

# Week of Meetings 1970-04 Saul of Tarsus

by Stan Ford

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*The sermon explores the life of Saul of Tarsus, from his role as a persecutor of the early Christian church to his conversion and commission as a devoted follower of Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 43:56

**Scripture:** Psalm 103:12, Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 8:26-40, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:7

**Topics:** "Spiritual Transformation", "Prayer Ministry"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the transformation of Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul. He emphasizes that Saul was a thinking man who had heard about the coming of the Messiah. The preacher also highlights Saul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, where he was convicted of his sins and forgiven. The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and how Saul's commission to spread the gospel was fulfilled through prayer meetings.

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## Transcript

Those of you that were with us this morning will remember that we were thinking a little of the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. I pointed out to you that the Lord Jesus, in the 28th of Matthew, in giving the Great Commission to the Church, said, Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. We saw this morning how very quickly the early church did this very thing.

I reminded you that all nations had arisen from the three sons of Noah, Ham, Shem, and Japheth. And we saw that in the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles was the conversion and the beginning of the instruction of this man, the son of Ham, the Ethiopian eunuch. This evening we're going to consider something of the 10th chapter of the Acts, and we're going to see how, in the 10th chapter, not the son of Ham, but the son of Shem, came to know Christ and began his instruction in the things of God.

I was thinking that we might even tonight have linked with it the 10th chapter and consider not the son of Ham or the son of Shem, but the son of Japheth. But I feel that maybe our time is slipping away just a little too fast. I'm going to ask then that before we turn to the 9th chapter of Acts, we might read a few verses from the 26th chapter of that same book.

Acts 26. Now we all know that the Acts of the Apostles is mainly in circling pre-med. First Solomon, then Stephen, and then Paul.

The book divides itself into those three parts, circling around three men, as we all know. When we come to this 26th chapter, we find this man's soul, and we find him bearing testimony before the last of the Jewish king. I think it's always good for us to remember that from that day to this, the Jews have not had a king.

This was the last of the Jewish kings, and more than this, they will not have a king until he who was born the king of David, to reign over the house of Jacob, will reign. But here in the 26th chapter, we will commence reading for the sake of time in verse 4. Says this man, For which hope, saith King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews? Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I very thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, 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, and I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme. And being exceedingly mad against them, I prosecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and permission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and then which journeyed with me.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Fall! Fall! Why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, but rise and stand upon my feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. And then, if I may turn back to the tenth chapter of the Acts, please.

Acts chapter ten, I'm sorry, Acts chapter nine, pardon me, Acts chapter nine. And Saul, yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto a high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 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. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Now may the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his own precious words. I wonder if you'd join me, please, as we ask the Lord's blessing.

Shall we pray? O God and Father, we lift our hearts to thee a precious evening, and in the precious name of the Lord Jesus, we ask that that which we have read from thy word, the Spirit himself may take, and make real to each one of us. We realize that unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain at building. And so we ask thee that thou thyself, the great master builder, wilt this evening in this place build into the church of God those who will trust the Lord.

For we ask it in his name. Amen. I don't think any man or woman would be in a moment's doubt when I suggest to you that surely one of the greatest, if not the greatest, one of the greatest of God's servants in the New Testament, a man who has left his mark upon Holy Writ as much, if not more, than any other, was this Saul of Tarsus.

This, the son not of Ham, but the son of David. I think you will grant me that to him God gave the great revelation of the church, dismissed that it was hidden in times past, but was revealed unto this man. And I am certain that all of us are most concerned that we shall know concerning his conversion, concerning indeed the things that appertain to him, his becoming a Christian.

And so this evening, with your permission, I want us to think a little of that which the word of God tells us of him as a man. Oh, I will be considering a little with you of the things that he taught and the things that he said. But I want us to consider a little of him as a man.

I'm going to ask that you will think with me of four very simple things. First, I'm going to say a word about his conviction. You see, I've been preaching the gospel long enough, in this and so many other countries, to no longer have any doubt that the man or the woman that comes to Jesus Christ is the man or the woman who first of all realizes he needs, she needs, to come to Christ.

