Repentance Personified
The Conversion of Saul
Text: Acts 22: 3-16 (cf. 9: 1-19)

INTRODUCTION:

A. Saul of Tarsus was a remarkable person before he became a Christian.

1. He was a Jew among Jews.
   Phil. 3: 4b-5 If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 
s circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of 
Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

   a. “Circumcised the eighth day” references the faithfulness of his parents.
   b. The “tribe of Benjamin” was one of the two pure faithful tribes of Judah.
   c. Being a “Hebrew of Hebrews” had two meanings:
      1) He was a pure Jews, i.e., there was no gentile blood in his genealogy.
      2) He was able to speak the Hebrew dialect. (cf. – Acts 22: 2)

2. He was well educated in the Jewish traditions and religious law. (Tarsus colleges)
   Acts 22: 3 – I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, 
educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, 
being zealous for God just as you all are today.

   a. Educated by the most respected teacher in Jerusalem. (cf. – Acts 5: 34)
   b. As his father before him, Saul was a member of the Pharisees. (Phil. 3: 5)
      Acts 26: 5 – Since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to 
testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our 
religion.

   c. Saul was recognized by others as being a highly educated man.
      Acts 26: 24 – While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, 
“Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.”

3. He was ambitious and achieved success that few his age had attained.
   Gal. 1: 14 – I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among 
my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

4. He was most likely a member of the Sanhedrin.
   Acts. 26: 10 – And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many 
of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, 
but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.

   a. He had direct access to the high priest.
   b. He had a vote in life and death matters. (Only the Sanhedrin decided life and death)
B. Saul was one of the greatest enemies of the church.

1. Acts 26: 9-11 So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

a. Saul was angry at Christians. (He thought they were false teachers.)

b. Persecuting Christians was Saul’s way of serving God.

2. Saul acted upon his convictions. (Gal. 1: 13-14 ... thought answering God’s call)

3. Therefore, Saul did not feel guilty about killing Christians.

While seeking to destroy “the way” God showed the way. It was a life-changing experience. With this lesson we will observe Saul’s transformation.

* (We read Acts 22 ... now we will compare Acts 9)

I. Jesus appeared to Saul as he was traveling along the road.

A. Saul talked face-to-face with the risen Christ.

Acts 9: 3-6 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

B. Even after talking with Jesus, Saul was still lost; he needed salvation from sin.

1. Three days later Saul still had his sins. He was still not saved!

2. Jesus did not save Paul, i.e., He could have forgiven him of his sins, but He did not.

3. Saul needed instructions about how to be saved.

a. Acts 9: 6 – get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”
b. Likewise, when the angel appeared to Cornelius. He was told to send for Peter
   “And he will speak words to you by which you will be saved,” Acts 11: 14

* Therefore, at this point, Saul was a believer who was lost.

1. He had seen a vision from God.
2. Many today think they are saved because they saw a vision, BUT visions can’t save.

II. Saul (now a believer) experienced two miracles, but remained lost in sin. S#13.

A. He was blinded by a supernatural light.
   S#14. Act 9: 8-9 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank

   1. He was given instructions by Jesus and obeyed them.
   2. He a fasted and praying (Vs. 11) for three days which is associated with repentance.

B. He had his sight miraculously restored.
   S#15. Acts 9: 17-18 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

C. After having seen Jesus and having experiencing two miracles he remained lost.

   1. Remember, it is sin that causes one to be lost.
      a. Rom. 6: 23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
      b. Matt. 1: 21 – She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.
      c. I Tim. 1: 15 – It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.
   2. After Saul’s sight was restored the preachers told Saul he needed his sins removed.
      a. Saul was NOT told to receive Jesus as his personal savior.
      b. Saul was NOT told to say the sinners’ prayer.
      c. He was told to call on the Lord by being baptized and that would remove sin.
III. After seeing Jesus and talking with Jesus Saul prayed and fasted for three days.

A. Saul was praying while waiting for the preacher to come.

Acts 9: 12 – And the Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

1. The text clearly states that Jesus/God heard Saul’s prayers. “for he is praying” S#21.
2. Though Saul was blind, God sent a vision to him. (acknowledgement of prayer)

Acts 9: 12 – He (Saul) has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.

