

Saul's conversion

Hymns

608 Faith is the Victory

341 To God be the Glory

109 Marvelous Grace

(108 Amazing Grace) extra

The biblical account of **Saul's conversion** centers on his dramatic encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. This miraculous event transformed one of Christianity's fiercest persecutors into its most devoted apostle.

The conversion is told 3 times in **Acts 9:1-20, 22:1-16, 26:4-20**.

Saul, a devout Pharisee, zealously persecuted the early Christian church. After being present for the stoning of Stephen, he obtained authorization from the high priest to arrest followers of Jesus in Damascus and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains.

But Saul had an encounter with Jesus as he neared Damascus. A blinding light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice asking, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" When Saul asked who was speaking, the voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Blinded by the brilliant light, Saul was led by the hand into Damascus.

For three days, Saul remained blind and did not eat or drink. A disciple named Ananias, directed by God in a vision, laid hands on Saul. His sight was restored, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit and baptized.

Ellen White says that Saul's mind was deeply stirred prior to the Damascus road experience. He had witnessed the death of Stephen, and although he sided with the priests, Stephen's bold faith left a lingering impression of conviction. (Sketches from the life of Paul ch 2)

Jesus could have directly healed Saul's blindness and forgiven his sins, but instead, directed him to His church agents, beginning with Ananias, to learn his duty, honoring the church's role. (Conflict and courage g 339)

Instead of striking Saul dead for his crimes, God spared his life, transforming a bitter enemy into an able defender who would take the gospel to the Gentiles.

His transformation of character is very impressive. Beneath Saul's deep bigotry, God in his wisdom, recognized a heart inherently loyal to truth. Once completely humbled, the bitterest persecutor transitioned into the church's ablest defender, spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. (The conversion of Paul SS lesson: The book of Acts.)

Ellen White says that during the three days of blindness in Damascus, Saul was engaging in deep, agonizing prayer and repentance. These prayers were heard, and his "nobler faculties were brought into harmony with the eternal purposes of God."

Now let's consider **Ananias**. He played a pivotal, courageous role in welcoming Saul by overcoming his well-founded fears to restore Saul's sight, baptize him, and formally welcome the former persecutor into the early Christian community as a brother in the faith.

When the Lord directed Ananias to go to Saul, he initially hesitated, reminding God of Saul's terrifying reputation for persecuting believers. Nevertheless, trusting the vision, Ananias demonstrated supreme faith and obedience by going directly to the house where Saul was staying.

Upon meeting Saul, who was blind and fasting, Ananias greeted him with the words, "Brother Saul". This simple yet profound greeting signaled immediate forgiveness, reconciliation, and full acceptance into the covenant community of believers.

God used Ananias to mediate physical and spiritual healing: Ananias placed his hands on Saul, fulfilling God's mission to restore Saul's sight (described as scales falling from his eyes) and ensuring he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Following his healing and the recovery of his physical strength, Ananias baptized Saul, formally incorporating him into the body of the church. Ananias's obedience paved the way for Saul (who became Paul the Apostle) to transition from a violent adversary into one of the most prolific figures in the expansion of Christianity

What can we learn from the conversion of Saul? Saul's dramatic shift from a violent persecutor to a passionate missionary illustrates the profound, transforming power of God's grace, and shows that true conversion changes both our direction and our purpose. **No one is beyond redemption, if they will open their heart to God when he speaks to them:** Saul was actively hunting, arresting, and even executing early Christians. His transformation demonstrates that the grace of Christ can overcome the deepest hatred or most violent opposition. **We must pray for, show love to, and share with all in this world. We shouldn't write people off as unreachable.** Christ identifies with His people: When Jesus confronted Saul on the road to Damascus, He asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?". This reveals the intimate, unbreakable bond between Jesus and His followers; attacking believers is seen as attacking Christ Himself. Humility precedes spiritual sight: Saul was struck blind for three days, forcing him into a state of total helplessness and reliance on others. It is often when our own plans are stripped away that we can truly begin to "see" the truth of God. The importance of community: God didn't just leave Saul to figure things out on his own. He used Ananias—a faithful disciple whom Saul previously intended to persecute—to welcome him, pray for him, and restore his sight. It highlights the importance of accepting and integrating new believers into the faith. True conversion leads to action: Saul's change of heart wasn't just an internal feeling; he immediately began proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues. A genuine encounter with God fundamentally alters how a person lives and what they dedicate their life to.