

# “That’s Saul, Folks!”

## Session Seven

### Introduction

Do you have a story of how you first came to faith?

“Saul’s experience on the road to Damascus is the most famous conversion in church history. Luke is so impressed with its importance, that he includes the story \_\_\_\_\_ times.” (p. 165).

Stott estimates it was about a 150 mile journey Saul and company were completing, over the course of a week’s time. Damascus represented much more to Saul, the strict Pharisee, than another stop on his [“No Way José”] campaign of repression. It was the hub of a vast commercial network with far-flung lines of caravan trade reaching into north Syria, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Persia and Arabia. If the new “way” of Christianity flourished in Damascus, it would quickly reach all these places. From the viewpoint of the Sanhedrin and of Saul, the arch-persecutor, it had to be stopped in Damascus” (Concordia Self-Study Bible, p. 1672).

### Acts 9:1-9

What does Saul have the legal authority to do?

Note Jesus does not say, “Why are you persecuting my people?” When people are persecuted because of Jesus, who is really being persecuted?

Saul did not “make a decision for Christ”. He was confronted by \_\_\_\_\_. How does Saul’s experience speak to our spiritual state when it is apart from Christ? With Christ?

The irony: “He who had expected to enter Damascus in the fullness of his pride and prowess, as a self-confident opponent of Christ, was actually led into it, humbled and blinded, a captive of the very Christ he opposed” (p. 170).

### Acts 9:10-19a

Something like scales fall from Saul’s eyes. He regains his vision, is baptized, eats and regains his strength. As the hymn proclaims, “Was blind, but now I see!” Stott comments, “Divine grace does not trample on human personality. Rather the reverse, for it enables human beings to be truly human. It is sin which imprisons. It is grace which liberates” (p. 173).

“I suspect this laying on of hands was a gesture of love to a blind man who could not see the smile on Ananias’ face, but could feel the pressure of his hands. At the same time, Ananias addressed him as “Brother Saul” or “Saul, my brother”. I never fail to be moved by these words. They may well have been the first words which Saul heard from Christian lips after his conversion, and they were words of welcome. They must have been music to his ears” (p. 175-6).

In response to Ananias’ hesitation, Jesus calls Saul his “\_\_\_\_\_”).  
To whom will Saul witness?

### Acts 9:19b-31

Who introduces Saul to the apostles, and how does he live up to his name?

v. 30 Tarsus is Saul’s \_\_\_\_\_.

Note how the church is described in v. 31. Where is it? Who sustains it? What is the feel?

“Thus the story of Saul’s conversion in Acts 9 begins with him leaving Jerusalem with an official mandate from the high priest to arrest fugitive Christians, and ends with him leaving Jerusalem as a fugitive Christian himself” (p. 179).

### Concluding Thoughts

“Saul the persecutor has become Saul the persecuted. And in the rest of the Acts story Luke tells us more of his hero’s sufferings... Witness to Christ involves suffering for Christ. It is not an accident that the Greek word for \_\_\_\_\_ (*martys*) came to be associated with martyrdom. ‘Suffering, then, is the badge of true discipleship,’ wrote Bonhoeffer” (p. 179).

“As for the unconverted, there are many Sauls of Tarsus in the world today. Like him they are richly endowed with natural gifts of intellect and character; men and women of personality, energy, initiative and drive; having the courage of their non-Christian convictions; utterly sincere, but sincerely mistaken; travelling, as it were, from Jerusalem to Damascus instead of from Damascus to Jerusalem; hard, stubborn, even fanatical in their rejection of Jesus Christ. But they are not beyond his sovereign grace” (p. 180).

Do you know a “Saul”? Are you praying for him/her?

Other thoughts, questions, comments...