

Lessons from Paul's Conversion

Intro: Paul's conversion to Christ and Christianity is an interesting story. The beloved physician, Luke, records his conversion three times for our consideration; Acts 9, 22, and 26. Paul became a great character of the Bible, becoming one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, going on three missionary tours, an inspired writer of 14 (including Hebrews) books of the New Testament. There are some great lessons we can learn from his conversion.

I. BEING RELIGIOUS DOES NOT MAKE US RIGHT WITH GOD.

A. Paul was a very religious individual.

1. Acts 22:3 ³ I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."
 - a. He was trained by the leading Jewish teacher of his day.
 - b. He was zealous toward God.
2. Gal. 1:13-14 ¹³ For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: ¹⁴ And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."
3. Phi. 3:4-6 ⁴ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."
4. His journey to Damascus was prompted by religion.
 - a. Acts 22:4-5 ⁴ And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. ⁵ As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished."
 - b. Acts 26:9-12 ⁹ I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ 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*. ¹¹ 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. ¹² Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,"

B. Paul thought he was serving God.

1. Acts 26:9 ⁹ I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
2. God said he was fighting against Him.
 - a. Acts 9:5 ⁵ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard."
 - b. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, means he was kicking against God and His teaching.

C. Being religious is no substitute for being religiously right.

1. The Jews (Pharisees and Sadducees) were religious, but religiously wrong and came under the condemnation of God.
2. Rom. 10:2-3 ² For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

II. HAVING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE DOES NOT MAKE US RIGHT WITH GOD.

A. Paul had a good conscience before God.

1. Acts 23:1 ⁴¹ And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”
2. Acts 24:16 ¹⁶ And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men.”

B. We must have a good conscience.

1. Rom. 14:23 ²³ And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”
2. 1 John 3:19-21 ¹⁹ And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. ²⁰ For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.”
3. Our heart must be trained in accordance with God's Word.

III. FAITH, REPENTANCE AND PRAYER DO NOT TAKE AWAY SIN.

A. Paul had faith in Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

1. Acts 9:5-6 ⁵ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. ⁶ And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”
 - a. The first time Saul said “Lord” (verse 5 ⁵ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”) it was not out of faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. However, in verse 6 (⁶ And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”) when he says “Lord,” he now has faith in Jesus.
 - c. This faith was a trusting accepting faith, as evidenced by the question, “what wilt thou have me to do?”
2. This type faith is necessary for salvation.
 - a. John 8:24 ²⁴ I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.”
 - b. John 14:1 ¹ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

B. Saul demonstrated repentance.

1. While repentance is not directly stated it is implied by Saul's action.
2. He followed Jesus' command to go into the city.
3. Acts 9:9, 11 ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. ¹⁰ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord. ¹¹ And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,”

C. Saul prayed.

1. Many today tell people to pray for salvation (pray the sinners prayer).
2. Saul prayed; Acts 9:11 ¹¹ And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.”

D. Yet, all these things were done *before* Saul had been told what he needed to do.

IV. BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL TO MAN'S SALVATION.

A. Jesus statement.

1. Jesus told Saul to go into Damascus and it would be told him what he must do.
2. This was after Saul confessed his faith in Jesus.
3. Saul went into the city penitent and praying, yet no one had come and told him what he must do.

B. Ananias sent by Jesus.

1. Jesus sends Ananias to Saul to tell him what he needed to do; Acts 9:10-11 ¹⁰ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. ¹¹ And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth."
2. Acts 22:13-16 ¹³ Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. ¹⁴ And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. ¹⁵ For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
3. At the time Ananias sees Saul, he is still lost, he needed to have his sins washed away.
4. The act that would wash away his sins was baptism.
5. This is the only thing Ananias told Saul to do was to be baptized.

C. Baptism's essentiality confirmed.

1. Mark 16:16 ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
2. Acts 2:38 ³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
3. 1 Pet. 3:21 ²¹ The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

Conclusion: Have you done what Saul did to be saved? If not you can accept the commands of Christ today for the salvation of your soul.