

# Crossings Connect 2024

## Day One: Conversion Acts 9:1-9; 17-19

### Large Group Summary:

- Large Group Main Theme: **Conversion: Acts 9: 1-9; 17-19**

### Large Group Main Points:

- Humans can be sorted in three groups: the unconvinced, undecided, and unashamed.
- Each group has a different perspective on the Gospel message. Some are skeptical, some are questioning but not committed, and some are committed to following Christ.
- We cannot earn right standing before God, rather he offers it to us freely if we turn to him.

### Small Group Review:

***By nature, we are all born sinners (unconvinced).***

Question: David in Psalm 51 says we are born in sin, what does this mean about our relationship with God?

Answer: No one except Jesus has ever been without a sin nature, meaning that at our heart level we desire that which is against God. We cannot be good enough to earn our salvation.

***There is no one too far from Jesus.***

Question: What is the symbolism of the “scales” falling off the eyes of Saul in Acts 9:18?

Answer: Jesus had made Saul physically blind to show him that he had been spiritually blind. When we do not have a relationship with Christ, it is like we have thick scales over our eyes that blind us to the truth of the Gospel. The more we live in our sin, the harder and harder the scales over our eyes block us from seeing Jesus. Yet, when Jesus comes and meets you through the Holy Spirit, like Saul, the scales fall off our eyes and we can see spiritual realities.

Question: What does life look like for Jesus’ sheep?

Answer: It’s a life of joy under the watchful eye of the Good Shepherd. He cares for us and protects us. His sheep are obedient to him, not because he is an abusive shepherd who beats his sheep, but because he loves them and they love him. John describes this as “life and life abundantly.”

***Jesus has a plan for your life.***

Saul in many ways was a planner, he had everything he could ever want. He was extremely well educated, a Pharisee (religious leader), he held Roman citizenship (a really big deal), spoke multiple languages (at least Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, and probably some Latin). Yet, what God had planned for Saul was so much bigger. Paul himself says he counts all of the above as garbage in Philippians 3:2-11 for the knowledge of knowing Christ as Lord.

Question: Why is it important that God has a plan for your life?

Answer: We often talk about how God is Omnipotent (all powerful), Omniscient (All knowing), and Omnipresent (everywhere all at once, all the time). God knows, sees, and has power over every aspect of our lives. Just as he said that Paul would proclaim the Gospel before Kings and

governors (something he could only do because of his Roman citizenship), and it happened. So too does God have a plan for your life. He might call you to be a missionary, a Pastor, a husband, a wife, a plumber, a secretary, or anything in-between. Yet, like Paul he is calling you to be a faithful witness wherever he sends you.

**Prayer Time:**

Open to a blank page in your Bible Study Booklet. Spend some time writing a prayer to God.

- “God, I am your sheep, you are my shepherd, and you call me by name. Thank you for protecting me and giving me life.”
- “Lord, other shepherds in my life have failed me, but I trust that you will never fail me.”
- “Help me fight the sin that is leading me astray from your path. Help me to remember that your path is the best path.”

## Day Two: Growth Galatians 1:1-24

### **Large Group Summary:**

- Large Group Main Theme: **Growth: Galatians 1:11-24**

### **Large Group Main Points:**

- Throughout our lives The Lord sanctifies us (makes us more like Christ)
- The Lord has a Plan for your life.
- When we come to Christ for salvation we are changed.

### **Small Group Review:**

#### ***What does Jesus say about himself?***

#### ***God reveals himself through the Gospel.***

Question: In verses 15 and 16, Paul says the Lord set him apart before he was even born and that the Lord “was pleased to reveal his Son to him.” How does the Lord reveal his Son to us now? Has the Lord revealed his Son to you?

Answer: When we look at the life of Paul, we see a person who even before his conversion, desired to see God glorified, yet in his sin his zealousness was misplaced. Paul’s conversion story is built around the episode from yesterday where Jesus revealed himself to Paul on the road to Damascus.

#### ***God gives us a way through the Gospel.***

Question: Do all roads lead to God? Why can’t a good Muslim go to heaven? Why can’t a faithful Jew?

Answer: The Bible tells us that no one is good (Rom 3:10-12). While we might share common morals and some beliefs with people who do not follow Christ, apart from Christ there is no way to heaven. God gives us one way to have a relationship with him, one way for sins to be forgiven, to have faith in Jesus as our savior and Lord.

Question: In John 14:6 Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.” How do we see Paul echoing this in Galatians 1:11-14?

Answer: The only way for us to be reconciled to God is through the revelation of Christ. Paul says it is not man’s gospel, nor his own, rather it is through the revealed Christ. Likewise, you and I cannot come to God unless Christ reveals himself to us.

