

First Church – Part 9

Acts 9:1-5 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

I. Review Acts 8

A. The Great Diaspora

B. The Life of Philip

1. The ministry of Philip – Bringing people to Jesus

C. Samaria

1. The city believed

2. The city was baptized

3. Received the Holy Ghost

D. Ethiopian

1. Philip again emphasized baptism

2. Winning key people

- II. On the road to Damascus

- A. Saul persecuting the church

1. Saul was there at the death of Stephen
 2. The church had left Jerusalem, and so Saul was willing to go after them to Damascus
 3. Notice that Saul was looking for both men and women
 - a) Women were active in ministry in the early church
 4. Saul got his letters and left to go find the Christians

- B. Saul sees the light

1. This is very similar to the burning bush experience of Moses
 - a) A bright light
 - b) A voice speaking to him
 2. Also similar to John in Revelation

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

3. An encounter with the living God ought to cause us to humble ourselves
 4. When we enter the presence of God, there is no room for ego or pride
 - a) We must approach God in humility

b) This was the opposite of the way that Saul had been approaching God before. Before he was self absorbed in his work against Christians.

(1) Saul asked for the letters. The high priest did not ask him to go.

(2) Saul was convinced that he was the one meant to stamp out Christianity.

C. It was after the voice, that Saul realized he did not “know” the Lord

1. Who are you Lord?

a) I really don’t know you.

(1) An encounter with God can cause us to examine our relationship with Him.

(2) Do we just know about God? Or do we actually know Him? Can we recognize His voice when He calls us?

D. I am Jesus

1. What a shock that must have been for Saul

a) I thought I was defending you from heresy

b) But I really was fighting against you

E. Hard to kick against the pricks

1. Talking about the staff with spikes used to herd oxen or cattle.

a) The pricks would be used to make the animal go where it was supposed to go.

b) But kicking against the pricks could cause damage to the animal’s leg

2. Saul had been fighting against the leading of God.
 - a) He had heard the words of Stephen.
 - b) He had seen the attitude of Stephen at his trial.
 - c) He had seen the death of Stephen.
 - (1) None of these things had impacted Saul's life the way that they should have.
 - d) So now God was making His will known in a stronger way.
3. God leads us through things that happen around us
 - a) If we do not "listen or respond" to these prodding's then God has to use stronger things to get our attention
 - (1) Sometimes in the middle of our trial we need to stop and say, "What is it that you wanted me to hear God?"

Acts 9:6-9 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

F. What should I do?

1. When we recognize the voice of God, our response should be “What do you want me to do?”

a) If God has taken the time to get your attention it is so he can tell you something.

b) Some people go through their Damascus road experience but never ask the important question. What should I do?

(1) I want God’s direction in my life

2. Though Saul was now physically blind, his spiritual sight was better than ever

a) Saul had been blind to the prodding’s of Jesus Christ

b) Now his spiritual eyes had been opened.

c) God told him to go into the city and so that is what he did.

(1) He could not get there himself he had to have help

(2) Sometimes doing the will of God, takes cooperation.

d) Saul entered into a time of fasting and prayer.

(1) Saul waited. Saul had done what God had told him to do. But he still had to wait on God’s timing.

III. Paul’s Conversion

Acts 9:10-16 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

A. The disciple Ananias

1. Recognized the voice of God
2. Was willing to respond
3. God tells him to go to Saul
 - a) This is the same God that was there at the death of Stephen
 - b) This is the guy that has letters to throw Christians in jail
 - c) God, are you sure? There's nothing wrong with asking God questions.
 - d) But when God answers the questions it's time to go
4. Ananias gets a glimpse of Saul's future.

- a) Seeing beyond the present into the potential of people

Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

B. Did what God asked

1. Even though he was not sure, he followed the voice of God
2. Ananias was not an apostle, or pastor, just a disciple. A regular saint
3. Called him Brother Saul. He accepted Saul even before the conversion process was completed.
4. Saul was baptized. In Jesus name- because that is how he told others to be baptized.

- a) Received the Holy Ghost as well.

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all

5. We will never hear about Ananias again

- a) He witnessed to one guy, but that one guy became the greatest soul winner. Who knows what the Bible study that you teach might bring about?

Acts 9:20-22 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

IV. The ministry of Saul

A. Saul preaches Jesus

1. Saul's first response to conversion is to go out and witness.
 - a) Once you're saved. Go out and save someone else
2. Saul went to the synagogue
 - a) He preached to those that he knew
 - b) Go to those that know you and tell them about what's happened to you.
3. Saul proved Christ
 - a) He was a learned man. He used his knowledge to convince others about Jesus Christ.

Acts 9:23-27 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus

B. Saul's persecution begins

1. The same people that had been willing to support him before now wanted to kill him
2. The people that he wanted to kill before were willing to support him now.
 - a) Paul escaped in a basket down the wall
 - b) This is only the first of many persecutions that Paul will suffer

C. Saul comes to Jerusalem

1. He wanted to join the church, but they were afraid of him
 - a) The church had trouble believing his conversion
2. But here comes Barnabas.
 - a) Barnabas endorsed Saul to the church at Jerusalem
 - b) It is interesting to note that Barnabas believed in Saul so strongly that he was willing to travel with him.
 - (1) The past is the past. When a person is converted we must completely embrace them as a brother or sister.
 - (2) The past has consequences, but they should not

derail the future of an individual

Acts 9:33-35 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

V. Two miracles of Peter

A. Peter found a certain man

1. Peter went there looking for this guy
2. Peter came to deliver God's healing virtue
 - a) This guy had been waiting for 8 years. But when it was God's time, he immediately rose out of the bed.
3. The miracle was seen by the city and caused faith to rise.
 - a) When God blesses you don't keep it to yourself
 - b) Let your testimony be known to others.

Acts 9:36-43 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that

Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

B. The death of Tabitha

1. Good lady – bad things can happen to good people
2. But they sent for Peter – Peter had healed the sick, but not raised the dead
 - a) God stretches us outside our comfort zone
3. They showed him all the good things that Tabitha had done
 - a) Then Peter kicked out all of the mourners
 - b) This is a mirror of the resurrection of Jairus's daughter.

Mark 5 & Luke 8

- (1) Peter repeated what he had seen Jesus say and do
- (2) We should repeat what we have seen Jesus say

and do

4. Again this testimony is spread throughout the city, which causes more believers.
5. Peter remains in Joppa. Which sets up Acts 10.