

# SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

## WEEK 32

### Saul is converted

Acts 9:1–31



## DAY 1

*Saul was the fiercest persecutor of the gospel • Acts 9:1–2*

### READ

Acts 9:1–9

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Acts 9:1–2

The greatest persecutor of the early church was Saul. He was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28) and a Pharisee trained by one of the most famous rabbis (22:3; 23:6). His qualifications were flawless (Phil 3:4), and so was his zeal to rip the church apart (3:6; Acts 8:3). He had agreed with putting Stephen to death (8:1), and he was convinced that he was doing the right thing (26:9). He was obsessed with persecution. It was his way of life. It consumed him. He didn't want Christians in prison. He wanted them dead (26:10–11). And not just in Jerusalem, but everywhere (26:11). His life was all about destroying the *Way*, people who claimed that Jesus was the way to God (John 14:6; Acts 18:26). So he set off for Damascus, a large city in Syria, north of Judea, where Christianity had begun to spread among the large Jewish community. Saul had authority from the high priest, but he was about to meet someone with even more authority: Jesus. This encounter would radically transform Saul—the gospel's greatest opponent would become its greatest proponent.

### ASK

1. Who was trying to kill Christians?  
*Saul.*
2. Why was Saul going to Damascus?  
*To arrest and kill Christians.*
3. Did Saul have permission to do this?  
*Yes. Saul had authority from the high priest.*
4. Did Saul think he was doing the right thing?  
*Yes. He believed that he was serving God.*

### DISCUSS

1. Is sincerity enough to make someone a good person?
2. Have you ever thought you were doing the right thing, but then realized the Bible showed it wasn't right?

## DAY 2

Jesus defeated the fiercest persecutor of His gospel • Acts 9:3–9

### READ

Acts 9:1–9

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Acts 9:3–9

Even though it was noon (Acts 22:6), Saul saw a supernatural light and heard a clear voice. Saul immediately knew that this person was the Lord. But who exactly was this Lord? The answer shook Saul's world. What he thought was great service to the Lord was actually great sin against Jesus. By persecuting believers, Saul was persecuting Jesus. Saul's experience was unique, but it shows two principles of salvation. First, Jesus calls the sinner. He causes the sinner to see who Jesus really is (John 6:37, 44; 2 Cor 4:6), and as a result, He causes the sinner to desire to live under His authority (22:10–11). This is what happened to Saul, who spent the next three days seeking Jesus in prayer. Second, Jesus convicts the sinner by showing him how desperately sinful he is (Luke 18:13). He replaces pride with humility so that the sinner is ready to respond in faith (Matt 11:25; 18:3). So Saul, instead of entering Damascus as a proud conqueror of Christians, was led in as a humble captive of Christ. By calling and convicting Saul, Jesus defeated the church's fiercest persecutor.

### ASK

1. Who appeared to Saul near Damascus?  
*Jesus.*
2. What did Saul call Jesus?  
*Lord.*
3. How did Jesus call Saul to faith?  
*Jesus caused Saul to realize just who He is—Lord, Son of God, and Messiah.*
4. How did Jesus convict Saul of his sin?  
*Jesus allowed Saul to see that what Saul thought was a good thing (persecuting Christians) was actually a very terrible thing (attacking God).*

### DISCUSS

1. Why did Jesus say Saul was persecuting Him (Col 1:24)?
2. Have you ever recognized your own sin the same way Saul did (1 Tim 1:15)?

## DAY 3

Jesus made Saul a witness to His gospel • Acts 9:10–19

### READ

Acts 9:10–31

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Acts 9:10–19

Imagine if you were Ananias: how quickly would you obey and go help a man who wanted to kill you? Ananias was ready to obey, but he still wondered why he was being sent to the enemy. Jesus answered that He had chosen Saul to be His instrument. This shows that Jesus is the one in charge. He is the one leading the mission to proclaim His name to the whole world. Now He had chosen Saul to accomplish a big

part of that mission—to Jews (Rom 1:16), to Gentiles (11:13), and to kings (Acts 26). If that wasn't enough to convince Ananias, Jesus added that instead of causing more suffering, Saul himself would suffer greatly for Jesus (2 Cor 11:24–29). Ananias obeyed, and through Ananias, Saul's **conversion** was complete. Saul's physical blindness was healed, illustrating that he also had new spiritual sight (Heb 11:1, 13, 27; 2 Cor 4:4–6). Saul also confirmed his faith through baptism. Thus, while the process of turning from self and turning toward Jesus had begun while still on the road, now Saul's faith shows his conversion was complete.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