#### ***God gives us a mission through the Gospel.***

When we look at the life of Paul following his conversion, we see a person “on fire” for God. Yesterday, we looked at Philippians 3 where Paul says his old life is like garbage for the sake of knowing Christ. Paul was given a mission by God. He says in verse 16 that Jesus revealed himself to him, so that he can preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews).

Question: What is radical about Paul’s mission?

Answer: Paul is known as the first missionary to the Gentiles, a badge he wore with honor. During the time of the Bible there were two types of people, Jews (God’s chosen people descended from Abraham) and Gentiles (those outside the family of Abraham). The Jewish

people proudly traced back their lineage to Abraham and the promise God made to him to make his descendants a great nation. Even more so, they believed that when God sent his messiah to the world, he would deliver the Jewish people from the Gentiles (he would wipe them out). Yet, God's plan was not to wipe out the Gentiles, but to save them from their sin. You and I are Gentiles who are being welcomed to join the family of God.

Question: What is God's plan for your life?

Answer: God's mission for every one of our lives can be summed up in two short phrases. To know him and to make him known. There is obviously a lot of complexities, but first and foremost God desires for us to come to a saving knowledge of him. Many of you may be in a stage where you don't know Christ as your savior and Lord. God is revealing himself to you through the faithful ministry of your church members and pastors, as well as through camp this week.

#### **TAWG:**

During your TAWG, you studied Ephesians 2:1-10 where Paul discusses who we are before Christ and who Christ makes us to be.

Question: What is grace?

Answer: Grace is the giving of undeserving favor, God the Father sent Jesus to die that we might become co-heirs of the new heavens and earth with Christ.

Question: What is mercy?

Answer: Mercy is the withholding of rightly due punishment and the granting of undeserving forgiveness. God did not have to forgive our sins; he is not required to grant mercy on us. Yet, because of his love for us, he chose to pour out the wrath we deserve on Christ so that we can become co-heirs with Christ in heaven.

Question: How should we understand works if they can't save us?

Answer: Our good works are signs of God's grace and mercy at work in us. When we come to Christ, we are a new creation, created for good works, so that the world will see Christ at work in us as we live out and share the Gospel.

#### **Prayer Time:**

Open to a blank page in your Bible Study Booklet. Spend some time writing a prayer to God.

- "God, you are holy. I thank you that when I was a child of wrath you sent your son to die for me. Help me to live each day in a way that honors you."
- "Lord, help me to fight sin in my own life that I might reflect your love greater."
- "Father, embolden me and my church with the Gospel to faithfully reach our neighbors with the Gospel."

### **Day Three: Content Romans 3:9-12,18,23**

#### **Large Group Summary:**

- Large Group Main Theme: **Content Romans 3:9-12, 18,23**

#### **Large Group Main Points:**

- What is a rebel? Rebels are dead in their sin.
- To be redeemed is to be made right with God through the Gospel.
- We must position ourselves for growth.

#### **Small Group Review:**

##### ***Sin twisted how we were created to be.***

Question: What does it mean that God made man in his image in Genesis 2?

Answer: God created Adam and Eve different than he did the rest of creation. There are a lot of views on exactly what this means, but the important aspects are: God created man to have a relationship with him, to have relationships with each other, to worship him, and to demonstrate his care over the entire universe by exercising care over his creation.

Question: How did sin effect our hearts?

Answer: In Genesis 3, Satan tempts Adam and Eve by leading them to desire to be like God. From that moment on, death entered the world, not just physical death but spiritual death. Adam and Eve and all of their descendants would continually strive to be like God while not seeking God. They desired to be the masters of their own fate, and in turn blinded themselves to God and the things of God. They became spiritually dead and apart from Christ making us alive, we will stay there.

##### ***We must be made alive.***

Question: Why is it important that God is sovereign over salvation?

Answer: Since God is sovereign over salvation, nothing can change the method, mode, of effectiveness of the Gospel. Paul would tell us that neither heights, depths, angels, or demons can separate us from the love of God. (Rom. 8:39-39). Once you are in Christ, you are eternally secured. You cannot lose your salvation because you are under his eternal rule.

Question: Why is it important that we have a responsibility in salvation?

Answer: You might have heard the term irresistible grace. What this means is that when God sends the Spirit to convict you of your sin, you will come to saving faith. You can try to “push down” this conviction deep into your soul and resist this calling, but like Jonah and many others you cannot flee the Lord. Yet, the Spirit calls us to repent, we must submit under the Lord’s reign: confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in our hearts that God raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9)

#### **TAWG:**

Today in TAWG you looked at Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 3:14-21. Paul’s desire is that the Lord would strengthen the church, to be deeply rooted in Christ.

