

Conversion of the Biggest Pharisee

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 9, and we'll be reading verses 1 through 20. And it starts, meanwhile, so the meanwhile is God building his church in the book of Acts against all opposition, nothing stopping it.

And we see that continuing here in Acts chapter 9. This is the word of God. Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.

He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any there who belonged to the way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

Who are you, Lord? Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, he replied. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.

[1 : 23] The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless. They had heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing.

So they led him by the hand to Damascus. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus, there was a disciple named Ananias.

The Lord called to him in a vision. Ananias. Yes, Lord, he answered. The Lord told him, go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

In a vision, he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him and restore his sight. Lord, Ananias said, I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.

And he has come here with authority from the chief priest to arrest all who call on your name. But the Lord said to Ananias, go. This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

[2 : 41] I will show him how much he must suffer for my name. Then Ananias went to the house and entered in and entered it.

Placing his hands on Saul, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me to you so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He got up and was baptized and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once, he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Let's hear his word preached.

I'd like you to think of a living person of whom you would say, of all the people in the world, the last person I would ever think of becoming a Christian is.

[3 : 51] And you fill in that blank. It might even be yourself if you're here. I'm thinking that of you. Maybe somebody you've prayed for.

Years and years and witnessed to. Get that person in your mind. I believe the Bible gives us a man that would trump all our nominees.

And it's the man we just read about, Saul of Tarsus. A Pharisee advancing in Judaism, as he says of himself, beyond many of his own age because of his extreme religious zeal against all things having to do with Jesus of Nazareth.

A Pharisee. If you saw a sign at Potato Creek State Farm. Let me start over. If you saw a sign at Potato Creek State Park that said, beware of Tyrannosaurus Rex.

You would say, there's no danger here. Those guys have been extinct for centuries. And even so, reading Jesus' words in the scriptures, beware of the teaching of the Pharisees.

[5 : 08] You may say the same. There are no longer any danger here. They've been extinct for centuries. But after studying for two months, Matthew 23, our Lord's last words to the multitudes in the temple, in which he pronounces seven woes against the Pharisees and warns the people against them.

I trust we've learned that though this Jewish religious party of Pharisees is extinct, that their religion is alive and well in the world today.

And in fact, it may have more of its tentacles in our own hearts than what we realize. Wanting to appear better than what we are.

Doing what we do for the eyes of men. And so on and so forth as we've seen. But its religion is the most common religion in the world today. It's that self-help religion.

Self-help salvation. Salvation by what we do. Rather than looking away altogether from self to what Jesus has done for hell-deserving rebels against God.

[6 : 20] Now one of the wonderful things about the Bible is the way that light from one passage will cast its light upon other passages in the Bible.

In other words, the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible. It is the best interpretation of the Bible. And so last week when we studied the conversion of Nicodemus and John 3 introduced him as a man of the Pharisees.

Well then, that light from Matthew 23 that we spent two months studying casts its light upon this man and at once we knew gobs about him.

And why Jesus said to him the things he said. Like Nicodemus, you must be born again if you ever hope to perceive and understand much less enter the kingdom of God.

And that you must look away from yourself to the Son of Man being lifted up for sinners and look in faith to him if ever you are to be saved.

[7 : 28] So, Matthew 23 showed us how it could be that this respected leading teacher in Israel could be ignorant of the most basic things.

And so last week we did see the conversion of this Pharisee Nicodemus and this week we see the conversion of the biggest Pharisee of them all, Saul of Tarsus. Now his conversion account is given three times in the book of Acts.

We had the account in chapter 9 read to us, but it's also recounted in chapter 22 and again in chapter 26. And the very fact that it's recorded three times in such detail reveals how important this is to us.

God is saying, get it, not once, not twice, three times we are given this conversion that we are so familiar with we refer to it, don't we?

I didn't have a Damascus Road conversion, we say. We know what we mean by that. We've read it over and over again. But in some of Paul's letters, he tells us even more about his conversion.

[8 : 36] He enables us to go inside the man and to see what he was thinking, what he was wrestling with.

And we're able to see how he went from a self-righteous legalist to a humble believer in the Lord Jesus, from a hater of the Nazarene to one who would spend his life in ministering his gospel and then give his life out of love for his Savior.

