

Bible Study 29 - Acts 9:1-9 – The conversion of Saul

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

1. Saul was driven by hatred of the Christian faith: But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

a) Saul was a bitter antagonist of the Christian faith. We encountered him for the first time at the cruel execution of Stephen who was condemned by the authorities, dragged outside the City gates, and callously stoned to death...

b) Saul acquired official permission from the authorities in Jerusalem to persecute Christians at Damascus. Clearly, Saul had made it his life mission to eradicate the Christian faith, not only in Jerusalem, but wherever it had spread...

c) Saul was determined to arrest any followers of Jesus Christ and have them brought back to Jerusalem in chains to prosecute them for their faith... Men and women alike were to be targets in his zealous and violent campaign... No one was to be spared who professed faith in Jesus...

2. Saul was deterred from completing his mission by a dramatic encounter enroute to Damascus: Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

a) Saul was stopped suddenly, out of the blue, so to speak, by a brilliant light... It was a heavenly light... it was none other than the Light of the world who is the Lord Jesus Christ... who has come to dispel and dissipate the darkness...

b) Saul was brought to his knees by his encounter with the Light... It was other-worldly, infinitely holy, and brilliantly powerful... The Light exposed his lack of holiness, humility, love, and wisdom...

c) Saul, blinded by the Light, was asked a pertinent and penetrating question... “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Note, Christ knew Saul... he knew him personally and perfectly... The Lord Jesus’s question reveals his intimate connection or communion with his people – the church, the body of Christ...

Moreover, the Lord as the Light is exposing the darkness of Saul’s heart and will...

3. Saul discovers the Risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus: And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

a) Saul cries out for revelation... Who?... Why?... What?... How does God want us to live?...

b) Saul is brought to realise not only that Jesus is Lord, but he also therefore recognises the folly and evil of persecuting Christ’s church... God’s way is Jesus Christ. He is the way of love not loathing. He is the way of conviction not coercion. He is the way of confidence rather than cancelling...

c) Saul receives instruction from the Lord Jesus... He receives the word... which must be a lamp for our feet and light for our path...

4. Saul deferentially arrives in Damascus a different man: 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

a) Saul was rendered dependent on his travelling companions...

b) Saul yet remained in the dark... to teach him to wait for enlightenment...

c) Saul arrived in Damascus to await further revelation... which he would receive through an intermediary who is God's servant... a channel or conduit for God's word and will... and that is the purpose in part of Christ's ministers and church...

Questions

1. What do you think drove Saul to such determined persecution of Christians?
2. What does Saul's conversion teach us about the power of God's grace in Jesus Christ to change people?
3. Why do you think Saul was blinded by the Light?
4. What does this passage indirectly tell us about Christ's church?
5. How does the Lord Jesus instruct his followers today?