The message of the Christian faith has never changed. Oh, sometimes we have found that God's people have emphasized one part of it more than enough. But the message of the Christian faith has never changed, and this is it.

Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus. It is not just faith in the Lord Jesus. It is repentance towards God.

It is not just repentance. It is faith in our Lord Jesus. And this evening, as we think a little of this man, I think it's essential for us to say a word concerning his conviction.

And then I'm going to ask you to consider with me a word concerning his conversion. The conviction is not enough. To realize our need of God is not enough.

But acting upon the fact that God hath brought us to know his need, we must pass from conviction to conversion. And that's not enough. Remember the words of Jesus? Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, Son, Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things.

And so I want to say a word, not only about his conviction and his conversion, I want to say a word about his commission. I want us to consider what God said to him, and how he went forth to exercise that commission. And then last of all, of course, I want to say a word, if you will permit me, about his concern.

That the man who received the commission from God was the man who, in every breath he took, in every word he said, in every place he went, in every prayer he made, was the man that showed his absolute concern for others. Firstly, then, a word about his conviction. Now I'm not sure, and I must ask your permission, as it were, to take a scripture here, and a scripture there, and quote those scriptures, draw my conclusion.

You may not come to the faith. Now girls, please, I don't want to have to speak. That's it.

Now those people behaved very nicely when I was speaking to you, so I'll expect you to behave while I'm speaking to them. Now don't let me look again. Thank you.

I think you will grant me that I'm going to draw one or two conclusions, and you may feel that I am not drawing these conclusions correctly. If this be the case, then I do ask you to consider it with me, to think with me, and I believe you will see why I have come to the conclusion that these were the things that led to a tremendous conviction in the heart of this man, Saul of Tarsus. First of all, you will remember that the first time he's mentioned, we find him at the stoning of Stephen.

Now the remarkable thing to me is this, that when eventually he stands before the last of the Jewish kings, and defends himself, and at the same time gives his testimony, he mentions nothing about Stephen. But it seems to me that here this young man, this young man who stood and observed Stephen as Stephen was stoned to death, that at that time there began in his heart and in his life, there began the great sphere of conviction. There's something else that always strikes me about Saul of Tarsus, as you know, is that Saul of Tarsus had a family.

He had kinsmen. And the last chapter of the epistle to the Romans tells us that those kinsmen of his, may I read it to you, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are of note amongst the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. What a statement to make! That here he was, this Saul of Tarsus, and he had kinsmen.

I know not whether they would kill his sister, that sister that's referred to in the epistle. I know not who they were. I only know that when Paul waits for Rome, he speaks of kinsmen that are his fellow prisoners, but who were in Christ before him.

Now, does it seem feasible that such a young man as Saul of Tarsus, such a young man who was so adamant in his persecution of the Christian church, should be a young man that those who of his family were in Christ would never have prayed for him? I've got a feeling that many a time in the home of this kinsman, prayers have handed to glory. Oh God, they're out of breath. Oh God, that this young man is Saul, and he needs me.

Why is he so forceful in his persecution of the church? He needs me. Oh God, remember him. Save him.

It's the night I find myself speaking this time. Your relatives go up Christ, and it seems sometimes that they also will be persecutors of the church, or brothers that defend it. Pray on! Pray on! We've a God who answers prayer.

God hears, and moves, and acts, and answers prayer. There, that takes quite a while. I don't really want to talk about it.

But let me just throw it out for your consideration. Have you ever noticed how almost everything that affected the life of Saul of Tarsus was associated with prayer? You've noticed that. The first time he's mentioned in the Bible, he's at a prayer meeting.

The first time he's mentioned in the Bible, he's at a prayer meeting. Or, it's a bloody prayer meeting. There was Stephen's fall into the ground, and the stones hurled at him, and he's praying, laying off his sins on their charge.

Have you noticed the next time he's mentioned in the Bible? The very next time, he's at a prayer meeting. And God says, don't you worry. Behold, he prayeth.



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