**ASK** 

1. Who did Jesus use to equip Saul to be His chosen instrument?  
*Ananias came, prayed, and baptized Saul.*
2. Why was Ananias initially confused when Jesus told him to go to Saul?  
*Saul was the enemy of the gospel.*
3. What did Jesus call Saul?  
*“My chosen instrument.”*
4. Why did Jesus call Saul His “chosen instrument”?  
*Jesus was going to use Saul to tell others about Jesus.*

**DISCUSS** 

1. How do we know Saul’s conversion was complete?
2. Are you willing to share Jesus with others? Even if it’s dangerous? Even if other people end up getting lots of attention (like Saul) and you do not (like Ananias)?

**DAY 4***Jesus proclaimed and protected His gospel • Acts 9:20–31***READ** 

Acts 9:10–31

**EXPLAIN** **The truth of Acts 9:20–31**

Jesus’ plan for Saul began right away. Saul proclaimed the opposite of what he used to believe. He said Jesus is the Son of God—the Messiah who has all the authority of the Father (Mark 14:61). The Jews were shocked by how completely he had changed. After that, Saul spent about three years in the area just south of Damascus called Nabatean Arabia (Gal 1:17–18). The Nabatean king, Aretas, must not have liked Saul’s preaching there, so even after Saul returned to Damascus, Aretas worked with the Jews to try to capture him (2 Cor 11:32). Saul escaped, but just as Jesus had said, he was already preaching and being persecuted. This pattern would continue in Jerusalem, but first, Saul had to overcome opposition from within the church. The Christians there were suspicious: was Saul tricking everyone in order to hurt them more? Fortunately, Barnabas made peace, and Saul met Peter and James (Gal 1:18–19). After that Saul continued proclaiming that Jesus is Lord, until he again needed to flee. This time, he went back to his hometown, Tarsus, until Barnabas came to give him a new mission (Acts 11:25).

**ASK** 

1. When did Saul begin proclaiming Jesus?  
*Right after his conversion.*
2. Why were the Christians in Jerusalem afraid of Saul?  
*They thought Saul might be tricking everyone in order to hurt them more.*
3. How did Barnabas know Saul’s faith was real?  
*By how boldly Saul proclaimed Jesus and suffered for Him.*
4. How did Jesus protect His church?  
*By ending Saul’s persecution, Jesus allowed the church to have a time of peace.*

**DISCUSS** 

1. Have you been mistreated for telling others the good news about Jesus?
2. What keeps you from being a witness for Jesus? Lack of genuine conversion for yourself? Lack of love for Jesus or for others? Lack of knowledge? Fear of how people will respond?

## DAY 5

### The washing of regeneration • Titus 3:5

#### READ

Titus 3:1–11

#### EXPLAIN

##### The truth of Titus 3:5

Along with the human response in conversion comes God's act of **regeneration**. Paul not only experienced this in his conversion, but he also wrote about it in his letter to Titus: "he saved us...by the washing of regeneration." This is new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3), when the Spirit radically changes a person from the inside out (2 Cor 5:17). We see that this happened to Saul because the Spirit also filled him (Acts 9:17). Not only did Saul need the Spirit to be saved, but he also needed the Spirit in order to be a key witness to Jesus (1:8). Saul knew this. He knew it was only God's power within that made the difference (2 Cor 4:7). Like all Christians, Saul needed to be transformed in order to display Christ (2 Cor 3:18). The Spirit changed Saul from a proud and bitter persecutor to a humble and joyful sufferer (Phil 3:4–11) and from an arrogant legalist to a grateful believer (1 Tim 1:13–17). Before, he had appointed himself to be chief persecutor. Now, he was an apostle not because of himself, but because of God's gracious choice (Gal 1:1).

#### ASK

1. What is regeneration?  
*It is new birth caused by the Holy Spirit.*
2. Who experiences regeneration?  
*Every Christian at salvation.*
3. How did Paul show that he had been regenerated?  
*He changed from a proud and bitter persecutor to a humble and joyful sufferer and from an arrogant legalist to a grateful believer. He relied on God's authority and not on his own.*

#### DISCUSS

1. Why is regeneration necessary (Eph 2:1, 5)?
2. Have you been born again? If so, how does this affect your life (Gal 5:16–26)? If not, how can you be (Luke 11:13; Jas 4:3–10)?

## NEXT WEEK

### The Gentiles receive the gospel

Acts 10:1–11:18