And I trust that this will also give us encouragement to believe that these who are on our list of the hardest to be saved are not impossible to God. He's still the God that saved.

Saul of Tarsus, mighty to save. And I trust it will also give us a deeper appreciation of our own conversion because we're more like Saul than we may realize. So where do we find him?

How do we find Saul upon first meeting him in our Bibles? Well, it's there at the end of Acts chapter 7. He's a young man. He's standing outside of Jerusalem. This is about three years after Jesus had died, been raised to life, and ascended back into heaven.

[9 : 54] And this man Saul has got garments at his feet that men have taken off to have better use of their arms and their hands. And he's watching with approval along with his fellow Pharisees as Stephen, a follower of Jesus, is being stoned.

Now Saul had heard him preach so full of wisdom and power that no man could stand up against him. Not even this chief debater Saul could answer his treatment of the Scriptures.

And they were furious and quickly charged Stephen with blasphemy. As they couldn't silence him with arguments, they silenced him with rocks that beat the life out of him.

And the scene closes with this statement. Saul was there giving his approval to his death. And I might add, a death that he never forgot.

He never could forget as he watched the way Stephen died, totally at peace, confident of Jesus Christ, receiving him into heaven, committing himself and his spirit into the hands of Jesus Christ and dying with words of forgiveness on his lips.

[11:12] Lord, do not hold this sin to their account. Dying like his Savior. The next words begin in chapter 8 of Acts.

On that day, the very day in which Stephen was stoned to death. On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem.

And verse 3 says, Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

And the impression given here is that Saul was the ringleader of this great persecution that broke out at the stoning of Stephen. He, more than anyone else, began to destroy the church.

He was the energy that kept this campaign going. And that could be why they laid their garments at his feet. That he was the leader.

[12:19] He was the mob boss. And they were doing this as he approved of his killing. He was like a wild animal that once gets a taste of blood will not stop until it has more.

And so chapter 9 and verse 1 begins the account of Saul's conversion with these words.

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.

And he went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any there who belonged to the way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Now Damascus is 130 miles away. And Damascus is in a foreign land of Syria. And we see just how zealous Saul is to hunt down Christians.

Even there. He was out to completely destroy the church of Jesus Christ and erase his name from the earth. And so we pause the video at this point as we want to go inside the man, Saul now, and get inside of his mind and his heart and what he's thinking.

[13:40] And he does that for us in Philippians chapter 3. This is nearly 30 years after his conversion. And he tells us what he was putting his confidence in to make himself right with God to get into heaven.

And he lists all the things he's got going for him. It's all over here in the plus column. Things that he thought would impress God and about how holy he was and how deserving he was of entering heaven.

Verses 4 to 6 of Philippians 3. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. Now he's listing them. He's circumcised the eighth day of the people of Israel.

I'm no Gentile. I'm no half-breed Samaritan. I'm a full-blooded Israelite. Of the tribe of Benjamin from which was taken the first king named Saul.

Like me. A Hebrew of Hebrews. So his Jewish pedigree was beyond doubt. He's got all the credentials. He's a thoroughbred Jew and he's proud of it. Not only in front of men but boasting before the Lord as if that gets him favor in heaven.

[14:57] And then he lists three things that he did. Those were three things that he was by birth. Here's three things he did that made him confident that he was one of God's favorites. First he says, in regard to the law, a Pharisee.

Well now we know something, don't we, about Pharisees. So he belonged to the strictest religious party of the Jews, ever so careful about the things of God's law.

Down to specifics. Secondly, he says, as for zeal, persecuting the church. You heard him right.

This is in the plus column. This was a badge he wore with pride and could boast about before God. So deceived was Paul that he listed this as one of the things that would be found pleasing in heaven.

That would earn God's favor. He thought he was doing God a service to rid the earth of those corrupting the true religion with these blasphemous claims about a blasphemous Jesus.

[16:04] Remember, that was the charge for which the Pharisees and chief priests gave Jesus the death sentence was saying that he was blaspheming to claim to be God's son.

And Paul is, or Saul here, is saying that they got it right with Jesus. He was a blasphemer. That's how he was thinking. And now he's going a step further by persecuting the followers of Jesus.

