

## Why Did Saul Obey the Gospel?

Philippians 3:8, *“Yet indeed I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...”*

**Introduction:** Luke recounts the conversion story of Saul three times in the book of Acts (9, 22, 26). Paul’s conversion served as a blueprint or “*pattern*” for “*all those who are going to believe on*” Christ “*for everlasting life*” (1 Timothy 1:16).

Without Saul’s conversion, the church today would sorely miss one of the greatest conversion examples in the entire New Testament and in the history of mankind. Yet, based on the modern philosophy of preaching and today’s faulty methods of “*bringing people to the church,*” Saul would have never been converted nor will people like him. Why? Because we often use inferior reasoning to win people to Jesus? So, to find converts like Saul, consider the reasons Saul converted.

### I. Not for Family (Philippians 3:3-5a)

- A. Some become “Christians” to make a husband, wife, parent, child or friend happy...
- B. If Saul was looking to make his family happy he would have never converted (Philippians 3:3-5a).
  - 1. Saul had a rich national and family history that he knew quite well.
  - 2. Yet, the decision to follow or not follow Jesus was not one we make because it is the “family religion.”
- C. Faith is not something we inherit, like our genes, from family—we must own it regardless of whether our family follows Jesus or not (cp. Matthew 10:34-38)!

### II. Not To Satisfy Tradition (Philippians 3:5b)

- A. The church may be able to trace its roots back to 33 A.D., but Judaism goes back centuries further in history.
- B. If tradition was a key factor in choosing a religion, Saul would have stayed a Jew!
  - 1. He was “*concerning the law, a Pharisee*” (Philippians 3:5).
  - 2. The Pharisees took great pride in their tradition, but Jesus often exposed the fact that their traditions led to a rejection of God’s commands (Mark 7:6-9).
- C. It is important for us to make sure we are more interested in doing God’s will than keeping some personal or religious tradition.

### III. Not to Join An “Active Church” (Philippians 3:6)

- A. It is important to be “*always abounding in the work of the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- B. But, Saul was already a zealous Jew—so being busy itself was not a factor in his conversion.
  - 1. He was so zealous about his faith that he “*went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way... he might bring them bound to Jerusalem*” (Acts 9:1-2).
  - 2. It is possible for religious people to be “active” in the wrong work, so being “active” alone is not a reason to be part of a church (Matthew 7:21-23).

3. One can find many religious and irreligious groups both Christian and non-Christian alike who are quite active—but are they active in the right work?
- C. It is important that we “have a zeal for God” that is “according to knowledge” (Romans 10:1-2).

#### IV. Not For Earthly Prosperity (Philippians 3:7-8)

- A. Some preach a “health and wealth” gospel and guarantee earthly prosperity for those who believe in Jesus.
  1. If Paul was interested in a “health and wealth” gospel he should have stayed a Jew because he was a rising star among the Jewish people (Acts 22:1-5).
  2. Yet, as a Christian he suffered greatly as the result of his faith (2 Cor 11:24-28).
- B. The prosperity gospel is not what Jesus experienced on earth—nor does He guarantee it to His followers (cp. John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; Colossians 3:5).
- C. The blessings we receive in Christ are spiritual leading to eternal reward (Ephesians 1:3; Romans 6:23).

*Transition:* So, what was the reason Saul became a follower of Jesus Christ (See Philippians 3:9-11).

**There is always one central message—a message no other religion has to offer!** It was an offer promised to the fathers of the Jews long ago, as Saul mentions to King Agrippa in Acts 26:6-8. It was a promise found in the prophecies of David, as Paul quotes to a synagogue of Jews in Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:32-39. It was the promise of the resurrected king which was fulfilled in Jesus, and no other, in the presence of many witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). Fighting this evidence of the predicted resurrection was what Jesus said was like Saul “kicking against the goads” (Acts 9:3-7)! Deny the resurrection of Jesus and you have denied the hope of resurrection for yourself! Accept the resurrection of Jesus and you have accepted the possibility of your own resurrection one day. For that reason, Paul says what he does in Philippians 3:9-11! Before Saul converted to Jesus he was willing to kill Christians! After Saul believed the evidence of Jesus, he was willing to lose everything and die for Christ!

Nothing else would have converted Saul to Christ! Nothing but the blood, the burial, and the undeniable resurrection of Jesus! Yet, how many times do we not talk about this fundamental evidence? How often do we try to win people with persuasion tactics that are feeble attempts to lure people to Christ by some other means than Jesus Christ Himself?!

*Conclusion:* Are you using the “right arguments” to win people to Jesus? Were you converted to Jesus for the right reasons? When you truly understand Jesus has something to offer that no other religion does then you will feel as compelled as Saul to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to gain Christ!