



Bethany Bible Study & Discussion:

Acts 9 (Part I)

A Persecutor becomes a Preacher

Wednesdays
7.30-8.30PM

- **Note**, using Paul throughout (instead of Saul & Paul) to keep the names consistent
- **Acts 9:1-31** Paul's mission(1-2): Who is Paul? Where was Paul headed and why? What were Christians called then? The Great Encounter (3-9): Who confronts Paul and how? What did the Lord ask him? What were Paul's two questions? How does the Lord encounter us today? Ananias meets Paul (10-17): Who was Ananias and what was his role? Why did he hesitate? Paul's ministry begins (20-31) What did Paul preach? What made Paul a great apologetic? How did Jews react to Paul? How did disciples react to Paul? Paul's Changed Life & New Mission (1-31): List some of amazing transformational changes in Paul following his conversion; Conclusion: What can we learn from the conversion of Paul?
- **Related readings**: Acts 22:1-16, 26: 12-19

Paul: The man & his (old) mission

Acts 9:1-2, Acts 22:3-5

Who is Paul? Where was Paul headed and why?

What were Christians called then?

Introducing Paul ...

The MAN, ACTS 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel (great Jewish teacher) and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today” also **Philippians 3:5,6**

The MISSION ACTS 22:4 | persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,

Well educated + Passionate for God

(dangerous combination, if the mission is not right!)

Paul's Journey ... Damascus <-> Jerusalem



Christians known as followers of
“This Way”

John 14:6 “Jesus answered, I am the way ...”

Not sure how Paul traveled. But willingness to travel demonstrates his zeal! ... how many of us will travel 400 miles (round trip) to fulfill the great commission?



Paul's 'light & sound' Encounter

Acts 9:3-9

Acts 22: 6-16

Acts 26:13-18

- Who confronts Paul and how?
- How bright was the light?
- Did Paul 'see' Jesus in physical, resurrected form?
- What did the Lord say?
- What were Paul's two questions?
- What was *probably* Paul's first comprehensive exposure to gospel?
- How does the Lord encounter us today?

Paul encounters Lord Jesus via Sound & Light

- Great light from Heaven @ noon time (Acts 22:6), saw Jesus (v.17, v.27)
- Immediate effect: Paul fell down, trembled and surprised, became blind
- Lord's introduction: I am Jesus (Matthew 1:21)
- Lord's question: Why Persecutest thou me? (not church)
 - All sins are against God (Against thee, thee only have I sinned, Psalms 51:4)
 - Christ is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23) ... and we are members of one body (Romans 12:5) ==> Persecution to one = Persecution to All

Paul encounters Lord Jesus via Sound & Light

- Paul's 2 important questions (basis for conversion + calling):
 - Who are you, Lord? (we need to come to know the Lord before being saved)
 - What do you want me to do? (we should discover our divine calling following conversion)
- Instructions to Paul:
 - Arise and go to Damascus, for next steps
 - Oftentimes, Lord leads us one step at a time (ex. Abraham)... as we obey, next steps are revealed ... continual obedience leads to progression in our spiritual life.
 - Paul fasted/prayed (in communion with the Lord) and remained blind for 3-days (v. 9, 11)
- How does the Lord encounter sinners/believers today?
 - Generally through His word, messengers, dreams/visions

Paul's meeting with Ananias

Acts 9:10-17

Who was Ananias? what was his role? why did he hesitate?

How did Paul respond to Ananias?

What do we learn from Ananias role in the life of Paul?

Ananias

- **Ananias** – certain disciple @ Damascus (v.10) (not a prominent leader like Peter, but respected), saint (v.13); Devout man, good testimony (Acts 22:12)
- **Ananias** – given clear directions: where to go, who to meet, how to recognize Paul (v.11); Paul also simultaneously prepared (v.12)
- Ananias objects to making this trip (v.13)
 - But when Lord leads, He will also provide & protect ... we should not question God's instructions! (His ways & thoughts are higher, Isaiah 55:8-9)
 - What would have happened had Ananias refused to go? (Lord would have found someone else or he may have chastened like Jonah)

Ananias meets Paul

- Paul is found praying ... is that surprising? (as a Pharisee must have prayed before, but now it is a different prayer)
- Ananias lays hands on him, addressing him as “brother”
 - Sight restored (physical and spiritual sight)
 - Mission given (v.15/16; Acts 22:15)
 - Filled with holy spirit
 - Baptized
- Ananias leaves the picture once the task is done (like Philip in Acts 8)
- How can we be sure that Paul had a true salvation experience?

