



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

The Conversion of Saul

Part 4

October 10, 2021

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

As we end our study of Paul's conversion, sit back, and think about what a turnaround Paul made in his life! Think about how his choices and actions stand as great examples for us as to how we, as Christians, can also have an impact on the lives of others. One day the focus of Paul's life was to persecute Christians and just a short

time later, he was traveling many miles on missionary journeys to share God's Message! Look at the map at the top of the page. Aren't you amazed to see how much he traveled?? Can you imagine how many lives he changed during his missionary journeys?

We've now reached Paul's third missionary journey which took him once again to the region of Galatia and Phrygia, with the intent of strengthening his brothers and sisters in Christ. The journey lasted from 53 to 57 A.D. and is taught in **ACTS 18:23-ACTS 21:14**. This missionary journey was a longer trip than the previous two, and he spent his time building up and strengthening those churches he had planted on his first two journeys. The Bible tells us that he spent a significant portion of his time in Ephesus – about 2-3 years. And while there, he encountered some disciples who had not heard the full Gospel message. So he taught them about Christ's Death and Resurrection and placed his hands on them so that they were filled with The Holy Spirit.

Ephesus went through a great revival during Paul's time there. He performed many miracles, signs, and wonders, and the people converted in great numbers! When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living there, they were seized with fear. Many who believed privately now openly confessed their conversions. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. Because of this, The Word of The Lord spread very widely.

But in response to this great revival, a riot broke out in the city against Paul because their way of life was being threatened by his sharing The Gospel. A silversmith who made shrines of Artemis was angered because of his loss of business, so he stirred up the city into a state of rage and confusion. It took several hours before the city clerk was able to quiet them down.

When Paul got ready to leave, he met with the other disciples in Ephesus to give them encouragement and say goodbye. He then left for Macedonia, accompanied by Sopatrem Aristarchus, Secundus, Galius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus. They visited the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea before they made their way to Corinth. After a short time there, Paul attempted to go back to Syria but was stopped short when he discovered a plot against his life.

Paul then retraced his steps back through Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, stopping in Troas where he stayed for seven days. Led by The Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and eager to be there for Pentecost, Paul bypassed Ephesus knowing that he would need to stay there longer than he had time. So, he called for the Ephesian elders to come and meet him in Miletus before going to Jerusalem. This meeting was a difficult one for all the disciples and elders because they knew they were seeing Paul for the last time: ***Then Paul went down on his knees, all of them kneeling with him, and prayed. And then a river of tears. Much clinging to Paul, not wanting to let him go. They knew they would never see him again—he had told them quite plainly. The pain cut deep. Then, bravely, they walked him down to the ship. (ACTS 20:36-38 The Message Bible)***

After Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he was quickly met by men who sought to destroy him. He was beaten, falsely accused, imprisoned, transferred from one place to the next, shipwrecked, and held under house arrest – all in the course of around four years.

When Paul entered the Jewish Synagogue for the first time to teach, he was immediately met with opposition by the Jews. They incited a riot so violent and chaotic that Paul was arrested and carried off for his own safety by two soldiers. He later discovered a plot against his life and brought it to the commander's attention; so he was then transferred to Caesarea where he was imprisoned for two years. Finally, Paul was transferred back to Jerusalem to be put on trial there. But before this happened, he appealed to Caesar and was transported by ship to Rome.

It was during this journey to Rome that Paul was shipwrecked and experienced many difficulties before finally making it to Rome in 60 A.D. He was put under house arrest for two years. Paul may have been released after 2 years in prison and gone on a fourth missionary journey, or he may have been kept in prison until the time of the Fire of Rome in 64 AD. What happened at this point is unclear. Some say that Paul's trip from Caesarea to Rome for his first Roman imprisonment constitutes his "fourth journey," while others say he embarked on another missionary trip after he was released. Much depends on whether he was imprisoned once or twice. In **2 TIM 4:16**, Paul, writing from prison, refers to his "first" trial, and **verse 17** indicates that it ended favorably; these clues point to at least two imprisonments in Rome. It's been conjectured that Paul's fourth missionary journey started upon his release from his first imprisonment.

In his writing, Paul explains and contrasts his life before surrendering to Christ. He had everything — status, money, respect, knowledge – all of it. But none of it meant a single thing to him next to knowing Christ. This is the goal that all Christians are called to: lives wholly abandoned to Christ. This kind of abandon ushers in radical, society-altering, world-shaking impact. Think about Paul's life after that moment on the road to Damascus!

So, what are the lessons in Paul's life, following his conversion? He didn't live to please mankind. He was humble and selfless. He was focused on God's calling in his life and lived with Eternity in mind. If we follow Paul's example, we'll find ourselves living Godly lives and walking in effective ministry. This kind of abandon opens the door to a vast array of different opportunities to serve The Lord and spread the Gospel. We need to commit to be a follower of Jesus Christ for He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life.

Of all the people that God could have used to bring so many people to Him, he ironically used the man who had been killing Christians. God changed Paul's heart and used him for His Glory. It's almost difficult to comprehend why God picked Paul of all people, but that's what makes him so relatable. If God can use someone like Paul to do that much good, then that should encourage us to know that He can use anyone of us at any time!