

The Unstoppable Gospel
12. A surprising conversion (Acts 9v1-31)

John Percival

Introduction

- A *Damascus Gate experience...*
- A **life-changing encounter** with Jesus Christ:

BEFORE conversion (v1-2)

- A hater
- A persecutor

DURING conversion (v3-9)

- Jesus reveals who he is
 - Alive
 - God
 - One with his people
- Saul understands himself

AFTER conversion (v10-31)

- Prayer
- Joining the church
- Baptism
- Evangelism

Conclusion

Acts 9v1-31 (NIV)

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² 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.

³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ 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. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Ambassador Church Promises

As Christians, we believe that we were dead in our sins and deserving of God's wrath; but because of his great love and mercy God has given us new life in Christ. In Christ we are forgiven, accepted, and adopted by God. All this is through God's incomparable grace and is only received by faith. In view of God's mercy to us we make these promises in dependence on God and the work of his Spirit in us.

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house 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 so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

²³ After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, ²⁴ but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵ But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

²⁶ When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰ When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹ Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

We promise to grow in the knowledge of God:

- We will give thanks and praise God for his goodness to us
- We will seek to repent of our sin and rejoice in our forgiveness
- We will celebrate our new life in Christ and walk humbly with God
- We will seek the guidance and leading of the Spirit of God in everything we do
- We will live a life that honours God in obedience to his Word
- We will express our dependence on God in prayer
- We will give God glory for all his work in us and in the world

We promise to grow together as a community of God's people:

- We will endeavour to meet together regularly
- We will make every effort to keep the unity of the church as those whom Christ has reconciled
- We will forgive each other as Christ forgave us
- We will embrace our responsibility to love, care, and pray for each other as God's family
- We will use our gifts to encourage and build each other up
- We will contribute to the church's financial support
- We will respect and honour the leadership of the church

We promise to go into the world with the good news about Jesus:

- We will bear witness to the good news of the gospel through our words and actions
- We will welcome new people into the life of the church
- We will seek to do good to all people to show the love of God
- We will accept suffering for the sake of the gospel
- We will pray for the spread of the gospel throughout Hong Kong and across the world
- We will, if we move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of these promises and the principles of God's Word