

## 20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 34 (August 18-24, 2013)

The conversion of Saul (Paul) has to be the greatest miracle recorded in the Book of Acts. We will look closely at his calling in this week's devotions.

### Sunday -- August 18 (Acts 9:1-6)

Saul first appears in the Book of Acts when the witnesses of those who are stoning Stephen lay their garments at his feet (Acts 7:58). He is a legalistic Pharisee who approves the killing of this Godly man (Acts 8:1). Who would ever expect a super-sinner like Saul to come to faith in Jesus Christ? In today's text, Saul is on his way to Damascus to persecute the church in that city. He has authority from the high priest to arrest any believers in Jesus Christ (v. 1-2). God knocks Saul off his high horse with a brilliant light from heaven. The passionate religious leader hears a voice saying (v. 3-4), "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Don't miss the fact that when you persecute the church, you persecute Jesus! Saul's response in v. 5 indicates that he knows exactly **Who** is calling to him. Jesus identifies Himself and commands Saul to "get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do" (v. 5-6). We will follow this calling tomorrow.

### Monday -- August 19 (Acts 9:7-9)

God often calls a person when he/she is in a large crowd, but the call is **personal** to the one the Lord is addressing. Saul, whose name is changed to Paul (Acts 13:9), testifies in Acts 22:9 that the men with him see the light and hear the sound, but they cannot understand the **message** because it is personal to him (v. 7). The brilliant light causes Saul to be blind for three days. During that time, he fasts as he waits for God to show him his assignment (v. 8-9). I want you to meditate on these three verses for a while. Many people are trying to serve God today in their own strength because they cannot testify to a time when the Lord **called** them and assigned to them a ministry. God equips those He calls (see Hebrews 13:20-21 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). **Wait** until you hear His still, small voice calling you! Then you can know for sure that the Lord has gone before you to prepare the way. (Hint: When you are the first one in your group to see a need, God is usually calling you to fulfill it!)

### Tuesday -- August 20 (Acts 9:10-19)

Has God ever asked you to do something that you really did not want to do? This is the case with Ananias who is being sent to minister to Saul, the persecutor (v. 10-12). You can certainly understand his hesitation as he reminds the Lord about his enemy's mission in Damascus (v. 13-14). God assures Ananias that He knows what He is doing in choosing this "chief of sinners" (see 1 Timothy 1:15). Also, He does not paint a rosy picture for **His chosen vessel**. There is no mention of a condominium or an air-conditioned doghouse in His calling (v. 15-16). Using the obedience of Ananias, God performs the miracle and Saul's eyes are opened. Following his baptism into the very faith he tried so hard to destroy, the new apostle ends his fast of three days (v. 9). Saul is now ready to begin **God's** mission (v. 18-19).

### **Wednesday** -- August 21 (Acts 9:19-27)

Saul does not delay the start of his new ministry as he immediately goes from **persecutor** to **preacher** (v. 20). His listeners are astonished that such a transformation could have been made in this wicked religious leader (v. 21). Saul's powerful message of **salvation through Jesus alone** baffles the Jews living in Damascus (v. 22). God had forewarned Saul that persecutions were coming (v. 16), but he probably did not expect them to come this quickly (v. 23-24). His followers help him escape through an opening in the city wall (v. 25). Having been forced out of Damascus, Saul tries to join the disciples in Jerusalem, but they label him as an imposter (v. 26). That's when Barnabas, whose name means **Son of Encouragement** (Acts 4:36), intercedes on behalf of the newest apostle (v. 27). Do you know someone who needs encouragement? Perhaps God wants **you** to be a Barnabas to that person today.

### **Thursday** -- August 22 (Acts 9:28-31)

Barnabas is a real hero in the story of the Apostle Paul (Saul). We can only imagine what would have happened to the new convert if Barnabas had not gone to bat for him. Most of the New Testament would never have been written. Because of the intervention of this disciple who trusted him, Saul is able to go from place to place in Jerusalem preaching the same faith he had tried to destroy (v. 28). Because the Grecian Jews also try to kill him, his Christian brothers send him to his hometown of Tarsus where he will be safe (v. 30). The Holy Spirit begins a powerful work within the new church causing growth both in numbers and knowledge (v. 31). Personally, I believe the time of peace is about to end in our country. Like **Ananias**, we must lead others to Jesus, and, like **Barnabas**, we must encourage one another daily! (see Hebrews 10:25)

### **Friday** -- August 23 (Acts 9:32-38)

In today's text, the Book of Acts switches from Saul to Peter. This brash apostle comes to Lydda to visit believers (v. 32) and sees a paralytic named Aeneas who has been bedridden for eight years (v. 33). Peter heals him in the Name of Jesus Christ, and the former paralytic stands on his feet (v. 34). This miracle triggers a revival in the towns of Lydda and Sharon (v. 35). The news reaches Joppa where a great need arises. A wonderful lady named Tabitha has just breathed her last, but the disciples are not ready to give up (v. 36-37). They send for Peter with an urgent request (v. 38), "Please come at once!" We will conclude the story tomorrow.

### **Saturday** -- August 24 (Acts 9:39-43)

Good works cannot save anyone (see Ephesians 2:8-10), but we are all saved by a "**faith that works.**" Tabitha (Dorcas) has a widows' ministry in Joppa and is known for her many good deeds (v. 36, 39). Peter asks everyone to leave the room before he falls on his knees in prayer. He calls Tabitha by name and commands the dead woman to "get up" (v. 40). God honors his prayer and Tabitha responds to the command and opens her eyes. Peter takes her by the hand and helps her up. Then he calls the mourning believers and widows and presents her alive to them. This wonderful miracle causes many others to turn to the Lord (c. 42). Perhaps **your** testimony could start a revival where you live. Tell others what the Lord has done in your life and you may be surprised to see how He uses your witness.