Paul's Conversion

The Apostle Paul recounts the day of his conversion, the day he was saved from his sins, in Acts 22:16-12-16. "Ananias... came to me... and said to me, Brother Saul... then he said, God has chosen you that you should know his will... you will be His witness of what you have seen and heard... now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Paul's declaration helps us understand exactly when salvation came into his life.

Some believe that Paul was saved while traveling on the road to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him (Acts 9:1-9). The belief being that the experience itself is what saved Paul (Saul). Some see this meeting with Jesus as a joyous occasion for Paul (Saul), but the context seems to read much differently. Paul (Saul) was "trembling and astonished" (Acts 9:6), seemingly scared. Jesus did not appear to save Paul (Saul), but rather to instruct him on what he was to do (Acts 26:15-16).

There are some who believe that Paul (Saul) was saved when he addressed Jesus for who He is - "Lord." This assertion is made because in Paul's recount of the story he uses the phrase, "Calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). If Paul were saved when he recognized Jesus for being Lord, then Jesus obviously did not realize Paul/Saul was saved (And, Jesus made no mistakes). Jesus tells Paul (Saul) to go into the city and he will be told what to do (Acts 9:6). Recognizing or calling upon Jesus, then and now, is simply not enough for one to be saved (consider Matthew 7:21-23). (Please notice that calling on the name of the Lord came after the instruction to have his sins washed away in baptism.)

Then there are those who believe that Paul (Saul) was saved because he prayed (Acts 9:11). There is a commercial on TV where a popular denominational preacher tells those listening to "pray this prayer with me... and Jesus will come into your life and forgive your sins." If all Paul had to do was pray his way into a proper relationship with Jesus and God, why does Ananias (Acts 9:10) arrive to find Paul praying, and stop him from praying? The context helps us understand that Paul (Saul) was praying and apparently not eating as he is most distressed (Acts 9:19). Paul is not going to be saved until he does what he is told to do by Ananias.

If Paul (Saul) was saved before Ananias arrived, why does it appear that Paul is in physical distress? If Paul was saved before Ananias arrived, obviously Ananias did not realize it either, because it is Ananias who will tell him what he must to get himself right in the eyes of Jesus and God. "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16, 9:18). The example of Saul who becomes the Apostle Paul (Acts 9 and 22) help us understand is the steps necessary for one to be saved:

1. Believe (Paul believed it was Jesus speaking to him),
2. Confess (Paul recognized Jesus, calling Him Lord),
3. Repent (Paul prayed and waited to be told what he must do),
4. Baptism (Immediately, Paul was baptized for the remission of his sins).

The example and description given of what saved Paul is simple and clear. The question we need to each ask our self is, "Am I saved according to the example of Paul?" Follow Saul's (Paul's) example and make your life right with your Savior and your God.