

ADVENTURING WITH GOD: Following in the Apostles' Footsteps

Reaching Our World *Acts 1:1–11*



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Alan Redpath wrote, “The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime.”¹

There is nothing as miraculous as the turning of a soul from death to life in Jesus. And the more notorious the person who turns, the more skepticism we tend to have. “Is she *really* saved?” “He’s gonna have to *prove* to us that he is really living for Jesus now!”

From Martin Luther’s reformation to Chuck Colson’s freedom from the prison of sin, God’s mercy and miraculous salvation have been displayed in the most unlikely people. However, no one was more unlikely than Saul of Tarsus.

In Acts 9, Saul was in hot pursuit of Christians located miles away from Jerusalem, in Damascus. Saul was in hot pursuit of Christians, but God pursued him even more relentlessly. Saul’s own words in Acts 22:3–5, Acts 26:9–11, Galatians 1:13–14, and 1 Timothy 1:13 serve as a confession, as he describes his former ruthlessness in stark relief to the great grace of God.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Seven Steps of Saul’s Conversion

Here are seven points that summarize the scene of God’s transformation of Saul on that dusty Damascus road:

A light shone. Brighter than the sun at midday, a blinding light from heaven stopped Saul in his tracks (Acts 9:3).

Saul fell to the ground. Saul had no idea what was happening to him (9:4).

A voice spoke. All those around Saul heard, but only he understood that Jesus asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (9:4).

Saul responded. “Who are You, Lord?” (9:5)



Quotable

*The deep work of
the Holy Spirit
in our lives is
what gives us
the gumption to
stay at it.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Jesus identified Himself. “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5).

Saul responded again. “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10).

Jesus answered. “Get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do” (9:6).



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Saul's “Prodding”

In Acts 26:14, Jesus told Saul (Paul) that it was hard for him to “kick at the goads.” God was prodding Saul toward change even before that fateful day on the Damascus road. Three possible prods were at play in Saul's life:

Prod Number One: Doubt

Saul was a contemporary of Jesus and close in age. It's probable Saul had even heard Jesus speak, marveled at His teaching, and gotten frustrated at His departures from tradition. Saul may have had secret, unspoken doubts. Possibly he could *not* get Jesus out of his mind.

Prod Number Two: Stephen

Saul could not escape the memory of Stephen (Acts 7). He must have been hunted and haunted by the face of Stephen, which according to Luke's writing was “like the face of an angel” (6:15).

Prod Number Three: The Courage of Christians

After witnessing time after time the bravery of countless Christians who were imprisoned, tortured, and killed, Saul must have had a disquieted spirit. This drove him to fanatical extremes. Ultimately, the blinding light of Jesus broke Saul's stubborn will.

2. Saul Becomes Paul

Several biblical figures took new names to reflect certain aspects of their personal and spiritual journeys. Some were even renamed by God Himself. Though his new name meant “little,” Saul-turned-Paul embraced the gospel message with a huge passion.



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3. Four Events Following Saul's Conversion

After Saul's miraculous encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road, four events occurred.

Ananias saw a vision. God called a disciple named Ananias to fulfill the vision He had given Saul.

He made a contact. Ananias went to meet Saul, despite his own fears.

Saul formed a relationship. Saul spent several days recovering from his incredible encounter and learning from the Christians in Damascus.

He gave a proclamation. Saul couldn't wait to proclaim the good news, and he immediately started to share the life-altering message of the gospel with others.



LET'S LIVE IT

Don't discount God's power to change a life. Don't write off anyone as “unsaveable.”

Remember where you were before the Lord got hold of you. Your transformation as a Christian is due only to the grace of God.

Have you ever kicked at the goads of the Holy Spirit?

ENDNOTE

1. Alan Redpath, *The Making of a Man of God: Lessons from the Life of David* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1962), Foreword.



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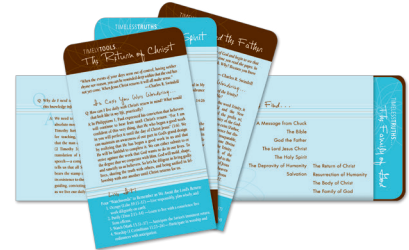
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