

***A Light from Heaven***

Acts 9

Tony Chute, Interim Pastor

**Overview:** The transformation of Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle is one of the most remarkable conversion stories in history. Saul had originally intended to put an end to the faith by persecuting Christians, but Jesus put an end to his plans by revealing that persecuting the church was the same as persecuting Christ himself. The hesitancy of Ananias to accommodate Saul and the fear with which the disciples responded to his desire to join them indicates that no one thought of Saul as a candidate for conversion. However, Luke includes a number of clues that confirm the reality of Saul's conversion: he responded to the Lord, was baptized, became a disciple, witnessed for Christ, was rejected by the world, and served the church.

**01. Conversion is a work of God by which the worst sinners, the most successful, and the best behaved are justified.**

**02. Conversion is an instantaneous action that often occurs after a long struggle, a gradual awareness, or sudden sense of our sin.**

**03. Conversion is evidenced by obedience to biblical commands, relinquishing worldly praise, and fellowship in the local church.**

This Promise is for You and for All

1. Consider how Luke refers to Saul's presence at Stephen's execution (Acts 7:58) and ongoing persecution (Acts 8:1-2; 9:1-2). Compare those accounts with the ministry of Saul in the remainder of Acts. What is the overall purpose of Luke's account of Saul's conversion? How does Saul's conversion enable the gospel to go forth in light of Acts 1:8?

2. What elements of Saul's conversion can you identify with? Have you had a sense of your own failure before God, even when people indicate that you have accomplished much with your life? What does the conversion of Saul suggest to us about the difference in how God evaluates us, and how we and others evaluate ourselves? See Philippians 3:3-11 for further insight.

3. Are there people in your circles of influence that you believe will never come to Christ for salvation? Take time to pray for them, asking the Lord to work in their lives in the same way that He brought Saul to faith.

4. The suddenness of Saul's conversion has led some to conclude that everyone who is saved should be able to know the time and place when they gave their lives to Christ. Consider, however, Paul's words to Timothy regarding how he came to faith (2 Timothy 2:5). If a person does not know when and where they became a Christian, what elements of the gospel must they know to be assured of their conversion? See Ephesians 2:1-10 for further insight.

5. As you read the account of the early stages of Saul's life as a Christian, note how he is immediately persecuted by those to whom he witnesses (9:22-23, 28-29). What does the rejection of Saul suggest about our place in a world that is increasingly more hostile to Christianity? Do you find comfort in Saul's example? Consider also the words of Jesus in John 15:19.

**For Further Reading: David Wells, *Turning to God: Reclaiming Conversion as Unique, Necessary, and Supernatural* (Baker, 2012)**

This Promise is for You and for All