by some other affliction. At such a time the heart has sufficient opportunity for earnest, prayerful communion with God.”

The Bible says, *“The Lord ... is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9). Sometimes the Lord will stop us dead in our tracks, so that the only place we have to look for help is to Him. But if that’s what it takes, the Lord loves us enough to do it. Would God be a loving God if He let people go their own way down the broad, easy path leading to hell, and do nothing to try to turn them around? Lamentations 3:31-33 says, *“The Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”*

The Lord knocked Saul to the ground and blinded him for a little while, and He ended up saving Saul’s soul. Being converted to believe in Jesus Christ is a humbling process. We all resist God by nature. But God in His grace has broken down our resistance and brought us to believe in Him.

The Lord told a Christian named Ananias to go lay his hands on Saul so that Saul could regain his sight. Ananias had heard about Saul and what he was doing to the Christians, and was afraid to go to him. The Lord had a huge surprise for Ananias. Saul was a Christian now! Saul loved the Lord Jesus and would humbly serve Him from then on. So Ananias put his trust in God and went to see Saul, and God took away Saul’s blindness.

After Saul regained his strength we’re told that he *“spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in*

Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?’” Saul was ‘on fire’ for the Lord Jesus, and wasn’t everyone amazed!

Saul had studied under Gamaliel, one of the most learned and distinguished rabbis of his day. Saul was a gifted Jewish theologian himself, and full of religious zeal. He truly believed he was serving God in every way he could. But as long as he hardened his heart against Jesus, his faith and his considerable knowledge of Scripture and his zeal to serve God were completely misguided.

Then Jesus opened Saul’s eyes and heart to see the truth. Thinking of the way he was before and after his conversion Paul came to say, *“Indeed I ... count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.... That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* (Philip. 3:8ff.)

Jesus had told Ananias, *“I will show [Saul] how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”* Just after our text we hear that Saul’s former Jewish allies in persecuting the Christians were now plotting to kill him! Sometimes we have to suffer as Christians. Any time we take a stand on God’s Word, any time we do our part in serving the Lord, the devil is going to fight us. Sometimes he hits us hard, and it really hurts. The Lord uses our crosses to bring us closer to Him, make our faith stronger, and make us more mature Christians. Then we can serve our Lord better. We say with Paul, *“For to me, to live is Christ”* (Philip. 1:21, my emphasis). Our great treasure in life is knowing Jesus who died on the cross for our sins and rose again to save us, and living our lives for Him. Listen to what happened once with Peter and John: *“The [Jewish leaders] ... called for the apostles and [beat] them. They commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for [Jesus’] name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”* (Ac. 5:40-42)

Sometimes we feel very unworthy and inadequate to serve our Lord. Paul once wondered about the public ministry, *“Who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor. 2:16b). The way Paul had so terribly persecuted Christ’s people before his conversion sometimes weighed heavily on him. He said, *“I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”* (1 Cor. 15:9-11)

The Lord used the training and the gifts Saul had, brought him to believe in Jesus and filled his heart with Jesus’ love, and made him the Apostle Paul. The Lord has done the same kind of thing with each of us. We may say, “I’m sure not the Apostle Paul.” The Lord prepared Paul to serve Him back then, and the Lord has prepared you and me to serve Him now. The Lord has given each of us our gifts. He has put the love of Jesus into our hearts. And He tells us to go and share His Gospel with the world.

Who are you and I, that God should have brought us sinners to believe in Jesus, our Savior, and given us the wonderful privilege of telling the world about Him? **JESUS CALLS SINNERS TO SALVATION AND SERVICE.** Amen.