Question: How can we be deeply rooted in Christ?

Answer: Trees don't sprout up over night, they take years and years of cultivation. Like a tree we must spend years and years seeking to grow our roots into God's Word. We do this through reading and studying the Bible, hearing the Bible faithfully preached, praying, meditating, and memorizing scripture.

**Prayer Time:**

Open to a blank page in your Bible Study Booklet. Spend some time writing a prayer to God.

- "God, you are good and loving. I thank you that you know me by name and that you you're your Spirit to earth to work in our lives."
- "Lord help me to be deeply rooted in Christ."
- "Help me to have a deep desire to know and study your word, that I may seek to know the unknowable depths of your love."

## **Day Four: Call: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20**

### **Large Group Summary:**

- Large Group Main Theme: **Call: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20**

### **Small Group Review:**

#### ***God calls us to something.***

Question: What is God calling us to?

Answer: First God calls you to be reconciled to him through Jesus, who is “reconciling the world to himself.” Second, God calls you to be his ambassador. Ambassadors represent their home countries in places other than where their citizenship belongs. St. Augustine understood this as the City of God and the city of man, with Christians belonging to the city of God. Their primary allegiance is not to the place where they physically dwell now. Rather, their citizenship is held in God’s eternal kingdom. Yet, they live here on earth as God’s representatives, calling those who still belong to the cities of man in darkness to be reconciled to God.

Question: How does God make his appeal through us?

Answer: You may have heard the misquote, “Preach the Gospel, use words if necessary”. While this is not a valid means for gospel sharing, there is an aspect of this we can keep. See, we are not saved by our works, nor will others be saved by seeing our works. All who come to know Jesus as Lord have heard and read the Gospel message. The Spirit convicts them as the Gospel is linguistically communicated from one person to another. Yet, our works aren’t worthless, people will see the way that we live and wonder why we live that way. They may see Christian marriages, community support, joy in suffering and hardship, and other aspects of the Gospel lived out. As we grow in Christlikeness, we begin to live out his teachings. People notice and gospel opportunities are afforded to us.

#### ***God sends us somewhere.***

We have already acknowledged that not everyone is called to be a missionary. Yet, the Great Commission is for everyone. God is not only calling you, but sending you out to a dark, dying world to show the light of Christ. If you are in Christ, you are a soldier in a great spiritual conflict. The war was won by Christ on the cross, Satan has no power over you, he cannot do anything to you outside the will of God. At the end of Matthew 28 Jesus seals his marching orders for the church to take the gospel to the nations by saying, He is with us even to the end of the age! The question for you is, where is the Lord asking you to be a faithful witness of him right now?

#### ***We implore you!***

Paul pleads at the end of our verses today. He says, “We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (20). The Gospel requires response. You in hearing this today are responding either positively or negatively to what is being said. Either you feel convicted by your sin and are ready to submit your life to Christ, or you don’t. Saying things like I’ll do it later when I’m older,

or I don't need this, or not yet is to deny the gospel message. Yet, we implore you to be reconciled to Christ! Likewise, when you share the Gospel, you should implore those you share with to do the same.

Question: Why does Paul use the word implore?

Answer: To implore is to strongly plea with someone Paul is not casually saying "check this out." His plan is not to "get around to it" after becoming good friends. Paul is saying, "COME TO CHRIST, SUBMIT UNDER HIM, HAVE YOUR SINS FORGIVEN NOW!" The Bible tells us that hell is a very real place where God's wrath will be poured out upon all those who did not have faith in Christ for eternity. Jesus often describes it as a place of utter darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Sin brings a serious punishment.

A way I like to describe it is this; if I slap my best friend what happens? Maybe I get slapped back, we go get some food and we're good. I go slap a cop, what happens? I'm getting arrested, placed in jail, maybe roughed up a bit on the way. I decide that I am going to go to Saudi Arabia and slap the crown prince, what happens? I'm dead. See the sin is the same, but the person I sinned against is very different. With each higher tier of authority, the punishment for my sin increases. How much worse is the punishment for sinning against God, the ultimate authority?

**TAWG:**

Today in TAWG you looked at Paul's description of how we as new creations in Christ should live.

Question: How do we become a new creation?

