

May 3, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Order of Worship and Notes
Pastor Marvin Singh

Praise Band:

“Your Love Awakens Me”

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”

Sermon: The Risen Lord Confronts Saul
Acts 9:1-18

Saul, who became Paul, is an extraordinary character. Though he was not among the first twelve Apostles, through his conversion and ministry he achieved that distinguished status of being an Apostle of Christ. We can have a number of studies on his life, work, and witness but we will limit ourselves here to his conversion and mission.

In three parts:

1. Saul, who knew about God but not Christ.
2. When Jesus confronted him and introduced himself to Saul.
3. Paul’s walk with Christ.

1. Saul who knew about God, missed out on Christ

He was from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, with a zeal to persecute the church, faultless as per legal requirements of righteousness. Saul studied under the able teacher Gamaliel, was a Roman citizen by birth, and a linguist. (Philippians 3:5-6, Acts 22:3, 28) He knew the Scriptures, yet was blinded to see the person of Christ.

He witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen. He heard the words, prayers, and death of Stephen. (Stephen is introduced, then accused, in Acts 6, and gives his testimony and is martyred in Acts 7:1-8:3.)

a. Stephen’s Words: Stephen spoke about the calling and choosing of Abraham, Joseph, and then Moses. He talked about the journey of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery to freedom entering into the promised land. He talked about David and Solomon and the temple of the Lord. He accused them of killing the Righteous One and said they had received the law that was put into effect through angels, but had not obeyed it.

b. Stephen’s Prayer: *“Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man (Jesus) standing at the right hand of God.” ... Lord Jesus receive my Spirit”, ... “then he fell down on his knees and cried out, Lord, do not hold this sin against them”* (Acts 7:56-60)

c. Stephen's death: when they were stoning him, he prayed for them asking the Lord to forgive the persecutors. Then he fell asleep.

2. Jesus Confronts and Introduce Himself to Saul – Acts 9:1-18

Saul was about to enter the city of Damascus, with the High Priest's permission, to locate all the "followers of the WAY" in the synagogues and put them to prison and death. The Way was Christ. (John 14:6)

Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. Saul:

* fell to the ground,

* heard the voice calling his name "Saul, Saul,"

* "Why do you persecute me?"

"Saul responded, 'Who are you, Lord?'"

a. Then Jesus introduced himself, *"I AM Jesus whom you are persecuting. It is not easy for you to kick against the goads."* (also Acts 26:14)

b. He was dumbfounded. I believe the whole scene of Stephen's martyrdom came to haunt him and become alive to his memory. The words, the prayers, and the death were clear.

c. Yes, our life and witness are very important - how we live, witness, and deal with our enemies. Stephen followed the Lord's model of forgiveness from the cross, *"Father, forgive them as they do not know what they do."* (Luke 23:34) Stephen also forgave his persecutors. People are reading our life and character and when the opportunity comes, they recognize it immediately. What is our witness? We may never know that our life's witness becomes seeds of faith in the hardened hearts.

d. Saul, I believe also knew about the importance of the words "I AM." He recognized that He is the Lord. He knew the story of Abraham and Moses and David, just refreshed by Stephen recently in Jerusalem.

He was also introduced to Jesus: his name, office, and work as Savior.

3. Paul's Life with Christ

Jesus told him to go to:

- a. Ananias, the disciple, who had a great reputation with the Jews, as well as with the followers of the Way.
- b. Address: House of Judas, Straight Street, Damascus
- c. Purpose: You will be told what you must do.

Ananias had already been given the instructions and purpose of choosing this persecutor Pharisee called Saul, *“This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”* (Acts 9:15-16)

What happened to Saul at the Road to Damascus, and in the city? Dr. Farar writes in *The Life and Work of Saint Paul*, pg 199

<u>Road to Damascus</u>	<u>In Damascus</u>
Fell down in death	Rose in Life
Fell in the midst of things temporal	Rose in awful consciousness of things eternal
Fell proud and intolerant	Rose humble and broken
Fell a persecuting Jew	Rose a penitent Christian

Ananias prayed for his recovery of sight, introduced him to the disciples, and Paul straightaway preached in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. (Acts 9:20) When the disciples were still not sure about the conversion and reluctant to accept him, Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. (Acts 9:26-27)

Paul became a missionary, he took others with him and established many churches, mentored young men, wrote many letters to the church for teaching them and encouraging them, revisited the churches. He was beaten, forsaken, imprisoned. He shared his testimony to Governor Felix, then his successor Porcius Festus, then King Agrippa. (Acts 24-26) He had been shipwrecked, jailed and beaten, but he enjoyed the wounds which he gladly bore. (2 Corinthians 11:25, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:24)

Finally, to King Agrippa, he revealed his mission given to him by the Lord Jesus: The Lord said to Paul, I am sending you to the Gentiles:

- * *“To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light,*
- * *from the power of Satan to God*
- * *so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”* (Acts 26:16-18)

Paul was then sent to Rome, to face trial there. *“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who come to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Acts 28:30-31)

Paul was faithful to his calling and the mission.

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Celebration of Communion 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

Closing Hymn

“There is a Fountain,” verses 1 & 3
(music and lyrics available at willerupumc.org, #622 if you have the United Methodist Hymnal)