How can we be confident that Paul had a true salvation experience?

- Met the Lord in a personal way (Stephen also saw Jesus, Acts 7:55; difference?)
- Responds to the Lord with good questions
- Obeyed the Lord
- Found praying (a new intimacy with the Lord)
- Receives holy spirit (source of divine power)
- Does not object to Ananias call for baptism (ready to witness, ready for new resurrected life in Christ in the body of Christ)
- Begins to witness immediately (v.20) (life changed)

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? **arise, and be baptized,** and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord

Acts 9: 15, 16 Paul's mission: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: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake

What do we learn from the role of Ananias in Paul's life?

God can use anyone (who is willing)

We are all saints (v.13) and qualified to minister to others

Paul's ministry begins & continues in subsequent chapters

Acts 9:20-31, Galatians 1:15-18

What did Paul preach? To whom did he preach? What made Paul a great apologetic? How did Jews react to Paul? Who taught/discipled Paul during his initial days? When did he go to Jerusalem? How did disciples react to Paul?

What did Paul preach?

- Paul **Preached CHRIST, son of God** (v.20, Galatians 1:16) in synagogues in Damascus

The message and the mission remains unchanged!

- Peter Preached Christ (Acts 2:22)
- Philip Preached Christ (Acts 8:5)

Persecution did not change the message or the mission

Only the message of Christ can accomplish the mission!

Galatians 1: 15-18 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, ¹⁶ To reveal his Son in me, that I might **preach him** among the heathen; immediately I **conferred not with flesh and blood**

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

Jews Reactions to Paul's witnessing

Paul preached to Jewish people in the synagogue ... confounded the Jews, proving that this is the very Christ (v.22)

Reaction:

Paul's preaching seen as a threat ... sought to kill him (v.23)

(historically, killing has not silenced the message!)

Mathew 16:18 ... I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it

Disciples reaction to Paul

Paul goes to Jerusalem after 3-years (Galatians 1:17-18). He didn't seek formal training from apostles (like he previously did through Gamaliel when he wanted to learn about Judaism). We can interpret that he waited on the Lord to receive divine revelations and his first lessons in Christian faith.

- Disciples **were afraid and do not believe** Paul was a changed man
 - (Unbelief is surprising, since disciples must have been preaching about the power of the gospel to change lives!!)
- Barnabas, son of consolation, acts as the peace maker and connects Paul to the disciples

