

Message Summary

The story of Paul's conversion showcases God's ability to radically transform the worst of sinners. In it, we see God's patience, power, and passion to bring glory to Himself by drawing sinners even today.

God's patience is on display through allowing Saul around thirty years of rebellion before saving him. This rebellion involved persecuting God's very own church. Further, Saul (eventually Paul) gave three years to study and preparation before significant church leadership, and fifteen years being sent out as a formal missionary. Likewise, the power of God is seen in saving Paul, who in his own words was the worst of all sinners (1 Tm. 1:15). Paul's life serves as a warning to all Christians to not be deluded into thinking we did something to earn our faith. We, like Paul, were running in the opposite direction, and the Lord in his power transformed our hearts and lives. Finally, God's passion to transform the lost is seen in raising Paul up as a missionary among the Gentiles. Paul, who had spent his life becoming the best and brightest Jew (see Phil. 3:4-6), now reached across ethnic lines to preach this gospel he formerly hated to the Gentiles he once looked down on.

Paul's conversion was certainly one of the most magnificent in all of history. But it is not the last or only one. Paul's biography reminds us that God is still working, these thousands of years later, to bring glory to himself by saving the worst of sinners. May God continue giving us his patience, power, and passion to bring the gospel to prepare our lives and surrender everything for the sake of the gospel among the lost.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why does God delight in showing mercy to the most weak, foolish, and undeserving of sinners? Why are we so prone to resist this truth? Consider esp. 1 Cor. 1:26-2:5; 2 Cor. 4:7-12.

Why was God especially delighted for Paul to minister to the Gentiles? What about Paul's background would make Paul's Gentile mission an especially clear gospel witness? (See Gal. 2:2, 8)

How did the Lord utilize Paul's abilities he gained as an unbeliever (linguistics, Jewish education, etc.) to spread the gospel he once hated?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. In what ways is the Lord calling you to exhibit Pauline patience this week?
2. Are there seasons of preparation you have been neglecting or impatient through?
3. Do you tend to think of yourself as a vessel good and gifted enough to earn your salvation, or as someone so fallen and broken that only God could save?
4. Do you share Paul's – and God's – passion for the lost?
5. Do you really believe no one is beyond God's power, or do you limit God's power to only what you can see and control?
6. Who is God calling you to believe He has the power to save? Are you faithfully praying and ministering to that/those individual(s)?
7. What sorts of skills, abilities, connections, or opportunities do you have to spread the gospel that you may have gained even as an unbeliever?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for sending Christ to be assassinated in our place, so that we as the worst of sinners might receive an eternal inheritance
 - Thank God for answering our prayers for Ms. Emily Otwell last week. Pray that the Lord would give us even more faithfulness in prayer

- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray for the Lord's healing grace to Trish Ratliff
 - Pray that the Lord would work in even the most unlikely places and among the most unlikely people in Gadsden to bring glory to Himself
 - Ask for God's power to live out the obedience He has called us to in sharing His patience, power, and passion

- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the nation of Syria, that the Lord would have mercy on the many families impacted by the ongoing warfare. Pray that the Lord might even grant repentance to Assad and other significant leaders of Syria. Finally, pray that the Lord might grant endurance to persecuted Christians and a witness to the lost around them