So zealous is he. He's being driven by this religious zeal then. A zeal that has gone bad. And history is full of accounts of some of the greatest bloodbaths motivated by false religious zeal. So I'm a Pharisee. I'm persecuting the church. And third, as for legalistic righteousness, that is, as for righteousness of the law, the law of God, faultless.

Faultless. Now that's no small boast to make before God in His law. That it has nothing with which to accuse me. Not a thing to say against me.

[17:19] In His own eyes, He was faultlessly righteous. And the common people pretty much shared that opinion of the Pharisees.

Indeed, they were the holy ones. They were the devoted ones. The separated ones. And had this proverb that if only two men made it into heaven, surely one must be a Pharisee.

So we can imagine the spiritual earthquake that took place in the hearts of the common people when Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 20, I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

That was a shocking thing to hear. According to the Son of God, these Pharisees' righteousness was not what they thought it was.

They thought it qualified them for the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus says it is such that keeps them out. Now that's quite a difference once you agree. How can this happen?

[18:30] How could these Pharisees, Saul included, be so wrong about their own righteousness? Well, Jesus goes on to explain some of the ways in Matthew 5.

And He says it's due to their Scripture twisting. Yes, it sounds right they're quoting Scripture, but they're putting a twist on it with their interpretation of the Scriptures that makes it all wrong.

They were lowering the standard of righteousness by externalizing the demands of the law. They were like a runner who decides He's going to do the high hurdles in track.

But upon trying, He finds that they're just too high for Him. He can't get over them. So He goes around and He lowers the high hurdles down to where He can get over them with ease.

Now He's ready. Now He's good. In the same way, the Pharisees stood before the law of God and its demands.

[19:39] And there's no way they could keep those. And so they lowered them. They reduced the demands of God's law down to a few external things that they could handle.

And so you see, this was absolutely necessary for the religion of the Pharisee. If one gets into heaven by keeping the law, why then, it must be keepable. It must be something I can do.

So the law of God with all of its demands was brought down to where they could easily get over them and say, I have kept the law faultlessly.

So when a Pharisee read the Sixth Commandment, you shall not murder, if they had not murdered another person in cold blood, well then, they congratulated themselves as having done all that God's law required in the Sixth Command.

Jesus says, but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And anyone who says in anger, you fool, will be in danger of the fire of hell.

[20:47] You see, anger is murder in the heart. That's where murder begins. Therefore, anger breaks the Sixth Commandment.

You shall not murder. The Apostle John was there and heard it and learned well from his master and he says in his first epistle, chapter 3 and verse 15, anyone who hates his brother is a murderer.

And you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. And then when the Pharisee read the Seventh Commandment, you shall not commit adultery, why, they twisted it again to mean that if they had not gone to bed with anyone other than their wife, why then, they had faultlessly fulfilled the Seventh Commandment.

You see? I've cleared that one too. Faultless. Whereas Jesus says, but I tell you that if anyone looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Lust is adultery in the heart. Adultery begins there. And therefore, the lust itself breaks the Seventh Commandment.

[22:03] Now this is Jesus giving the interpretation of the law that he is the giver of. And so this is the way, one of the ways the Pharisees, including Saul, had so twisted the law and reduced it then to just a few external things, stripping of its demands upon the heart.

And that's why they didn't need a Savior. They didn't need Jesus. They had an obedience that would get them in. Their own obedience. And Jesus, the only lawgiver, the only judge, the only king and savior, says in essence, sorry, but man does not get to set the standard of righteousness for entrance into heaven.

God does. And his law makes demands upon your inward thoughts, your inward desires and attitudes and motivations, not just your outward actions.

sins. And any transgression of or lack of conformity to the law of God as God means it is sin and leaves you under condemnation and in need of a Savior from sin.

Now, every one of us has by nature as we come into this world something of this same problem of thinking our righteousness is better than it really is.

[23 : 34] Thinking that maybe if we just acted better and we're good boys and girls then we get into heaven for doing so. Hell's for somebody else.

It's for those bad people, not for me. Oh, how wrong we can be. That's what we should learn from the Pharisees. The church-going people can get it so wrong about our own righteousness. Jeremiah says it this way that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked beyond cure.

Who can understand it? Don't listen to your own heart. Your heart will lie to you. It's deceitful. Listen to God's word.

