

16. May 2025 The Conversion of Saul

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### “The Conversion of Saul”

Acts 9:1-22

*Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 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. Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 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.” And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying, and he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon thy name.” 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 sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”*

Jesus Himself intervened to put an end to the blind and bitter hostility of Saul of Tarsus. At that very moment, Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there, having received permission from the high priest. Along the way, however, God had mercy on the persecuted Christians and on Saul, in whom he would carry out his plan of salvation.

The conversion of St Paul is one of the turning points in the history of the early Church and is a valid example for all times that God can intervene in a seemingly hopeless situation and turn it around, so we must never lose hope. In the case of St Paul, the Lord made a fierce persecutor of the Church into the great Apostle of the Gentiles, *"a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel"*.

But for this to happen, Saul had to have a personal encounter with the Lord, which took place in a vision. Touched by the light of God, he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"* At that moment Jesus revealed Himself to him and everything changed. The Lord then gave Paul his first instructions and he did not resist. He had met the truth in the Person of Jesus and there was no longer any doubt. Everything was so clear and bright that he simply let himself be led. But the light was so intense that his eyes were blinded and he could no longer see anything. His companions were witnesses to the event, for they heard the voice of the Lord even though they did not see Him.

What a magnificent event, what kindness the Lord showed in making this persecutor His messenger! Paul would have abundant opportunity to right the wrong he had done to the Church, as the Lord had foretold to Ananias, *"I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name"*.

And so it was! Paul was always aware of the greatness of God's grace and mercy towards him. Later he would say openly: *"For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me"* (1 Cor 15:9-10).

Jesus healed Saul of his spiritual blindness, just as he would heal his physical blindness through his faithful disciple Ananias, whom He sent to him as soon as he arrived in Damascus. In Ananias' hesitation we can still sense the terror that Saul had sown among the believers. But Jesus had already done His work and Saul was ready to serve Him.

At this point I would like to express my great gratitude to the Lord for showing such mercy to the persecutor Saul and entrusting him with such an immense mission. He

used to be a zealous defender of the Law, but unfortunately he was moved by that blind zeal which is always dangerous and which has caused so much suffering both in the history of the Church and of humanity in general. But God saw the heart of Saul of Tarsus and delivered him from his blindness. Thus he became the great apostle from whom so many blessings flowed and whose letters we still read today with such spiritual profit.

I would also like to express my gratitude to St Paul for faithfully following the Lord's call, taking on so much hardship and even violent death for His sake. He deserves all our respect and love. These days, we especially ask him to help the Church adhere unreservedly to the apostles' teachings and never deviate, just as he remained faithful to the Lord until death.

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**Meditation on the day's reading:** <https://en.elijamission.net/gods-plan-stands-firm-for-ever-2/>

**Meditation on the day's Gospel:** <https://en.elijamission.net/i-am-the-way-2/>