

RESCUED FROM DEATH 2: A CHANGED LIFE

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. (Acts 9:5, NIV)

THE AUTO ACCIDENT OF THE GOLF COURSE is being struck by a golf ball. No one leaves home saying, “I’m going to get cut off and slam into another vehicle on the way to work today.” In the same way, no one tees off thinking, *I can’t wait until I take a screaming five-iron shank in the left arm!*

We call it the unexpected for a reason. We can’t predict it. Even when we’re watching a tense movie that we know will feature sudden surprises, we jump when they happen because we don’t know when they’re coming.

Normally we would not think of conversion—which in this case we mean going from a position of unbelief that Jesus is Savior and Lord to a position of belief that this is so—as a sudden, surprising occurrence. And yet, right there in the heart of the New Testament is an account that even the more cursory readers of Scripture remember. It is the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, where this murder-minded Jewish leader was headed to round up disciples of Jesus and return to Jerusalem with his prisoners on the line.

Then it happened. A light from heaven flashed around him, and Saul fell to the ground blinded.

There was no question in Saul’s mind about what had happened. God had taken him down. For three days he continued in his blindness, and he fasted from food and drink. Then a tentative disciple named Ananias, directed by God’s voice, showed up where Saul was staying and affirmed for this Jewish stalwart that the one Saul had encountered was the risen and glorified Jesus. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized, and within days was preaching what he now was convinced was true: Jesus is the Son of God.

Saul’s conversion was not typical, but neither was it unique. Many have been moved from unbelief to belief in the course of a sermon or a prayer. Others come more slowly, asking questions, considering the answers. Some walk on the edge of belief but only step over when a circumstance of life convinces them of their need. It’s not how you come or how quickly; it’s that you come to Jesus and that you are changed in the coming. Saul would become Paul, the voice of hope to the Gentiles, but long before then Jesus came to him and he came to faith.

Opening questions Have you ever been struck by a golf ball or golf club? Tell the story. • Has your life been changed by Christ, or is this something you are still considering?

READING Acts 7:59-8:1; Acts 9:1-22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Sin and salvation (Acts 7:59-8:1 and Acts 9:1-2)

What specific sins were evident in Saul’s life? What does it say about the power of God that a person can be moved so suddenly to belief? Is there any person beyond the saving reach of God?

Supernatural details (Acts 9:3-22)

How did God work supernaturally in Saul’s conversion? If you are a believer, what evidence do you see that God has changed you in supernatural ways that could not have occurred otherwise?

The power behind our change (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

All sinners, not just those of the type listed in this passage, need to be changed. Who is the change agent identified here and what kinds of changes does he make in our lives?