You'll receive nothing but the truth. So how does God show us that outside of Jesus Christ the true condition is that all of our righteous deeds, the best things we have ever done are like filthy rags in God's sight.

[24 : 44] How does He bring us to that point? Well, Saul's going to tell us that in Romans chapter 7 how it happened to him, how this high view of his self-righteousness was just shattered to bits.

God used His law. Not the Pharisees' interpretation of the law, but His law as it's rightly understood. He used His law to convince Saul of his sin.

Notice how he puts it in Romans 7.7. Saul says, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, do not covet.

So Saul is telling us that it was the law that shattered his view of himself. And especially the 10th commandment, do not covet.

Let me read it for you as Saul would have read it from Exodus 20.17. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his manservant or his maidservant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

[25 : 53] Now here was a command that's impossible to be reduced and lowered to a few external things that could be done. Because it doesn't have anything at all to do with outward actions.

It only has to do with the desires of the heart. Wanting what's not yours. Desiring what another has for yourself.

And in the end, this is what did him in. That's what he's telling us. Saul says that he, that without the law of God really confronting him in truth, he says, I was, I was doing fine.

It was like indwelling sin was dead within me. Didn't say anything to me. But as soon as the law came home to me with power, it's like sin inside sprang to life.

And it seized the opportunity afforded by the commandment and produced in me every kind of covetous desire. Sin was awakened by the law and started to desire the very things that the law forbid.

[27 : 05] It's like you were never tempted to walk on the grass until you saw the sign. Stay off the grass. Suddenly you have an interest in walking on that grass. You never even were tempted to tamper with a smoke detector in an airplane lavatory until the way, until the stewardess told you that that's a federal offense and \$2,000 fine for it.

And then you began to think, what would it be like to tamper with that thing in there? So that the commandment that forbids actually stirs up sin that is in us already by birth to want to do the forbidden thing.

And you can see this response to sin and this response of sin to the law of God in the very youngest of children. Well, not the youngest, but little squirts, one and two year olds.

Just dare to say the word no or don't touch. And what happens? Well, they look you in the eye and they give you that knowing smile and they reach out and they touch the very thing you said they

weren't supposed to touch.

And you're saying don't touch. Stir something up in them just to show you that they can touch it. That's the power of sin in its reaction to the holy commandments of God.

[28 : 29] And Saul is telling us that's what happened to me when I bumped into this commandment. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Sin await and produced in me every kind of covetous desire. Romans 7, 8. And try as he might, he could not make his heart not covet. And that's how he came to know himself to be a guilty lawbreaker.

God's law shattered his claim of faultless righteousness. As for the righteousness of the law, faultless. No, it now revealed his wicked heart.

And it left him condemned as a lawbreaker. Has God revealed this to you? Again, Saul was a church-going man.

You're in church. I don't assume that you all see yourself as God sees you this morning. Has he revealed this to you as he did to Saul and everyone that he saves?

[29 : 42] That outside of Jesus Christ, all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Because before you'll run to Christ to save you, you must see that you need saving and that you cannot save yourself.

And only then do you come and throw yourself upon the mercy of God in Christ. So we've had the inside look. We've gone inside of Saul to see what was going on in Saul.

Well, here's this battle. I thought I had faultless righteousness, but there's this command that says do not covet. And I saw what I was before God.

So this is going on inside. So let's now go back out to the Damascus road where Saul was nearly at his destination. He was just getting ready to pounce on more Christians there in faraway Damascus of Syria.

And suddenly he's met by the risen, living Christ. A light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing about them, falling to the ground and a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[30 : 51] There's a man ever more shocked to hear his own name mentioned twice. And Saul asked, who are you, Lord?

I am Jesus, who you are persecuting. Now it's only in the account of Acts 26, out of the three accounts of his conversion, it's only in Acts 26 that we learn something else that Jesus said to him at this very point.

Saul, Saul, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Here's the words. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

Now the metaphor is simple enough. It's the farmer who would yoke his ox to a plow or to a wagon to pull it. But there were times when the ox might stop and say, I've gone far enough.

I'm not going any further. And that's when the farmer would take his goad, his ox goad, just a sharp pointed stick, and he would make him willing to go further with just a poke, prodding him on.

[31 : 59] Well, some oxen were so stubborn that they might actually kick back at their owner. You know what that got?