B. Saul was fasting for the whole three days while waiting for the preacher.

Acts 9: 9 – And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

1. Prayer and fasting are linked to repentance.
   a. Having seen the resurrected Christ, Saul knew he had been wrong about Jesus.
   b. Saul knew his guilt so he had every reason to fear what would become of him.
2. Blind with no distractions Saul had plenty of time to remember his crimes.
   a. Having endorsed the stoning of Steven
   b. Having voted to kill men and women
   c. Having gone to foreign cities to persecute Christians

C. After three days of fasting and prayer, God’s messenger told Saul to be baptized to wash away his sins.

Acts 22: 16 – ‘Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

1. One cannot wash away sins that are not there.
2. One cannot be saved IN his sins.
3. If there was ever a person who could have prayed his way through it was Saul. S#24.
   a. Faith? He had firsthand knowledge of the deity of Christ.
   b. Repentance? His had prayed and fasted for three days. God heard his prayer.
   c. Confession? He obeyed what Jesus told him to do. (No obedience = no faith)
   d. Face-to face with Jesus Saul acknowledged that he has seen Jesus.
   b. Received two miracles He was made blind and cured of blindness.
   c. Received a vision from God A preacher named Ananias would come to him.

* BUT ... after all this ... He still needed to have his sins washed away.
   Thus, he was still LOST.
IV. The preacher was instructed by Jesus to tell Saul how to be saved. S#25.

A. The Lord himself called Saul a “chosen instrument.” Acts 9: 15 – But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine,

1. Though personally chosen by Jesus, Saul remain separated by his sins.
2. His sins had NOT be forgiven. Acts 22: 16

B. Jesus personally sent a preacher to instruct and to heal Saul. Vs. 11-16

1. Jesus did not save Saul when He appeared to him.
2. The preacher did not tell Saul his faith had saved him.
3. The preacher told Saul, “This is what you need to do to get rid of your sins.” S#26.

Acts 22: 16 – ‘Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

C. Believers retain their sins until they have been baptized in water. ( lost ) S#27.

1. Wait a minute! Cleanliness may be next to godliness, but water won’t wash away sin.
2. In baptism it is not the water that washes away the sins; it’s the blood of Christ.

Rev. 1: 5 – from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ( NKJV )

a. Baptism is more than just a dipping in water.

b. It is the way one calls on the name of the Lord, an expression of one’s faith.

3. Baptism is not relevant to physical cleansing. S#28.

I Pet. 3: 21 – Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

a. In some way it connects one to the resurrection of Christ.

b. Baptism is the way one appeals to God for a clear conscience. ( removal of guilt )

c. It is only the blood of Christ that can give one a clear conscience. S#29.

Heb. 9: 14 – How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

4. Baptism is the point at which one has his sins forgiven. S#30.

Acts 2: 38 – Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
a. One may be a repentant believer but he will not be saved until he is baptized.

b. Again, one is not forgiven on the basis of water, but by the blood of Christ. S#31.

Eph 1:7 – In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

** Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other : S#32.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baptism</th>
<th>Blood of Jesus</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acts 2:38</td>
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Therefore, baptism is the point of contact with the blood of Jesus.

D. Baptism is a faith response to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. S#33.

1. Calls on the name of the Lord in baptism, establishes a relationship with Him

Gal. 3: 26-27 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

2. The baptism of a believer is a demonstration of his faith in the gospel. S#34.

Rom. 6: 3-7 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin

3. Expressing faith though the burial in baptism frees on from sin and gives new life.

Rom. 6: 17-18 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

CONCLUSION :

A. Salvation is by grace through faith ( Eph. 2: 8-9 ) but it is when faith is express in baptism that grace is applied.

B. It is when our belief motivates us to act ( to obey ) that it becomes faith. S#35 / S#36.

C. II Thes. 1: 7-9 ... Those who do not know God and obey not the gospel are lost.
Lesson Text:

Acts 22: 3-16  ( cf. 9: 1-19 )

3  "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in 
this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the 
law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are 
today. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and 
putting both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the 
high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. 
From them I also received letters to the brethren, and 
started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who 
were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

6  "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching 
Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly 
flashed from heaven all around me, 7 and I fell to the 
ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why 
are you persecuting Me?’ 8 ‘And I answered, ‘Who are 
You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, 
whom you are persecuting.’ 9 And those who were with me 
saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice 
of the One who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, ‘What 
shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go 
on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has 
been appointed for you to do.’ 11 But since I could not see 
because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the 
hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.

12  “A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the 
standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews 
who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near said to 
me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time 
I looked up at him. 14 ‘And he said, ‘The God of our fathers 
has appointed you to know His will and to see the 
Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 
15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you 
have seen and heard. 16 Now why do you delay? Get up and 
be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His 
name.’