

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning
Week 38 (September 13-19, 2015)

This week, we will look at an unlikely person to be called into full time ministry—Saul, the same man who held the clothes of the men who stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:58).

Sunday, September 13 (read Acts 9:1-6)

“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:6)

As a Pharisee, Saul hates the Church primarily because it poses a threat to his powerful religious position. He is not satisfied with destroying the local body of believers in Jerusalem, but he also requests and receives permission from the High Priest to journey to Damascus to arrest anyone who belongs to the Way (v. 1-2). He is indeed riding on his “high horse” when a light flashes from heaven and knocks him to the ground (v. 3-4). He is the only one who hears a voice call out, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (See Acts 22:9) Saul knows he is hearing from the Lord before he receives the verification (v. 5). He is told to “get up and go into the city” (v. 6a). The details of his calling will not be made known to him until after he obeys this command. Is God telling **you** to “get up and go?” Obey His voice and you will find out how and where He wants to use you to glorify Him and His Word.

Monday, September 14 (read Acts 9:7-12)

The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.” (Acts 9:11, emphasis mine)

Don’t miss the truth that those near you may hear the same sound that you hear, but they will not understand the **message** that God is speaking to **you** (v. 7; ref. Acts 22:9). The bright light blinds Saul, prompting him to fast and pray for three days (v. 8-9). In Damascus, a disciple named Ananias also hears a call from God (v. 10). Upon answering with the familiar words, “Here I am,” Ananias receives one of the toughest calls in history. He is to go to the home of Judas (of all names) on Straight Street (God has a sense of humor) to witness to the archenemy of believers. Don’t miss the fact that God is doing all of this in answer to the prayers of His new believer, Saul (v.11). We will see how this plays out in tomorrow’s devotion.

Tuesday, September 15 (read Acts 9:13-16)

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my Name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.” (Acts 9:15)

You cannot blame Ananias for questioning the call of God, because he had heard so much about the man to whom he is being sent (v. 13-14). It’s like God sending you to witness to a Muslim extremist! I have found out that most people in today’s church do not believe that God sends a particular preacher to a specific location with a special mission in mind. Congregations often think that it is their responsibility to “hire” a pastor. If you think Saul is an unlikely choice, replace his name with “Roger” and the calling is even more surprising. At least Saul is a well-educated man! The future apostle is not informed of his condo and his air-conditioned doghouse that will be his reward for faithful service, but rather about how much he will suffer for the Name of Jesus! Would you respond to such a call as this?

Wednesday, September 16 (read Acts 9:17-19)

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized (Acts 9:18b)

When you read verse 17 in the NIV, you can almost hear the hesitation in Ananias' voice. Can you blame him? He has been sent to the most notorious Christian hater in the world! God works the miracle as His appointed messenger lays his hands on Saul and prays for him. Although Saul regains at least some of his sight, I do not believe he could ever see well enough to write his own letters (see Galatians 6:11). I believe God left his new minister with a constant reminder of the amount of light it took to knock him off his high horse (see Galatians 4:15). At any rate, Saul responds to the message from God through Ananias and follows through with a Christian baptism, after something like scales fall from his eyes (v. 18). He ends his three-day fast and sets out to become the greatest evangelist in the history of the faith.

Thursday, September 17 (read Acts 9:20-25)

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 9:22)

Often those who once were "super sinners" become deeply committed Christians. At least, **they** don't need anyone to convince them that they "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), unlike some church members. Saul begins immediately to preach Christ, the very One he was trying to destroy just days earlier (v. 20). Since he is a highly educated man (see Acts 22:3), Saul is able to debate even the scholars, much to the amazement of everyone (v. 21-22). Seeing this new apostle as a threat to their lucrative religious system, the Jews plan to kill Saul when he exits the city, but his fellow believers, who once feared him, save his life by lowering him in a basket through an opening in the wall (v. 24-25).

Friday, September 18 (read Acts 9:26-31)

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. (Acts 9:27)

We all need a "Barnabas" in our lives. The name means "Son of Encouragement," a name that the Biblical Barnabas rightly earns (Acts 4:36-37). Have you ever needed someone to introduce you to a body of believers that questioned your right to become one of their own? Fear of the unknown or fear of someone who is different can make us hesitate to accept an outsider. Thank God for people such as Barnabas! Saul (Jewish), who later changed his name to Paul (Greek) because he is called to take the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 13:9), is allowed to move about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly and debating with Grecian Jews who **also** try to kill him (28-29). Once again, his fellow believers save his life and send him to Tarsus, his hometown (v. 30; see also Acts 22:3). The church experiences a time of peace, during which it grows in numbers and in power. I pray your church is doing likewise!

Saturday, September 19 (read Acts 15:36-41)

Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. (Acts 15:37-38)

In the 13th chapter of Acts, you can read about the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. A young man named John (Mark, see Acts 12:25) accompanies them on their journey. Unfortunately, Mark deserts the mission and returns home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Today, you know Mark as the writer of the gospel that bears his name; he is not remembered as the young man who becomes homesick and deserts Paul and Barnabas during the long mission trip. The only reason you get to read his wonderful gospel is because Barnabas gives Mark a second chance (v. 37-40). Can you see why he is given the name "Son of Encouragement?" God gets glory because He now has **two** mission teams to send out instead of one (v. 41). Do you have a Barnabas in your life? Is there someone to whom you can be a Barnabas?