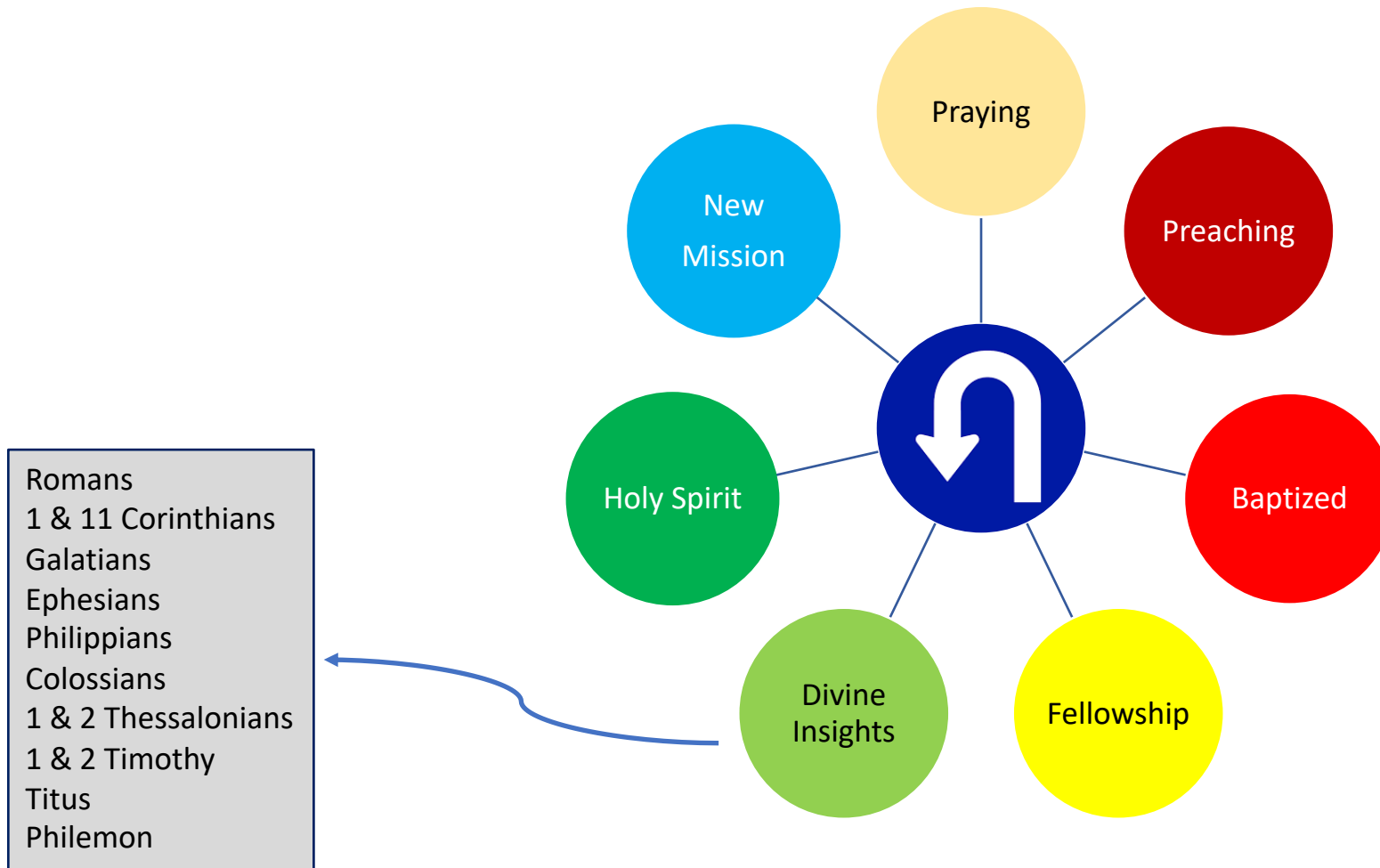
Church was at rest, edified, walked in fear of God,
comfort of Holy Spirit & Multiplied (v.31)



Paul: A changed life!

Only an encounter with the Living God can transforms lives!

Have you met Him Yet? Has your life Changed?



II Corinthians 5:17 ... If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new

Paul's conversion: Lessons learned

All sinners are precious to the Lord

Anyone can be saved by the gospel message

Credentials & family heritage do not matter ... Jesus is the only way

Blessings begin with submission to God's voice

Acts Review:

Do we remember?

1

- Author of Acts, Kingdom of God, Lord's Ascension
- Waiting for Holy Spirit, The Mission, Replacement for Judas

2

- Arrival of Holy Spirit, Difference in spirit between OT and NT
- Speaking in Tongues (Source, Purpose, Appropriate use) Peter's Sermon (Message, Last days) when is Holy Spirit given, Birth of Church and Characteristics of church

3

- First Healing (how? Parallel to sinner's experience)
- Peter's Sermon model (Question, Introduces Jesus, Confronts Mistakes, offers path to Repentance & Restoration, refers to Prophecies, Result)

Do we Remember?

4

- First Persecution-reason and verdict, Sanhedrin, Peter & John's response, Church Response, God's response, Caring Church, 2nd pouring of the Holy Spirit

5

- Church Discipline: Purpose, Example, Outcome
- Second Persecution: Reason, Peter's message to council, Response to beatings, Impact on Ministry

6

- Addressing Problems in church using godly decision making process
- Delegating to effectively exercise priority in use of gifts and talents

Do we Remember?

7

Stephen: Great man of God, Falsely accused, Confronts the council,
Stoned to death, Received by Christ

8

- Growing Persecution, but positive outcomes.
- Successful ministry of Philip in Samaria, Questionable salvation of Simon, significance of laying on of hands
- Philip's outreach to Eunuch leading to baptism. Baptism.
- How can we be effective evangelists?

9

- Paul's old mission
- Paul's encounter with Jesus, Meeting with Annanias, baptism
- Paul's first ministry in Damascus
- Evidence of Paul's true salvation and transformed life



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