

Sermon Date: November 10, 2013
Acts 9:1-31 – The Word Goes Out to Saul
Doug McBride

Read Acts 9:1-31

From N.T. Wright:

“And Saul sank to the ground, blinded by the light, with the words ringing in his head “I am Jesus, and you are persecuting Me. Me? Somehow these men and women Saul was dragging off to prison were Jesus’ people, His own extended self. Led by the hand to Damascus, it was three days before Saul could do anything except, simultaneously, recoil from the horror of what happened and gasp at its glory. We call this event a conversion, but it was more like a volcanic eruption, thunderstorm and tidal wave all coming together. If the death and resurrection of Jesus is the hinge on which the great door of history swung open at last, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was the moment when all the ancient promises of God gathered themselves up, rolled themselves into a ball, and came hurtling through that open door and out into the wide world behind.” (Acts for Everyone, p. 142).

1. We were first introduced to Saul from Acts 7:58 and 8:3. What else can we know about Saul’s background from Acts 26:4-11? See also 1 Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1:13, Philippians 3:4b-6 and 1 Timothy 1:13.

****Sidenote - Doug commented on the interchangeable nature of Saul’s/Paul’s name which can be a source of confusion. At birth, his given name was Saul, a Hebrew name. As a Roman citizen, he may have later adopted the name Paul a more popular Greek/Latin version. Throughout the New Testament, Saul is referred to by his Greek name, Paul.*

2. Doug described Paul’s conversion (v. 3-9) as a theophany. What does that mean? Why do you think God used such extreme measures to get Saul’s attention?
 - a. Has there been a time in your life when God has used extreme measures to get your attention?

3. Who is Ananias and what role does God ask him to play (v. 10-19)?
 - a. How does he respond?

4. What are God's prophetic words to Ananias about Saul's future (v. 15-16). See Acts 9:23-25; 29; 2 Corinthians 11:23b-28.

a. How does the Apostle Paul respond to the sufferings he endures years later from Philipians 3:7-9?

5. Doug describes Saul "as the persecutor who will now become the persecuted" (see v. 4-5, 15-16). What does that mean?

a. Have you ever been a persecutor who eventually becomes the one who is persecuted? How about the other way around?

b. Try the following exercise:

Rewrite the sentence above and replace the words "persecutor" and "persecuted" with the following words:

- Abused-abuser
- Loved-lover.
- Forgiven-forgiver

6. How do the other disciples and apostles respond to Saul when they first encounter him after his conversion (v.21, 26-27)?

7. Doug comments that God forges unconnected chaotic dots through darkness and redeems out of chaos. Has there been a period or instance of darkness or chaos in your own life that God has redeemed?

Closing Thoughts:

Doug pointed out that our life may seem like a mess of a chaotic mess of unconnected dots, but it never really is what it seems. In reality it is a series of threads woven together to create a God-breathed tapestry. Your thread is there. My thread is there. If you look at a Tapestry from the back, you'll see a seemingly senseless, chaotic mess of threads and knots. When you turn it over it is a beautiful masterpiece. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:12a that this side of heaven we "see in the mirror dimly." On the other side we'll see the Tapestry – see 1 Corinthians 13:12b.