

## THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

Text: Acts 7:58-8:1a; 9:1-2, 19b-21

INTRO: The sudden & complete change that took place in the life of Saul of Tarsus was a shock & a source of amazement to all who knew him. For the next few minutes let's take a closer look at Saul's conversion from persecutor of Christians to gospel preacher.

### I. WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS SAUL?

- A. He was of good ancestral background & training.  
Circumcised the 8th day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless (Phil. 3:5-6).
- B. He had the best education a young Jew could have in his day.

I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law & was zealous toward God as you all are today (Acts 22:3).

- C. He abounded in zeal, as already suggested.  
I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers (Gal. 1:14).
- D. He conscientiously did what he believed to be right.  
I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day (Acts 23:11).

### II. BUT HE WAS AN OUTSTANDING SINNER.

- A. His most notable sin, which overrode all his good traits & intentions was that of persecuting the church of God.

I persecuted this Way to the death, binding & delivering into prisons both men & women, as also the high priest bears me witness, & all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren &

went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished (Acts 22:4-5).

1. Saul's sin was not one of open, intentional rebellion. It was that of spiritual ignorance, misguided zeal.

I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, & an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Tim. 1:13).

2. Saul had done wrong because he thought wrong. He thought He knew the truth. He was honestly mistaken.

Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did (Acts 26:9-10).

- B. The fact that Saul was sincere & honest did not make his actions right. 1 Tim. 1:15

### III. JESUS CHANGED SAUL FROM THE MOST ZEALOUS PERSECUTOR TO THE MOST ZEALOUS PREACHER & APOSTLE THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN.

NOTE: We want to distinguish between the things that made Saul an apostle & what made him a Christian.

- A. An apostle.

[Ananias] said, "The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen & heard. (Acts 22:14-15).

Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:8).

- B. A Christian.

1. He had become a believer on the road, Acts 22:10

2. He had obviously repented of his sins, Acts 9:6
3. He was baptized so that his sins would be washed away in the precious blood of Jesus, A 22:16.

READ ROMANS 6:3-5

CONCLUSION: Like Paul, we can have a good conscience, a good education, be zealous & conscientious, & still be wrong. The same thing that made Saul a Christian can make us Christians. Nothing else can do so.

Highway 29, Liberty Hill, TX, August 14, 1963  
Cox Springs, TX, August 28, 1963  
Jonestown, TX, September 29, 1968  
KBSF Radio, Springhill, La, May 4, 1975  
La Porte, TX, January 9, 1983  
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, March 12, 2000