

**Thesis:** A close examination of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus shows that he was saved by grace through faith at his baptism. He was not saved outside of Christ, at his belief in Christ, at his repentance, or at his confession. Saul was saved at his baptism. The blood of Jesus is what washes away sins; baptism is when his blood washes them away.

**Support:** Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16

## 1. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

## 2. Introduction

- a. I'm not sure if you've noticed this, but over the last few months, we've had a series of lessons concerning what man has to do to be saved.
  - i. In **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**, the apostle Paul explains the heart of the gospel message.
    1. He says the good news of Jesus Christ is salvation from sins through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
    2. That's the gospel.
    3. Now, how do we as human beings accept it?
  - b. In March, we studied **Ephesians 2:1-10**. We learned from this passage that salvation is:
    - i. Offered by the grace of God.
    - ii. Accepted by man through faith.
    - iii. Is not a result of works; we cannot earn salvation.
      1. Some have misconstrued this to mean that we are saved by "faith alone."
      2. In doing this, they completely discount obedience to the works of God.
        - a. Jesus says faith is actually a work of God (**John 6:28-29**).
        - b. Moreover, God has prescribed works to be done by faith.
    - iv. We are not saved by mental assent alone; a saving faith is an obedient faith.
  - c. In April, we considered one such work of faith, repentance.
    - i. In our study of **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**, we learned that repentance is:
      1. Produced by godly grief.
      2. A change of mind from sin and toward God.
      3. Leads to reformation of life.
  - d. In May, we looked at the good confession (confessing that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God). This is something we say by faith.
    - i. Our main text that day was **1 Timothy 6:11-14**. In its study, we learned:
      1. Jesus made the good confession.
      2. Christians make the good confession.
      3. Christians live the good confession.
        - a. It is not something that is said once and then forgotten.
  - e. Thus far, we've looked at:
    - i. Grace
    - ii. Faith



- iii. Works of God done by faith.
  - 1. Repentance.
  - 2. Good confession.
- 3. **This morning, using the conversion accounts of Saul of Tarsus, let us put all of these pieces together and add just one more work of God done by faith. Our primary objective is to notice exactly when Saul was saved from his sins. His conversion is recorded in Acts 9:1-19. You may also want to put a finger on Acts 22:3-16, because we will refer to this passage as well. In Acts 9:1-19, Luke records:**
  - a. <sup>1</sup> But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup> But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup> The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup> Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
  - b. <sup>10</sup> Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, <sup>12</sup> and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." <sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; <sup>19</sup> and taking food, he was strengthened.
- 4. **This morning, using this passage along with Acts 22:3-16 and a process of elimination, let us identify the exact moment of salvation for the apostle Paul. Along the way, we will dispose of a few prevalent false doctrines.**
- 5. **First, Saul was not saved outside of Christ.**
  - a. I shouldn't have to spend much time on this, but there is a pronounced trend towards universalism today.
    - i. More and more people are believing that God is going to save everybody.
    - ii. According to the Pew Forum, 70% of religiously affiliated respondents said "many religions can lead to eternal life." Of these 70%:

1. 69% identified Judaism as one such religion.
  2. 52% named Islam.
  3. 53% said Hinduism.
  4. 42% said Atheism.
  5. and 56% said having no faith at all can lead to eternal life in heaven.
  - iii. According to the numbers, almost 1/2 of modern-day Americans believe Saul of Tarsus could have been saved outside of Christ because he was a Jew.
  - b. At the time he was a Jew, Saul also thought he was saved.
    - i. He writes in **Philippians 3:4-6**:
      1. <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless.
        - a. At the time Saul was a Jew, he considered himself blameless and therefore justified under the Law of Moses.
    - ii. He said in **Acts 23:1**, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."
      - a. At the time, prior to his conversion, Saul had clear conscience and considered himself blameless.
      - b. He believed he was saved (and half of Americans would have concurred).
    - iii. But he was wrong, dead wrong. And these misguided Americans are wrong as well.
  - c. You cannot be saved outside of Christ. It is impossible!
    - i. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (**John 14:6**).
    - ii. Peter says of Jesus Christ in **Acts 4:12**, "<sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
      1. Like every other Jew, Paul needed to repent toward God and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 20:21**).
  - d. Despite being a Jew and faithfully worshiping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he needed to repent toward him and believe in Jesus Christ.
  - e. Paul was not saved outside of Christ.
6. **Second, Saul was not saved at his belief in Christ.**
- a. **Acts 9:3-5**, "<sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
    - i. **Acts 22:14** and **I Corinthians 15:8** tell us that Saul not only heard the resurrected Christ, but he also saw him on the road.
      - I. Surely now he believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
        - a. He heard him with his own ears.
        - b. He saw him with his own eyes.



