

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 29

Acts Chapter 9

We have already seen in 8:1 how Saul approved of Stephen's death and indirectly caused Philip's ministry. Saul's conversion is to a gospel of unmistakable authority. It is a reflection of the authority of the risen Christ that he can humble someone as intimidating as Saul. Indeed it's not enough that Saul just becomes a Christian; Christ now uniquely charges Saul to spread the very gospel that he had been trying to stamp out. It is a beautiful irony that the man who hated Christians because they weren't Jewish enough, is now going to be instrumental in spreading the gospel to the non-Jews (9: 15-16)!

Read Acts 9: 1-9

- How would you describe Saul in 9:1,2? What do we already know of Saul before Acts 9?

- Twice Jesus accuses Saul of persecuting him. How was Saul doing that?

- How do you think Saul felt when confronted by Jesus? (vv 4-6) and how would you describe Saul now?

Read Acts 9: 10-25

- What do you think of Ananias' fear?

- Are there some people you assume are beyond God's reach so that, if God spoke to you about them, you would question him? How does this story challenge those assumptions?

- God has a job for Saul. Describe it in your own words.

Read Acts 9: 26-31

- How would you describe Saul now ?

- In what ways do we see the sovereignty of God operating in Acts 8-9? How is this an encouragement to us?
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Closing Remarks

The significance of divine initiative in salvation.

In our study of Acts 4: 12 we noted that our inability to do anything for our salvation should cause us to be humble; no genuine Christian has any reason for arrogance. When someone asked Mahatma Gandhi what he thought about E. Stanley Jones, Gandhi replied, "He's a good man, but he's too proud of his religion." When Jones was told about this, he said that Gandhi was right according to his own convictions. To Gandhi salvation was the result of hard work. Earning salvation was as difficult as trying to empty an ocean of water with one's hands. According to such a scheme, anyone who says that he or she is assured of salvation will be justly called arrogant.

But according to the Christian scheme, salvation is a gift of God; we do not deserve it and it is freely given to us by God, who takes the initiative by seeking us and bringing us to himself. In other words, we have no grounds for feeling superior to anyone. We must demonstrate this truth in an age when Christian belief about full assurance of salvation is considered arrogant by pluralists, who see the pursuit of salvation a something generated from within.

Given the great blessings that come from conversion, it is possible to place so much emphasis on these that converts forget that they are people under commission. For Saul conversion and commission went together. How about you?

