

Have you had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ?

Until this happens to us we have **not** experienced true and total conversion.

Saul who became Paul is the perfect example of such a total conversion.

Saul was a Pharisee through and through, he had total confidence in his ability to be righteous through keeping the law.

Philippians 3:4-6 [NIV] *“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.”*

But what was the approach to life and righteousness of Paul the new Saul who had experienced a personal encounter with Jesus Christ?

Philippians 3:7-11 [NIV] *“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord, confessed his own sin against Christ, and surrendered his life to Christ and resolved to obey Him, His Words, His Commands.

Sometimes Christ breaks into our lives like He did Saul's in a spectacular manner but **more often** conversion is a quiet experience, during a “quiet time” on our knees before God asking Him for the presence of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the truth about Jesus Christ in His Word.

Acts 9:1-6 [NIV] *“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”*

Saul thought he was persecuting heretics, but in reality he was persecuting Jesus Himself.

Anyone who is persecuting those who put all their trust in Jesus Christ, Christians, is also persecuting Jesus Himself, because such believers are the Body of Christ on earth.

Such an attitude of mind is **not** glorifying Jesus Christ so in grieving the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13-14 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”*

All the Holy Spirit does in and through us is to bring glory to Jesus Christ and the Father.

Ephesians 4:30 [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, **with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**”*

The Holy Spirit in us is the seal or guarantee that we belong to God, and that He will do all He has promised.

The Holy Spirit is like a down-payment, a deposit, a validating signature on contract that is the New Covenant.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the genuineness of our faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Acts 5:32 [NIV] *“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

Sent to those who obey Jesus Christ, and His Law of Love.

Ephesians 1:2-14 [NIV] *“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ.** For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons **through Jesus Christ,** in accordance with his pleasure and will, **to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.** **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And **he made known to us** the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed **in Christ,** to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, **even Christ.** **In him** we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to **hope in Christ,** might be for the praise of **his glory.** And you also were included **in Christ** when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked **in him** with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession, to the praise of **his glory.**”*

Grace is God’s voluntary and loving favour to those He is saving.

Predestination means marked out beforehand.

This is another way of saying that our salvation is God’s work **not** our own doing.

We **cannot** earn salvation, nor do we deserve it.

No religious, intellectual, or moral effort can gain it, because it comes only from God’s Mercy and Love.

Without God’s Grace no person can be saved.

To receive God’s Grace we must acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves, whatever we may do in the way of law-keeping.

We must acknowledge that **only** God can save us, by receiving His loving favour through faith in what Christ has done for us.

This change [conversion] took place in Saul’s life, after his encounter with Jesus Christ.

This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit working with us and then in us.

John 16:8 [NIV] *“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:”*

The Holy Spirit in us convicts us of our sins that leads to repentance of our sins.

Righteousness – accepting the righteousness of Jesus Christ as a gift upon our total trust in Him.

Judgement – there will be a time when we will have to give account to Christ of what we did with His loving sacrifice, and the offer to send the person of the Holy Spirit to lead us in our lives, and to receive through Him the gift of eternal life.