

# The Jefferson Spirit

Sundays at 9:00AM

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## When God Turns the Story Around

**Acts 9:1–6** recounts the powerful conversion of Saul, a fierce persecutor of Christians, who is stopped on the road to Damascus by a blinding light from heaven. In that moment, Jesus speaks to him, asking, "Why are you persecuting me?" Saul, stunned and humbled, begins a dramatic transformation from enemy of the faith to one of its greatest apostles. **Psalms 30** echoes the spirit of this transformation, celebrating God's deliverance and mercy with the words, "You turned my mourning into dancing." Together, these passages highlight the themes of redemption, divine intervention, and the hope of renewal, even from the darkest places.

## Scripture Reading: Act 9: 1-6 (NIV)

### Saul's Conversion

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 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. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

### Psalm 30

A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple of David.

1 I will exalt you, Lord,  
for you lifted me out of the depths  
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.  
2 Lord my God, I called to you for help,  
and you healed me.  
3 You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;  
you spared me from going down to the pit.  
4 Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;  
praise his holy name.  
5 For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may stay for the night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.  
6 When I felt secure, I said,  
"I will never be shaken."

7 Lord, when you favored me,  
you made my royal mountain stand firm;  
but when you hid your face,  
I was dismayed.

8 To you, Lord, I called;  
to the Lord I cried for mercy:

9 "What is gained if I am silenced,  
if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise you?  
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

10 Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me;  
Lord, be my help."

11 You turned my wailing into dancing;  
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,

12 that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.

Lord my God, I will praise you forever.





## Interesting Facts about Acts 9:1–6

### 1. Saul Was Not Seeking Jesus—Jesus Sought Saul

- Saul wasn't on a spiritual journey. He was on a mission to arrest Christians.
- This highlights the truth that **God's grace pursues us**, even when we're resisting Him.

### 2. "The Way" Was the Earliest Name for Christians

- Before they were called "Christians," followers of Jesus were known as "The Way" (v.2).
- This name reflected Jesus' words in John 14:6 — *"I am the Way..."* — and emphasized that Christianity was a **lifestyle**, not just a belief system.

### 3. Jesus Says, "Why Are You Persecuting Me?"

- Jesus doesn't ask, "Why are you persecuting my people?"—He says, "Why are you persecuting **me**?"
- This shows how intimately **Jesus identifies with His followers**. When the Church suffers, **He feels it personally**.

### 4. The Light Was Literal and Symbolic

- Saul is surrounded by a **bright light from heaven**—a classic symbol of God's presence in Scripture (Exodus 3, Daniel 10).
- But it's also **spiritual symbolism**: Saul, once walking in the "light" of religious law, is now **truly confronted by divine truth**.

### 5. Saul's Companions Hear the Voice, But Don't Understand

- Acts 9:7 notes that others heard the sound but didn't see or comprehend the full vision.
- This reinforces that God's call is often **personal** and not always **fully grasped by others** around us.

### 6. Blindness Marks the Start of Sight

- Saul is physically blinded (v.8), yet for the first time, he begins to truly see spiritually.
- His blindness humbles him and **prepares him to be led**, not to lead—key for his transformation.

### 7. The Conversion of Saul is So Important—It's Told Three Times

- The story of Saul's conversion is told **three times** in Acts: Chapter 9 (narrative), Chapter 22 (Paul's testimony), and Chapter 26 (before King Agrippa).
- This repetition underscores how **foundational** this moment is to the early Church.

### 8. Jesus Doesn't Explain—He Commands

- Jesus tells Saul *"Get up and go... and you will be told what to do."*
- Instead of a full plan, Saul receives a **step of obedience**. That's often how faith works—**trust without a blueprint**.

### 9. This Is the Birthplace of Paul's Mission

- This brief encounter is the **turning point** of Christian history.
- The man who tried to destroy the church becomes its **greatest missionary and theologian**.

### 10. It Mirrors Other Biblical Callings

- The double name "Saul, Saul," and the fall to the ground reflect other major callings:
- *"Moses, Moses"* (Exodus 3:4)
- *"Samuel, Samuel"* (1 Samuel 3:10)
- Each moment represents a **divine calling with destiny attached**.

## Interesting Facts about Psalm 30 (NIV)

### 1. It's a Psalm of David—but also Tied to the Temple

- The superscription says: *"A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple. Of David."*
- This is curious because **David never built the temple**—his son Solomon did.
- Most scholars believe David wrote this **in anticipation** of the temple or perhaps for the dedication of the **site** he prepared (1 Chronicles 22:1).

### 2. It's a Personal Testimony of Healing

- David speaks of being lifted from "the realm of the dead" (v.3), suggesting he faced a **life-threatening illness** or spiritual despair.
- This psalm reads like a **journal entry after a crisis**—raw, grateful, and transformed.

### 3. It Contains the Famous Verse: "Weeping May Stay for the Night..."

- Verse 5: *"Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."*
- One of the **most quoted verses** in Scripture—offering hope that sorrow is **temporary**, and joy will rise again.

