

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

The accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus can be found in Acts 9, 22 and 26. Several references to his former life, his conversion and becoming an apostle are made in his epistles (I Cor. 15: 8-10; Gal. 1:13-17; Phil. 3:3-6; I Tim. 1:12-16; II Tim. 1:11).

Saul as a young man persecuted the church of the Lord. He held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Years later, when he stood before King Agrippa, he said:

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. (Acts 26:9-11)

No one was more zealous against Christianity than was Saul (Gal. 1:13-14).

Saul received authority from the chief priest to go to Damascus, one hundred twenty miles north of Jerusalem, and bring bound Christians back to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus, a bright light shined round about him. He fell to the ground. A voice from heaven said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Not knowing who it was who spoke to him, Saul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Saul was an honest man and, as noted, a zealous man; but he was wrong in his beliefs. He thought he was doing God's service in persecuting Christians, but he was honestly and sincerely wrong. (John 16:2; Acts 23:1). This shows that one can be honest, sincere, and zealous for a wrong cause. There are many individuals today who think they are right religiously, but are wrong. We should not condemn their honesty or sincerity; however, we do need to try to teach them the truth.

Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord told him to go into Damascus and there it would be told him what he must do. Because he was blinded by the Lord, he was

led into the city. There for three days and nights he did not eat anything nor drink anything, but was praying. The Lord sent a preacher by the name of Ananias, who, when he arrived, told Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). When Ananias laid his hands on Saul, immediately he could see; and he arose and was baptized.

Some teach that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus; however, if that were the case, the Lord did not know it, for he told Saul to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. The Lord did not think Saul was saved on the road to Damascus because he sent Ananias, the preacher, to tell Saul what he was to do. Ananias did not know Saul was saved on the road to Damascus, because when he arrived at the place where Saul was, he told him, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." If Saul were saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved before his sins were washed away, because baptism washes away one's sins.

Why, then, did Jesus appear to Saul on the road to Damascus? Saul, later called Paul, answers this question. As Paul stood before King Agrippa, he related his conversation with Jesus on that road:

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:15-18.)

Note that Jesus said, "...for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose." To save him? No. But he appeared unto him to make him "a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Therefore, Jesus appeared unto Saul to qualify him to be an apostle. One had to have seen Jesus after his resurrection in order to have been an apostle. Paul points out to the Corinthian saints that he was an apostle born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:8-10).

The Lord did not appear unto Saul on the road to Damascus to tell him what he had to do in order to be saved. Such a responsibility falls upon the shoulders of men. The gospel treasure has been placed in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7). Suppose some disciple of the Lord had met Saul on the road to Damascus? Since Saul had been breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints, he might have bound the man, or possibly even killed the man who would have approached him.

Saul became the great apostle Paul. Luke records that after Saul's conversion he "straightway," or immediately, preached in the synagogues that Jesus Christ is the Son of God! What a turnabout! Further, Luke says that Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews. (Acts 9:20, 22).

The fact that Saul was praying was no indication that he was saved. Many lost people pray; yet, the Bible tells us that God does not hear the sinner's prayer (John 9:31). Ananias did refer to Saul as "brother" prior to his baptism, but the meaning is in the sense of his being an Israelite. Peter referred to the Jews on the day of Pentecost before their conversion as "brethren" (Acts 2:29), but they were still in their sins. They were of the same nation.

The lessons from the conversion of Saul are many. One can be honest and sincere and still be lost. One can be zealous for a wrong cause. What one does against a brother or sister in Christ is to do so against Christ. Be careful how you treat your brethren in Christ.

One calls on the Lord by being baptized to wash his sins away. If God could show mercy on Saul and save him by his obedience to the gospel, then God can save any sinner today who will obey the gospel. Just as Saul of Tarsus was truly converted to Christ, so must each of us be. Formerly, no one was more zealous against the cause of Christ than Saul, but when he was converted no one was more zealous for the cause of Christ than Paul. Let us learn from the great apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:1).

Ben F. Vick, Jr *from The Informer*

BIRTHDAYS

Abby Stillwell, 07-17; Erin Stillwell, 07-17;
Cindy Nelson , 07-19.

ILL

Sunday: Joy and Natalie Parish; Debbie Schleif.

Wednesday: Millie Robertson.

Those battling cancer: David Cole, Ledgia Campbell, Betty James and Cleo Stone. Remember these in your prayers along with: Millie Robertson and Allen Scott.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams resides at Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

MEMBERSHIP

Ralph Franklin expressed his desire to work and worship with Park Street on Sunday PM, July 6. We welcome Ralph back to Olathe! He resides at: The Gardens at Creekside, 16110 West 133rd St. Apt. 229, Olathe, KS 66062. His phone is: 913-839-9655.

OUT OF TOWN

John Cody Carter was out of town with friends on Sunday morning. The Dodson's were visiting relatives in Arkansas last week. George Thomas was in Iowa on business on Wednesday.

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

Our monthly Men's Business Meeting will be held this Sunday, July 13, following our AM worship. All men of the congregation are encouraged to attend.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDIES

The themes are: *"Walking In Son Light"* for Teens-Toddlers and *"Makeover for the Christian"* for Adults. The dates are July 28 – August 1. Flyers are in the foyer!

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 50; Sunday PM, 30; Wednesday PM, 30.

Those To Serve

July 13, 2008

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Parish

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... Trent Thrasher
SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
OPENING PRAYER John Cody Carter
PRESIDE..... George Thomas
ASSIST..... John Dodson
ASSIST..... John James
CLOSING PRAYER..... Chris Edwards

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER Steve Brown
CLOSING PRAYER..... Jared Nelson
LORD'S SUPPER..... George Thomas

WEDNESDAY 16th

SONG LEADER..... Jared Nelson
INVITATION John Cody Carter

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

Phone: (913) 764-2325

E-mail: olathecoc@sbcglobal.net

CHURCH OF CHRIST

515 WEST PARK

P.O. BOX 482

OLATHE, KANSAS 66051

www.kc-cofc.org/olathe.htm

www.oabs.org/olathe.asp