

The Way
Birth of the Church
Lesson 06: Jesus Transforms Saul the Persecutor
We are indebted to [Ethnos360](#) for providing the basis of these lessons

Review (Where We've Been)

The Way of the Early Church...

- They believed, were baptized, and behaved
- They preached Jesus as the only way to salvation

Acts 4:12 (ESV) “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

- They demonstrated boldness in the face of persecution

✓ Peter and John arrested and jailed for preaching the name of Jesus

Acts 4:18 (ESV) So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, **20** for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

✓ Stephen martyred for preaching the name of Jesus

Acts 7:58 (ESV) Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” **60** And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

BIG Idea

Following Jesus costs something.

The ways of Jesus don't call us to believe, be baptized, and then *be on our own way*.

It might not cost you your physical life but will cost you your life...

- The cost of releasing anything that distracts you
- The cost of releasing anything you trust in more than God
- The cost of possibly losing relationships
- The cost of giving, forgiving, sacrificing, and taking the role of a servant
- The cost of loving Jesus more than stuff

Following Jesus is an exchange of *who you are* for *who He wants you to be*.

Information (What You Need to Know)

Today, we will clearly see this exchange take place in the life of a man named Saul.

The Church Reacts to Persecution...

▪ **The church is persecuted**

Acts 8:1 (ESV) And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **2** Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. **3** But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Saul rejected the following teachings of Christians...

- ✓ God had raised Jesus from the dead
- ✓ Jesus could be trusted because He was who He claimed to be (Son of God)
“Therefore, Saul thought he loved the God of his ancestors. He felt it was his duty to punish, and even kill, the followers of Jesus.” – Firm Foundations

▪ **The church is scattered** (which God used to grow the church)

Acts 8:4 (ESV) Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

- ✓ Jesus had told them that the Gospel would be carried beyond Jerusalem

Acts 1:8 (ESV) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”



- ✓ Philip went to Samaria to proclaim the good news

Acts 8:5 (ESV) Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

“Jewish people of Galilee and Judea shunned the Samaritans, viewing them as a mixed race who practiced an impure, half-pagan religion.” – Got Questions

Acts 8:12 (ESV) ...they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

■ **The church gains an unlikely member of the Way**

- ✓ Saul is still persecuting the church

Acts 9:1 (ESV) But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest **2** 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.

- ✓ Saul is confronted by Jesus on his way to persecute people in Damascus

Acts 9:3 (ESV) Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. **4** And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” **5** And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. **6** But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” **7** The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. **8** Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. **9** And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- ✓ A vision about Saul is given to a man named Ananias

Acts 9:10 (ESV) 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.” **11** And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, **12** and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” **13** But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. **14** And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”

- ✓ God reveals that Saul would become a witness to the Gentiles

Acts 9:15 (ESV) 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 children of Israel. **16** For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

- ✓ Ananias obeys the Lord and Saul’s life is changed

Acts 9:17 (ESV) So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” **18** And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; **19** and taking food, he was strengthened.

Application (What You Need To Do):

How did Saul respond to his life change?

- He preaches that Jesus is the Savior

Acts 9:19 (ESV) For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. **20** And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” **21** And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” **22** But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

- ✓ He is befriended by Barnabas

Acts 9:26 (ESV) And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. **27** But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. **28** So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.

- ✓ He puts himself in danger by disputing and preaching

Acts 9:29 (ESV) And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. **30** And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Does the church stop growing following persecution?

Acts 9:31 (ESV) So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.