

Saul/Paul

On the road from Jerusalem to Damascus

Foundation

Bible passage : Acts 9

Saul of Tarsus was present when Stephen was put to death and he approved of what was done. He was a member of a group called the Pharisees who were rightly concerned about holiness but seem to have thought that it was all about keeping rules and seem to have thought themselves better than other people. Saul despised the followers of Jesus and wanted to put out the light of the message about Jesus. He must have heard that some of the people who had fled Jerusalem had gone to Damascus and so he got permission from the High Priest to go and arrest any Christians he found there.

Luke describes how Saul became a follower of Jesus in chapter 9. Later in Acts we find explaining to other how he came to see the light and as a result was left blind for three days. Jesus spoke to Saul but did not tell him very much.

Meanwhile the Lord had spoken to a disciple called Ananias (not the same one who died in Acts 6) and prepared him to meet with Saul. Ananias was surprised by this because he knew that Saul was persecuting disciples. But they met, Ananias prayed for Saul and laid hands on him, at which Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and regained his sight. He could physically see again, but more importantly had found the light of Christ. Saul was then baptized and remained in Damascus sharing the good news about Jesus with others. His life was changed dramatically when he came to faith in Jesus and people's lives are still



The Conversion of Saint Paul, Luca Giordano, 1690

changed today when they hear the message about Jesus and come to faith in Him.

It was Ananias who was told that Saul would have a special calling to carry the name of Jesus before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. Later Saul would refer to himself as the Apostle to the Gentiles and much of the remainder of Acts concerns the special role Paul had in spreading the light of Jesus to others.

(Notes : At this point believers were not called Christians but those belonging to The Way. Saul was a Roman Citizen and like many other Jews apparently had both a Hebrew and Latin name. Luke uses the name Saul at first in Acts but shortly after the first missionary journey to the Gentiles he started using the latin name Paulus (Paul in English) and only refers to him as Saul after than when recording what others said. Paul uses his latin name in his letters, and Peter also refers to him by that name in his letters.

““Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” Acts 9.15



Saul saw the light of Christ and went from being a persecutor of Christians to a key figure in the spread of the gospel.