Answer: First, we accept the Gospel. Our sin had separated us from God, creating a void we could never cross. Yet, in God's deep incomprehensible love for us, He sent His Son to die for you. Even more so, He rose back from the dead by His own power. So that those who believe in Him are free from the punishment of hell they rightfully deserve. Secondly, Jesus promises in John 14 that those who follow him are filled by the Spirit of God, so that they may be reminded of his teachings and guide them as they seek to proclaim his name to the lost.

**Prayer Time:**

Open to a blank page in your Bible Study Booklet. Spend some time writing a prayer to God.

- "Lord, thank you for making me a new creation, help my life to be a reflection of that."
- "God, thank you for calling me to be a part of your mission to save the lost. Help me to be a faithful witness."
- "God, I submit my life to you, lead me and send me where you will call me. Take my desires and make them yours."



## Day Five: Commission: 2 Cor. 4:1-12 (SKYCROFT ONLY)

### **Large Group Summary:**

- Large Group Main Theme: **Commission: 2 Cor. 4:1-12**

### **Large Group Main Points:**

- We all have a next step.
- Jesus has given us a commission.
- We join in a fellowship of the saints before and after us.

Question: How should it make us feel to know Christ is with us when we share the gospel?

Answer: This should be one of our greatest comforts and motivations to know that the God of the universe is present with us as we seek to live and do according to his will.

### **Small Group Review:**

Question: What does Paul mean when he says we should not lose heart?

Answer: Paul does not want our identities as Christians to lose the potency it once had. It is easy for us to let our passions shift from one thing to another: maybe you used to love a certain game, or a restaurant, a type of app or technology until you found a new one. It's okay for our interest to change in some things, but Paul wants our deepest unchanging desire to be on Christ and his mission.

### ***We are given a message of great importance.***

Question: Why does Paul say in verse 2 that we have renounced certain ways of life and refuse to tamper with God's word? How does this shape the way we share the Gospel?

Answer: If I tell you I am going to do something and do the opposite, that makes me not only a hypocrite, but a person you would find very hard to trust with any task in the future. The two-edge sword Paul is using here first tells us we ought to live like Christians because we have repented of these sins. Why would you believe me that Christ changed my life if my life can still be defined as disgraceful and underhanded? We do not try to use tricks or change God's word to get people to believe. We cannot affirm what God hates to get people in, then hope to change them. Rather, we **lovingly** confront them where they are, showing their sin and appealing to them to be changed by the Gospel.

### ***We are to be bold in our weakness.***

Question: In what ways are we weak?

Answer: Becoming a Christian does not mean that we will be free from sin in this life. It does not mean that we won't get sick, injured, or other bad things won't happen to us. Clay is not the prettiest material to use. It's hard to work with, it cracks easy, but it serves a purpose, especially in the times of the Bible. We will sin, let fear and doubt stop us from sharing when we should have, and struggle with anxiety, fear, and depression. Yet, like the humble clay pot, we can hold an immense treasure. Jesus promises to be with us, to empower us, to lead us, to love us, and to forgive us.

Question: How can we be bold in our weakness?

Answer: Perfection is nearly an impossible goal in most areas of life. We could write better, love others better, know more, do more, it goes on and on. Paul later in the same book is going to say that he “boast all the more gladly in his weakness” because it shows the power of Christ (2 Cor. 12:9). Once we realize that we are imperfect people emboldened by the Spirit seeking to reach imperfect people with the perfect message of Jesus Christ, there is little we can’t achieve for the Kingdom of God.

***We will persevere though suffering.***

Question: Why must we experience suffering in the Christian life?

Answer: Suffering is a part of the fall; one could argue that suffering and death are a part of human nature in this world. The atheist Karl Marx argues that “all living things suffer.” Christ himself suffered on our behalf. The promise of the Gospel has never been that we would be free from immediate suffering. Rather the call of the Gospel is a call to live and a call to die making Christ name known. It is then that the God welcomes us into heaven where pain and suffering will be no more.

**TAWG:**

Today in TAWG you looked at Paul’s description of the Armor of God.

Question: Why is it important that we put on the full armor of God every day?

Answer: It is said that many of the great puritan believers would pray each morning as they got dressed for the corresponding component of the armor of God. Their shirts became breastplates of righteousness and so on. We need to daily seek to put on this armor. We live in a state of spiritual warfare with an enemy who seeks to exploit our weaknesses. We need to seek daily and constant protection as we seek to fight sin and share the Gospel with others.

**Prayer Time:**

Open to a blank page in your Bible Study Booklet. Spend some time writing a prayer to God.

- “Father, help me to seek you daily that I might put on your full armor.”
- “Help me to find strength in my weakness, because you are with me.”
- “Help me to be bold as I share your incorruptible love with those around me.”