

Paul is Called & Commissioned

Acts 9 v 1-22

Context:

We saw in last week's study that, in his reminder to the Corinthians of the historical facts of the Gospel, he includes his own humbling and startling experience of seeing the resurrected Christ. In today's study we get a ring side seat to witness this extraordinary encounter which irreversibly altered the course of Paul's life. Back in Acts 7 we see Paul (his Hebrew was 'Saul') overseeing the mob execution of a young disciple of Jesus called Stephen. This shocking act of terror led to an outbreak of persecution against the believers in Jerusalem, most of whom fled for their own safety, carrying the Gospel message with them. Acts 8 v 3 tells us: 'But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.' Little did Saul/Paul know that he was about to be gloriously ambushed by Jesus himself. Let's join him on the road and see what happened.

Observation:

1. How is Saul described in v 1a?
2. What did he do in v 1b-2?
3. What did he see as he neared Damascus (v 3)?
4. How did he react and what did he hear (v 4)?
5. What question did Saul ask and what was the answer (v 5)?
6. What instruction did he then receive (v 6)?
7. What was the reaction of Saul's travelling companions and why (v 7)?
8. What was the physical effect on Saul of this encounter and how did his companions help him (v 8)?
9. How long did this physical effect last (v 9)?
10. Who did the Lord speak to next (v 10)?
11. What was he told in v 11-12?
12. What was his reaction in v 13-14?
13. What was the Lord's response in v 15-16?
14. What did he then do and say in v 17 and what was the effect on Saul in v 18-19a?
15. What did Saul then do in v 19b-20 and what was the reaction in v 21?
16. How is Saul described in v 22?

Meaning:

1. What do you think was Saul's motivation for his actions in v 1-2? Why did he hate Jesus and his followers so intensely?
2. We now call our faith 'Christianity', but in the early days of the church after the resurrection of Jesus the movement was called 'the Way' (see v 2). Why do you think this name was used and in what ways is it appropriate (see Isaiah 35 v 1-10 [especially v 8-10], John 14 v 1-6)?
3. What is the connection between Jesus and light (v 3) – see John 8 v 12, Matthew 17 v 1-5, John 1 v 1-5 & 14, 1 John 1 v 5.
4. Saul was persecuting the Church/Christians, so what do Jesus' words in v 4-5 indicate about the relationship between Jesus and his followers?
5. Why do you think this encounter caused Saul to become blind (v 8-9) and what does this indicate about the identity of Jesus – see Exodus 33 v 18-23.

6. What do you think was the significance of the length of time Saul was blind (v 9)?
7. Can you sympathise with Ananias' initial response to the Lord's command in v 10-14? How would you have reacted?
8. Saul's conversion was also his commission to be a missionary for Jesus (v 15). Why do you think God chose a man like Saul to be his messenger? – see 1 Timothy 1 v 15-16.
9. What do you think of Jesus' words at the end of v 16 about the future suffering of Saul? Why would Jesus show Saul this and why would he allow Saul to suffer as his messenger? (for a summary of Saul's suffering see 2 Corinthians 11 v 22-33 & 12 v 7-10).
10. Saul received the Holy Spirit and was baptised in water after Ananias prayed for him. Why is baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit so important for those who come to faith in Jesus?
11. Saul immediately began preaching the good news that Jesus is the Son of God (v 20) and the Messiah (v 22). Why do you think he changed his mind so quickly? What was it about knowing that Jesus did really rise from the dead that convinced him of the truth of Jesus' identity?

Application:

1. To what extent and in what ways, like Saul, is our *conversion* also our *commission* to be servants of Jesus?
2. In what ways might we suffer for our faith, as Saul did?
3. What encouragement can we take from the conversion of a man like Saul?

Pray:

- Thank God for Saul's conversion.
- Thank God for your own salvation.
- Pray for those you know who are not yet followers of Jesus.