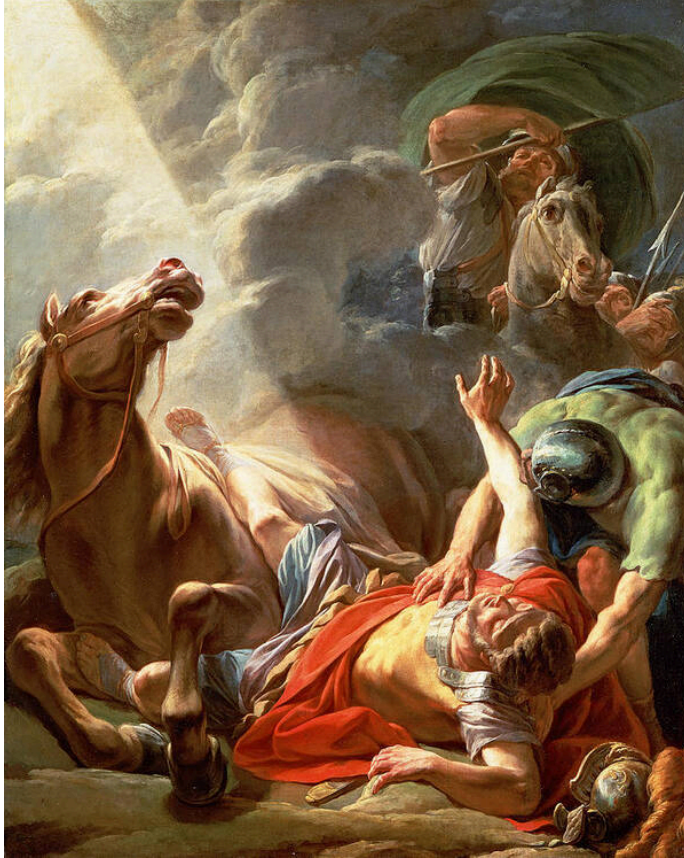


## THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

### *God's Enemies Are Conquered by the Revelation of Grace in Christ*



**Background:** Last Sunday, we saw Christ calling his first disciple Andrew, who in turn witnessed Peter to meet the "promised Messiah" This Sunday, we see Christ directly inviting Paul to become a disciple. What attributes did God see in these individuals that made them worthy of such a call. Well Paul was zealous in arresting and imprisoning Christians. Andrew and Peter were fishermen. Nicodemus was a tax collector. Nathaniel was said to be laying under a fig tree when Philip asked him to meet Jesus of Nazareth. So the first 4 disciples came from Bethsaida, far from Jerusalem, the city with the temple containing the Holy of Holies and the teachers of the law. So by man's wisdom it does not make a lot of sense. Rather it is the work of the Holy Spirit that guides us to become pastors, teachers, farmers, ecologists, or housewives. Regardless of vocation,

***The Conversion of Paul*** Nicolas-Bernard Lépicié (1767) Christ calls us to "follow me" Like Andrew and Phillip we are moved by the Spirit to say "I have met Christ, Come and see Him."

**The Lessons:** **Acts 9:1–22, Galatians 1:11–24, Matthew 19:27–30** Christ brings about a great reversal in St. Paul. *"He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy"* (Gal. 1:23). The enemy of the Gospel becomes its foremost preacher, and the last of the apostles becomes the first (Matt. 19:30). Paul is God's *"chosen instrument ... to carry [His] name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel"* (Acts 9:15). The conversion of Paul is only a more dramatic example of what God does in revealing Christ to us. The bondage of our sin makes saving faith impossible. "I believe that I cannot ... believe" (Small Catechism, Third Article of the Creed). But even this is no obstacle for our Lord's grace in Christ and the Holy Spirit's power through the Gospel. Baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit, and hearing the Word of Christ, our ears are opened and our spiritual blindness is lifted (Acts 9:17–19). It is dangerous to be a traitor to Christ's enemies — *"I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name"* (Acts 9:16) — but everything that is left behind is *"rubbish"* compared to *"the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:8) and the eternal life that we, with St. Paul, will at last inherit (Matt. 19:29).