



**Sermon Text:** Acts 9:19-31

*Sermon Date:* January 21, 2018

On Sunday, we jumped back into our study of Acts, picking up right after Saul's unexpected conversion on the road to Damascus. We looked at our text from three various vantage points and saw three aspects of the passage.

### **IN SAUL – TRUE CONVERSION**

First, we zoomed in to see what happened in Saul and we focused on the reality of true conversion. Looking at Saul's experience, we see that conversion isn't simply making a decision for Christ, but becoming a disciple of Christ.

1. **A New Perspective:** Saul's perspective of Jesus was inalterably altered. He discovered that Jesus was the Messiah. He was the Son of God. Saul had been utterly wrong, and this new perspective transformed the rest of his life.
2. **A New Purpose:** Paul's new perspective on Christ, revolutionized his purpose in life. He submitted to the risen Lord and lived to exalt Christ and make him known. "Who are you, Lord?" was accompanied by "What shall I do, Lord?" Paul's entire life changed because of Jesus.
3. **A New Person:** The reason Saul's perspective changed and his purpose changed was because, by God's grace, Saul was made a new person. He was born again, as Jesus taught in John 3. Conversion is a miracle of God's grace in which he brings life to those who are spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins.

A proper confessional and practical theology of conversion is essential. It isn't merely making a decision, but miraculously becoming a disciple of Jesus—a new perspective, a new purpose, a new person.

### **TO SAUL – PAINFUL SUFFERING**

Panning out a little more, we saw what happened to Saul as a result of what happened in Saul. His life changed dramatically. On the road to Damascus, God detonated Saul's life as he knew it. True conversion is always costly. Paul experienced the difficulty of **quiet preparation**, as the once rising star of Judaism spent three years in the obscurity of Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18). He endured **fierce opposition** as his opponents plotted to murder him two times in two different cities in our short text. Plus, he experienced **initial rejection** by the believers in Jerusalem who refused to welcome him as a Christian.

In our evangelism and in our individual expectations, we must rid ourselves of the falsehood that following Jesus is meant to be easy. Following Jesus is not easy, but it is always—and eternally—worth it.

### **AROUND SAUL – GOD'S PROVIDENCE**

Zooming out to see our passage in the context of this section of Acts, we are able to appreciate God's glorious providence. This section begins with Stephen's martyrdom and the Church being scattered in persecution. It ends with a report of the scattered Church's peace, establishment, holiness, comfort, and expansion (9:31). Here is the mighty triumph of God's providence—His plans are not thwarted in times of suffering but accomplished by them. From great persecution God produces great peace. And to top it all off, God transforms the Church's greatest persecutor into its greatest preacher.

In the same way, we can rejoice by trusting in God's providence. Even in the ugly messes of our lives, God is making something beautiful.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. Why is it important that our confessional *and* practical theology on conversion are thoroughly biblical?
3. In the midst of life, we can miss God's providence over it. How does Scripture help you zoom out to see the triumph of God's providence? How does the truth of God's providence help you in your daily life?