- c. He called him Lord with his own mouth.
        - i. While on that road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus came to believe Jesus was Lord.
    - ii. Many in the Protestant denominations would say Saul was saved at this point, by “faith only.”
      - I. They teach one is justified solely through faith in Christ.
        - a. Consequently, since Saul clearly believed in Christ, he would have been justified at this time.
        - b. But this is not the case.
    - iii. If this were the case, why does Saul then ask Jesus, “What shall I do, Lord?” (**Acts 22:10**).
    - iv. To which Jesus responds, “<sup>6</sup> But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do” (**Acts 9:6**).
      - 1. Most versions translate this as “must” rather than “are to.”
        - a. The Greek word used here is *dei* (day).
          - i. *Dei* means, “to be under necessity of happening, *it is necessary, one must, one has to*” (BDAG).
      - 2. Jesus didn’t say, “Oh, you believe, enjoy your salvation Saul.” Rather he said, “[I]t will be told you what you must do.”
        - a. It was still necessary for Saul to do something.
        - b. Jesus chose Ananias to tell Saul what he was still required to do.
  - b. Saul was not saved at his belief in Christ. His faith had yet to be expressed. Therefore, Ananias would tell him exactly what still needed to be done.
- 7. Third, Saul was not saved at his repentance.**
- a. Obviously, Saul was distraught.
    - i. He had been persecuting the church of his Lord Jesus Christ; he was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (**8:1**).
      - 1. He was on his way to Damascus to bind Christians and bring them to Jerusalem (**8:2**).
      - 2. Now he understood, he was wrong, and he was party to killing innocent Christians.
      - 3. He had been killing the followers of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, His Lord.
      - 4. As a result, he was penitent.
        - a. For three days, he neither ate nor drank (**8:9**).
        - b. He spent the time in prayer (**8:11**).
    - ii. Many in the denominations would assert Saul was saved by his penitent prayer.
      - 1. They believe reciting the so-called “sinner’s prayer” results in salvation.
      - 2. The form of the “sinner’s prayer” may vary, but here’s an example of one:
        - a. “Heavenly Father, I know that I am a sinner and that I deserve to go to hell. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I do now receive him as my Lord and personal Savior.



I promise to serve you to the best of my ability. Please save me. In Jesus' name. Amen.”

- iii. Even if Saul recited this prayer, this exact prayer, this “sinner’s prayer,” he was not saved by it.
  - 1. You cannot find anything resembling this prayer in the scriptures.
    - a. Nowhere in the scriptures are we told to pray for our salvation.
    - b. Not a single conversion account in the book of Acts includes anything remotely close this prayer.
    - c. This is a man-made fabrication with no efficacy whatsoever.
  - 2. This is especially obvious in Saul’s case.
    - a. He was praying prior to Ananias telling him what he must do.
- b. Saul was not saved at his repentance, either with or without prayer.

#### 8. **Fourth, Saul was not saved at his confession.**

- a. Saul called Jesus Lord twice in his conversation with him.
  - i. The first time occurs in **Acts 9:5**. He asks, “Who are you, Lord?”
    - 1. He didn’t know who Jesus was at the time, so perhaps this was a merely a title of honor.
  - ii. The second time, however, he knew who Jesus was, because Jesus had just told him.
    - 1. Saul says in **Acts 22:10**, “What shall I do, Lord?”
    - 2. With these words, Saul acknowledges Jesus as Lord.
    - 3. He confessed him as Lord.
    - 4. Yet, he still wasn’t saved.
      - a. He still had done what Jesus wanted of him.
  - iii. Jesus says in **Matthew 7:21**, “<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”
    - 1. Jesus says it takes more than saying, “Lord, Lord” to enter the kingdom of heaven.
      - a. You also have to do the will of the Father who is in heaven.
  - iv. He says in another place, “<sup>46</sup> "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?” (**Luke 6:46**).
    - 1. Again, calling Jesus Lord is not enough.
      - a. As Lord, he expects and demands obedience.
- b. Saul was not saved at his confession, since the Lord through Ananias had not yet told him what he must do.
- c. Saul believed, he was penitent, he confessed Jesus as Lord, but he still was not yet saved.

#### 9. **Fifth, Saul was saved at his baptism.**

- a. **Acts 9:17-18**, “<sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight.”



- i. Finally, after three days of blindness, with no food or drink and constant prayer, Ananias goes to Saul.
    - I. He lays his hands on him, and immediately something like scales fell from his eyes.
      - a. He regained his sight!
      - b. Saul looked up and finally saw Ananias.
  - ii. Ananias continued, “The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; <sup>15</sup> for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (**Acts 22:14-16**).
    - I. The Lord through Ananias gave Saul his commission, but before embarking on it, he needed his sins washed away.
      - a. He believed, but still needed his sins washed away.
      - b. He was penitent, but still needed his sins washed away.
      - c. He confessed Jesus as Lord, but still needed his sins washed away.
      - d. Ananias, the Lord’s messenger, told him he must be baptized (immersed) for his sins to be washed away.
  - iii. **Acts 9:18** says, “Then he rose and was baptized.”
- b. Finally, Paul was saved. The point of his salvation was at his baptism, when his sins were washed away by the blood of the lamb.

## 10. Conclusion

- a. The Bible clearly says we are saved by grace through faith.
  - i. Being justified by faith is not the issue.
    - 1. That’s what the Bible says.
    - 2. We are justified by faith.
  - ii. The question is, “When are we justified by faith?”
    - 1. Are we saved before or after this faith is expressed in obedience?
- b. A careful study of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus reveals exactly when he was saved.
  - i. He wasn’t saved outside of Christ.
    - 1. He wasn’t saved at his belief in Christ.
    - 2. He wasn’t saved at his repentance, or by prayer.
    - 3. He wasn’t saved at his confession.
  - ii. Saul was saved at his baptism, because baptism is the point where sins are washed away.
- c. By faith, Saul repented.
  - i. By faith, Saul confessed.
  - ii. By faith, Saul was baptized obtained his salvation.
- d. Saul was justified by faith at his baptism.

## 11. Invitation

- a. You can be as well.
- b. Why do you wait, rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.
- c. If you are ready to obey the gospel this morning and submit to Jesus in baptism, won’t you please come forward as we stand and sing.



d. Let us stand and sing.