### 4. David Owns His Pride—and God's Discipline

- In verse 6, David admits: *"When I felt secure, I said, 'I will never be shaken.'"*
- He realizes his success made him proud—and when God hid His face, David was undone.
- This is a reminder that **security apart from God is fragile**.

### 5. It Transitions from Plea to Praise

- The structure moves from desperation to thanksgiving:
- **Verses 1–3:** Testimony of deliverance.
- **Verses 4–5:** Call to worship.
- **Verses 6–10:** Honest confession and prayer.
- **Verses 11–12:** Celebration and joy.

### 6. The Imagery of Clothing is Symbolic

- *"You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy" (v.11)*
- In Hebrew culture, sackcloth was worn in mourning.
- God doesn't just remove sorrow—He **replaces it** with joy, like a fresh garment.

### 7. It's Meant to Be Sung Publicly

- It's called both a **"psalm"** and a **"song,"** suggesting it was written for **corporate worship**.
- David wanted others to join in thanking God—he turned his **private victory** into a **public praise**.

### 8. It Links Deeply with Resurrection Themes

- David speaks of being **brought up from the pit** (v.3), **restored to life**, and **not going down to the grave**.
- These phrases echo resurrection hope—and are often seen as **prophetic foreshadowing** of Christ's victory over death.

### 9. God's Anger is Real—but His Favor Lasts Longer

*"His anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime." (v.5)*

## Bible Quiz: "When God Turns the Story Around"

### Based on Acts 9:1–6 and Psalm 30

1. What was Saul doing at the beginning of Acts 9?

- A. Writing letters to the churches
- B. Traveling to Jerusalem to pray
- C. Breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples
- D. Preaching the gospel in Damascus

2. What group were early Christians referred to as in Acts 9:2?

- A. Believers
- B. Followers
- C. Disciples
- D. The Way

3. Where was Saul going when he encountered the bright light?

- A. Jerusalem
- B. Bethlehem
- C. Damascus
- D. Galilee

4. What caused Saul to fall to the ground?

- A. A Roman guard
- B. A violent wind
- C. A light from heaven
- D. An earthquake

5. What question did Jesus ask Saul during the encounter?

- A. "Why are you going to Damascus?"
- B. "Do you believe in Me?"
- C. "Why do you persecute Me?"
- D. "Who are you looking for?"

6. What happened to Saul's vision after the encounter?

- A. He could see perfectly
- B. He was blinded
- C. He had a vision of angels
- D. He fainted



7. In Psalm 30, David says, "Weeping may stay for the night..." — what comes in the morning?

- A. Healing
- B. Peace
- C. Joy
- D. Wisdom

8. What type of clothing does David say God removed from him?

- A. His royal robes
- B. His armor
- C. Sackcloth
- D. Shepherd's cloak

9. According to Psalm 30, how long does God's anger last?

- A. Forever
- B. Until we repent
- C. Only a moment
- D. A thousand years

10. True or False: Psalm 30 was written for the dedication of the temple.

- A. True
- B. False

### Answer Key

- 1. **C** – Breathing out murderous threats
- 2. **D** – The Way
- 3. **C** – Damascus
- 4. **C** – A light from heaven
- 5. **C** – "Why do you persecute Me?"
- 6. **B** – He was blinded
- 7. **C** – Joy
- 8. **C** – Sackcloth
- 9. **C** – Only a moment
- 10. **A** – True

- **Genesis 2:7** when God breathed life into Adam. This symbolizes **new spiritual life** through the Holy Spirit.
- **This is the first time the disciples are sent** — Jesus commissions them ("As the Father has sent me, I am sending you") even *before* Pentecost.
- **The phrase "Receive the Holy Spirit" is unique here** — it's a **personal, quiet empowerment** compared to the **public outpouring** at Pentecost (Acts 2).

### John 20:19–31 Quiz

**1. Where were the disciples when Jesus appeared to them?**

- a) In the temple
- b) On a mountain
- c) Behind locked doors
- d) Fishing by the sea

**2. What was the disciples' emotional state before Jesus appeared?**

- a) Excited
- b) Fearful
- c) Confused but joyful
- d) Angry

**3. What were Jesus' first words to the disciples?**

- a) "Why are you afraid?"
- b) "Peace be with you."
- c) "Do you believe in Me?"
- d) "Follow Me."

**4. What did Jesus show them to prove it was really Him?**

- a) His eyes and feet
- b) His scars and His side
- c) His robe and His sandals
- d) His crown of thorns

**5. What did Jesus do to the disciples after saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"?**

- a) Touched their heads
- b) Breathed on them
- c) Anointed them with oil
- d) Gave them a scroll

**6. Which disciple was not present when Jesus first appeared?**

- a) Peter
- b) John
- c) Thomas
- d) James

**7. What did Thomas say he needed to do in order to believe?**

- a) Hear Jesus speak
- b) See the empty tomb again
- c) Touch Jesus' scars
- d) Pray for a sign

**8. How many days later did Jesus appear again, this time for Thomas?**

- a) Three days
- b) Seven days
- c) Eight days
- d) Forty days

**9. What was Thomas' declaration when he saw Jesus?**

- a) "You are alive!"
- b) "I believe!"
- c) "My Lord and my God!"
- d) "Teacher, forgive me!"

