It’s **amazing** how folks ***didn’t believe*** his conversion…or is it? Saul went from a *renowned, famous and feared* **Pharisee** that was *breathing threats and murder against the church* to a preacher of Jesus Christ and a witness to Gospel that he so recently was at ***war*** with. And so they didn’t buy it. *“Is this not he, the destroyer of the Gospel?”* **Would you believe it?** I’m not sure we even have a fair comparison that we could use as an illustration. Hitler, Bin Laden? I can understand why folks were *skeptical.*

***But this is the power of God in the heart of a man.*** Paul would later write, and I love this so much, 2 Corinthians 5:17, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation* (literally, **new creation** – *“he is a”* was added for context). *Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* Jesus can change your life powerfully, completely…Your circumstance, your perspective, your logic, your rational, your personality, your life…but ***none of those things change if He hasn’t changed your heart***…therefore they are all secondary and not the priority.

The priority is this…***open your heart to Jesus.*** Invite Him into the very depth of your soul and spirit. Let Jesus define you…and then all things, one by one, *like a domino effect moving at the speed of light*, ***all things become new.*** It is unlike anything else, truly amazing what God can and will do in the heart of a man or a woman and Saul is an excellent picture of that. ***Total 180. Total west to east. He became his opposite***…he switched from Apple to Android…from Ford to Chevy, man…What else on earth can do that in the heart of a man? Nothing…then why do we so often try so hard with so many programs or things…Jesus is the only Way…

Acts Chapter 9 Verses 23 – 25

* Some say that this is the *best thing* that could have happened to him at this time. He is surging forth in strength, **preaching** in such a way to confound the Jews, **proving** by his *powerful sermons* and *dominant knowledge* of the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ…and just when you think he will become a ***Christian of Christians***, just as he was a ***Pharisee of Pharisees***…he hears of a plot to *end* him.
* Imagine the shock, the surprise…, *“But my points are so relevant!? My jokes are SO good!?”* **HA!** Folks are seeing the truth and coming alive…and yet, **they…hate…you**…*how humbling.* And then, the same man that was given letters of authority…certificate of approval and jurisdiction…to go into a city and act unitarily and authoritatively…is now having to exit in a very different manner…from ***riding in as a king*** to being snuck out under the cover of night ***as a criminal***. Humbling…
* Some say this was perhaps one of his greatest lessons…and I agree. In ministry and in serving the Lord, nothing matures you, humbles you…**same thing**…nothing matures you like *set-backs.* *Let downs*…and this is a **big basket let down** for Saul…and after this, I love this, he leaves the synagogues, the meetings, the venues, the mission, he leaves and goes to be alone with the Lord…

Acts Chapter 9 Verse 26

* It’s widely accepted that between verses 25 and 26 there is a span of time of about ***three years*** where Paul went to Arabia and was essentially on his own, then back down to Damascus and finally on to Jerusalem. You can read about that in Galatians Chapter 1.
* And the disciples don’t immediately let him in…notice this, **they didn’t believe him.** They didn’t believe him to be credible. They didn’t respect his conversion…and at this point Saul may have very well just gone it alone…but sometimes ***to be greatly used by God you have to love the brothers and sisters more than they are willing to love you***…***Sometimes to be a Christian, you actually have to be like Christ***…who took the cross for the people that rejected Him…

Acts Chapter 9 Verses 27 – 30

* Two quick things here…one, ***thank God for people like Barnabas***…someone who is warm and welcoming no matter what the person *looks like, has done, whatever*…I am so thankful when I see one of y’all welcoming a new person or a person who has been a couple of times and yet I haven’t been able to get to them yet…makes me so filled with joy…
* Second thing here is that after Saul is sent to Tarsus he remains there for about 10 years…there was ***such aggression*** towards him, especially in Jerusalem that the apostles decide to send him home, back to Tarsus, until things cooled off a bit…well a decade goes by…and really that decade, just like the *basket incident* probably helped to define him…from Saul the famous tyrant, to Saul the amazing story, to Saul the powerful preacher…**to Saul the unknown**…all before ever being called Paul the Apostle…

Acts Chapter 9 Verse 31

* Ain’t it the truth! Walking *(not standing still!)* in the ***fear*** of the Lord and the ***comfort*** of the Holy Spirit…**we grow up!** Fear and comfort *co-existing*…how? Because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom…not fear as in *afraid* but fear as in ***reverence and love and purity of respect***…and as you choose God over self, the Holy Spirit surges within you…and you mature…

Acts Chapter 9 Verses 32 – 35

* Now the spotlight turns back to Peter until mid way through Chapter 11 and I love this first scene…Peter is walking in his calling, what God would have him to do and he encounters…***opportunity!!*** And notice, Peter makes it very clear that it’s not *Peter with the gift of healing*, it’s not Peter *with the authority over anything*…its Jesus…**glorify Him, look to Him.**
* God said in Isaiah 42:8, *“I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another!”* Does that mean that God is on some sort of ego trip!? **Not at all.**  He just knows that if you or I glorify any man or woman, ***we will eventually be let down big time.*** He won’t share His glory because He will never allow your heart to go unprotected! And so for those that want to be greatly used by God…***is it for His glory or your own…?*** That is the key question!

Acts Chapter 9 Verses 36 – 43

* This is a great story…a great picture and awesome to read…and one of the reasons that brings me great joy is that Lydda was *someone who served others*…they wept over her, showing the wonderful clothes she had made for them…and Peter brings her back! There is something sweet and special about a person that serves others practically. ***Because there are needs everywhere and all over the place.***
* Dorcas wasn’t raised for her own sake…*she would have been fine in heaven*…she was raised for others. From death to life…***unusual and remarkable***…what Saul in your life do you believe God cannot convert? They didn’t believe it could happen with him, they didn’t believe when it happened…but we know today…***God was able and it happened***…you think you’re out of reach…talk to Saul…you think they won’t believe…talk to Saul…you want to be raised from death to life…***talk to Jesus.***