Sharper goads. More painful treatment. Well, we learn then that already the Lord, the Lord Jesus had been pricking Saul's conscience before he ever met him on the road to Damascus.

He had troubled him with his servant Stephen. He had troubled him with what Stephen had said, his wisdom and power in preaching the scriptures and Saul, great debater that he was.

He couldn't answer that. Ah, that was a poke, a prick. And then there was Stephen's claim that Jesus was alive and he's in heaven.

Ah, prick. No, he was a part of the Pharisees. You remember, it was the Pharisees that came up with the lie that the disciples of Jesus just stole his body away and Saul had bought into that 100% that Jesus is dead somewhere and they just are hiding him from us.

[33 : 21] And Stephen says, no, I see him and he's welcoming me into heaven. And then there was the way he died with confession or with confidence and forgiveness on his lips.

You see, all of these were the pricks of conscience that Jesus was given to Saul of Tarsus even before he met him on the road. And then there was all this trouble about the 10th commandment that too had been bothering him.

I thought I had a faultless righteousness but oh, that 10th word about not even wanting what was not mine. Oh, it did me in and I couldn't stop wanting what was forbidden.

These were the goads of the heavenly master painfully pricking his conscience and Saul was one stubborn ox, wasn't he? How did he respond?

kicking against his master. Throwing himself headlong all the more into his obsession to kill and persecute the followers of Jesus.

[34 : 30] That's how he answered these pricks of conscience. Kicking and what did it bring? More, more pain, more conviction. Jesus was pursuing his sinner.

Have some of you been kicking against the pricks of conscience. You know you're guilty but you're refusing to surrender and that's the way you're kicking.

I will not bow to Jesus in his ways. I like my way and you're kicking. It only brings more pain. Why not just bring your sin to Jesus and cry to him for mercy?

Trust in his blood and righteousness to atone for your sins because the blood of Jesus, God's son, cleanses from all sin. Trust in him today. Saul's kicking came to an end that day.

It all came together there outside Damascus and in the following three days of blindness inside the city of Damascus, he never saw more clearly than when he was blinded by the living Christ because it was then that light was dawning in his soul and he was beginning to see who Jesus was.

[35 : 48] He is alive. I've just met him. He was beginning to see then his own sin for what it was and he had no righteousness before this righteous Jesus.

He was beginning to see with such clarity I can't stop myself from sinning. but this Jesus is pursuing me in love to save me and he quit kicking and surrendered to him and put his trust in him alone in Christ.

Nothing in my hands I brought. He was ready to throw it all onto the worth of Christ and bank on heaven a hundred percent. all his eggs on this one basket that Jesus has done enough for sinners to save me.

He was baptized breaking his ties with the Pharisees and the Christless religion that he had and identifying with the followers of the despised Nazarene.

And at once he began to preach in the city of Damascus. You see he was qualified for that. He was a scholar. He knew the scriptures. He was just missing the key.

[37 : 02] And so it was a locked book. He knew nothing you see like Nicodemus didn't even know that there was such a thing as the new birth and the need for it and for looking away from self entirely and looking to the son of man lifted up for sin.

These things were foreign but when he met Jesus it's like the nickel dropped and all of a sudden all the lights were on. He had all the scriptures with which to prove that Jesus is the Christ and he went out and he preached in Damascus.

that Jesus is the son of God. Let's fast forward then 30 years after his conversion. We're once again back in Philippians 3 and this is where he tells us how before he met Christ he was so sure that he had a faultless righteousness before him along with his zeal for persecution and all these things he had going for him in the gain column.

now we find that all of his accounting methods have changed and what was gained to him is now over in the loss column. And Jesus Christ who he viewed as a total loss is now the one thing left in the gain column and he says he's everything.