**10. Why did John say he wrote his Gospel?**

- a) To prove Jesus' miracles
- b) To explain prophecy
- c) So that readers may believe Jesus is the Christ
- d) To preserve the disciples' stories

### Answer Key

1–c, 2–b, 3–b, 4–b, 5–b, 6–c, 7–c, 8–c, 9–c, 10–c.

## Order of Worship

Welcome

Opening Prayer

\*Call to Worship (Congregation)

Leader:

Come, all who have walked hard roads and long nights—  
God is calling us to new light and new life.

**People:**

**We were once blind to His presence—  
But now we see the grace that meets us on the road.**

Leader:

God has turned our mourning into dancing,  
Our fear into faith, our weeping into joy.

**People:**

**This is the day the Lord has made—  
We will rejoice and be glad in it!**

Leader:

Let us worship the God who turns stories around,  
Who meets us where we are and calls us by name.

**All Together:**

**With open hearts and ready praise, we come to worship the risen Christ!**

Children's Message

**\*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven, p.66 UMC Hymnal**

**Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-6 & Psalm 30**

**Sermon: When God Turns the Story Around**

Offertory - UMC Choir

\*Doxology - p.95 UMC Hymnal

**Hallelujah What a Savior, p.165 UMC Hymnal**

**The Great Thanksgiving**

Pastor:

"The Lord be with you."

**Congregation:**

**"And also with you."**

Pastor:

"Lift up your hearts."

**Congregation:**

**"We lift them up to the Lord."**

Pastor:

"Let us give thanks to the Lord our God."

**Congregation:**

**"It is right to give our thanks and praise."**

Pastor:

"It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. We give you thanks for your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, who took upon himself our sin and suffering, offering us new life and hope."

"On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: 'Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to his disciples, and said: 'Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us."

## **Communion**

**\*Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies, p.173 UMC Hymnal**

Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**Forgive us, Lord.**

**Breathe Your Spirit into us again.**

**Open our hearts to Your presence.**

**Set us free to believe, to love, and to be sent in Your name.**

**Amen.**

\*Sending Forth

Postlude



## Sermon Insights

### Sermon Lesson:

This week's sermon reminded us that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. In Acts 9:1–6, we saw how Saul, once a fierce persecutor of the Church, was stopped in his tracks by the risen Christ and called into a new life. His story, paired with the hope of Psalm 30, shows us that even in our darkest moments, God is still writing redemptive endings. Whether we're blinded by pride, pain, or the past, God offers light, direction, and joy that comes in the morning. When we trust Him with our steps, He turns our sorrow into purpose and our trials into testimonies.

### Application:

#### 1. Trust God with Your Turning Point

Just as Saul was stopped and redirected by Jesus, we, too, must be open to moments when God interrupts our plans. Whether it's a crisis, a change, or a calling, trust that God's detours are filled with purpose—and that He sees the bigger picture even when we don't.

#### 2. Don't Let the Darkness Define You

Psalm 30 reminds us that “weeping may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning.” Whatever season of sorrow or struggle you're in, hold on—God is not finished. His favor lasts longer than your pain, and your story isn't over yet.

#### 3. Follow the Next Step, Even if You Can't See the Whole Path

Jesus didn't tell Saul everything—He just told him to “go.” Sometimes faith looks like obedience without full understanding. If God is prompting your heart, take that next faithful step. He will lead you from there.

### Conclusion:

God is still in the business of turning lives around. Just as He met Saul on the road to Damascus with grace and power, He meets us in our own moments of blindness, pride, or pain—not to condemn, but to call us forward into purpose. Psalm 30 reminds us that God can lift us from the depths, clothe us with joy, and give us a new song to sing. Whatever your story has been, it's not the end. With God, every ending is the beginning of something new—and your morning of joy may be closer than you think.

**Upcoming Events:**

May 8 - 7PM Administrative Council Meeting

May 10 - 9AM Prayer Meeting at JUMC

May 11 - 10AM May Birthday Celebration

May 17 - 3-5 Paint Day - advance reservations needed

June 8 - 10AM June Birthday Celebration

June 14 - 9 AM Prayer Meeting at JUMC

June 22-26 - 6-8:30 PM Vacation Bible School at JUMC

July 12 - 9AM Prayer Meeting at JUMC

July 13 - 10AM July Birthday Celebration

**Prayer Requests:**

Carol Waple has asked for prayers for Barbara Morgan, who has pancreatic cancer.

Doris Branch has asked for prayers for Greg Duda, who has been diagnosed with Glioblastoma and prayers for Chad Lewis as he is having some health issues.

**Paint Day Fundraiser**

Our next paint day fundraiser will be a Patriotic Jar Bouquet and will be held on Saturday, May 17, 2025 from 3-5 at the church. Invite your family, friends and co-workers to come out and enjoy a day of socializing and fun. Cost is \$25.00 - all materials will be provided. For questions or to RSVP please see Jessica Trimble or Annaliese Moats.

