

Acts 9

The Conversion of Saul – (not to be confused with “Better Call Saul”)

Vs. 1-19

Interestingly, Paul’s own account of his conversion is sparse. He doesn’t describe the Damascus road experience as Luke does.

Saul was introduced in chapter 8. His conversion is here in chapter 9 but we don’t pick up his actual mission work until chapter 11.

Luke tells us little of Saul’s background – just that he is “enemy number 1” for the church.

Vs. 1-2 Saul takes the initiative in a destructive operation against the church. The persecution is not confined to

Jerusalem but spreads toward Damascus. There is no discussion of Saul's motives.

Vs3-9 On the way to Damascus, Saul's journey is interrupted – abruptly – by a question. Saul, Saul why do you persecute me? The light and Saul's falling describe responses to something divine. "Saul, Saul" is like Gen22, Abraham, Abraham or Gen 46, Jacob, Jacob or Exodus 3 Moses, Moses.

Christ question emphasizes that persecuting Christ's disciples is persecuting Christ himself.

Saul doesn't know who is speaking to him. Christ identifies himself and immediately commissions Saul. Nothing in Saul's life will ever be the same – beginning with the fact that he is now helpless – blind. He must be

led to Damascus and neither eats nor drinks for 3 days.

Vs.10-16 Ironically, the one who persecuted the disciples must now accept help from a disciple, Ananias. Ananias has a vision that calls him to go to Saul. He knows about Saul and argues against going but only one word answers “Go” – followed by the astounding information that this Saul is Christ’s chosen instrument

Saul has been not just called but commissioned to a special work.

Vs. 17-19 Ananias does go, lays hands on Saul and Saul is healed and receives the Holy Spirit. Ananias calls him “brother” Ananias in this story functions as a model of discipleship. He is a hero of the faith – less well-known than Peter but still important to God’s work.

Some conclusions:

The account is more objective than subjective. We are not told of Saul's feelings or what he did.

Only Christ can effect the kind of conversion Saul underwent.

This sort of conversion involves moving from independence to child-like dependence

In conversion we detach from former patterns of identity. There is often a time of confusion and a sense of meaninglessness. Then a dramatic transition from darkness to light – from chaos to meaning.

Conversion is about turning around to a new way of seeing things.

Conversion is seldom a once only experience – rather it is an ongoing experience of life

Luke presents the case that the taking of the gospel to the gentiles was divine initiative not human.

Vs. 20-31

Now Saul learns what it is like to be persecuted.

Luke has an issue to resolve – he has presented the original disciples as those who carry the tradition directly from Christ. Now he has a disciple called later. He now has two types of disciples – the later ones have had the experience of the risen Christ but do not know the traditions or stories of origin. In order to give authority to those like Paul, he has Paul's experience validated by the Jerusalem apostles. Paul himself

stresses that he is on a par with the rest of the disciples. But Luke requires Paul to claim his experience within the traditions given to the Jerusalem apostles.

Vs 32-43

Luke abruptly switches to Peter and two miracles.

Healing Aeneas and raising Tabitha from the dead.