I'm glad to have him and to lose all for him. This is how he puts it in Philippians 3 7 to 9 but whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ what is more I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things and consider them as rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith and so his own old imagined righteousness is replaced with true perfect righteousness the very righteousness of God worked out by the perfect obedience of Jesus while he was on the earth during those 33 years obeying on behalf of Saul and received by faith alone in Jesus Christ and the moment we believe and put our trust in Jesus all of our sins you see transferred from our account to his who was damned for them and all his perfect righteousness transferred to our account that we might be declared righteous before God instantly forgiven all of our sins past present future made right with God forever that's the only righteousness that will get us into heaven the perfect righteousness of Jesus obedience given to us and received by faith alone is it yours is that your your only hope for standing before God in that day that you have a righteousness by God himself approved because it is the very righteousness of God the Son it could be yours today if you will renounce your own righteousness

as filthy rags and accept Christ as Lord and Savior and so receive his perfect righteousness there's a gravestone over in Ireland that belonged to a young lady a young Christian gal and it simply said this

[40 : 36] I gave him my sins and he gave me his righteousness where do you find a Savior like that willing to make that trade to take your sins and to give you his righteousness and in taking your sins to go to a cross and be damned under God's wrath for your sins by a Savior who himself had no sin but was made sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God well there's just one passage more that Saul wrote close to the end of his life it's his first letter to Timothy his son in the faith and he's a Saul's about to meet his maker and he's had more than three decades of preaching Christ and suffering for him and in verses 13 and 14 of chapter 1 of 1 Timothy he tells how he was once a blasphemer interesting he's about to meet his maker and he's thinking what I once was

I was once a blasphemer a persecutor and a violent man oh but I was shown mercy and abundant grace was given me in Jesus Christ and then he says verse 15 here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance you know there are not many trustworthy sayings in the world being passed around today that are worthy of all of you accepting it every single one of you but here's one what is it that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst Saul writes so why did the eternal son of God become man and enter this world a wicked rebellious world that would crucify to save sinners that's why he came well why did Jesus Christ save the worst sinner Saul of Tarsus well Saul goes on to tell us in verse 16 for that very reason

I was shown mercy so that in me the worst of sinners Christ Jesus may display the greatness of his patience as an example to those who would believe on him unto eternal life you see don't miss this the reason Jesus Christ saved Saul the worst of sinners was to send every one of us a clear message you a clear message me a clear message if I can save Saul I can save you if my blood will cover his sins then it will cover yours if there's enough mercy and grace and patience in me to save him there's enough mercy grace and patience in me to save you no matter how long you've been kicking against the pricks of conscience I was patient with Saul and I will receive you if you come to me and sinner friend this is why Saul's conversion is recorded in scripture in such detail not just once not twice but three times to convince you

God wants you to know this faithful saying that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners and to save the very worst of them it's to be an example to you to you an example that you like Saul might believe on the Lord Jesus and receive eternal life and this is eternal life to know thee the only God and Jesus Christ whom you sent that's the trustworthy saying that deserves you fully accepting the Lord Jesus yourself he's ready to save you are you ready to be saved by him that's it you ready to be saved from yourself and all that you are come to him stop kicking surrender to this savior and realize he's been pursuing you up and down the corridors of your sinful world pursuing you poking you all that you might stop and fall into his arms and surrender of faith and repentance and receive him whom to know is life eternal and brothers and sisters this is this is the

Lord Jesus mighty to save those on our list of most unsavable there's an example for us to strengthen our faith to go on witnessing to seeking to be a winsome testimony to them and praying on for them and this is the same Lord Jesus who is mighty to save us to be so patient with us unless you were one of those that were saved the first time you heard the gospel I certainly wasn't I kicked I just bet that many of you kicked too and he kept pursuing didn't he he kept poking until one day he met you in such a way that you could reject no more well Paul has just one word to say at the end and it's verse 17 now to the king eternal immortal invisible the only God be honor and glory forever and ever amen in other words there's no one to receive any glory but this

[46 : 08] God the God who seeks and saves sinners in the person of his son Jesus Christ that's how we want to respond so take your hymnal and turn to 667 to God be the glory great things he has done and none greater than this patient loving kind work of salvation that he's done for Saul aren't you glad he saved Saul think how much of our Bibles have his signature on it aren't you glad that he saved Saul as this worst sinner so that you too could be encouraged by the salvation that he enjoyed I love the way that the writer puts in verse 2 I believe it is the vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus forgiveness receives the vilest offender well let's stand and sing to his praise seven there's great joy on this side of glory for the great things he's done in saving us what will it be there now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless really faultless before his glorious presence faultless without fault and with great joy to the only God

our savior glory majesty power and authority through Jesus
Christ our Lord before all ages now and forever more amen amen amen amen a