

With Sister Paulette Morrison on December 12, 2021

DISCOVERING THE POWER OF THE WORD

A Reading and Listening Session

Reflection on Acts 9 | Part I



Introduction

On December 12, 2021, our Sunday Evening Reading & Listening Session (Part I) centered around the theme 'Discover the Power of the Word by Reading the Word of God to Tell a Story.' We delved into the transformative journey of Saul, as narrated in Acts 9:1-6, 9-12, and 15-22. This article revisits that session, highlighting Saul's encounter with Jesus, his subsequent blindness and healing, and his radical conversion into a powerful preacher of Christ.

Saul's Journey: From Persecutor to Preacher

Saul, a zealous persecutor of the early Christians, was on his way to Damascus to imprison followers of Jesus. As he neared the city, a blinding light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). Trembling, Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).

The encounter left Saul blind. He was led into Damascus and, for three days, he neither ate nor drank. In Damascus, there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and instructed him to go to Straight Street and find Saul, who was praying. Ananias was hesitant, knowing Saul's reputation for persecuting believers. However, the Lord assured him, "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Ananias obeyed and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name?" (Acts 9:21). But Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

Key Verses

- **Acts 9:4-5:** "'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' He replied."
- **Acts 9:15:** "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."
- **Acts 9:17:** "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Points for Reflection and Discussion

During our session, several profound points were raised by our readers and listeners, offering diverse perspectives on Saul's transformative experience:

Sister Jones:

- 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' (9:6)
- 'Take the scales from mine eyes that I may see' (9:17)

Sister Jones highlighted the importance of seeking God's will in our lives, echoing Saul's initial response to Jesus. She also emphasized the need for spiritual clarity and vision, praying for the scales to be removed from our eyes so that we may truly see and understand God's purpose.

Minister Marjorie:

- 'Saul saw a light' (9:3)
- 'It’s hard to kick against the pricks' (9:5)
- 'A chosen vessel' (9:15)
- 'Straight Street' (9:11)
- 'Saul increased in strength' (9:22)

Minister Marjorie drew attention to the symbolic significance of the light that Saul encountered, representing divine revelation. She noted the futility of resisting God's will ('It’s hard to kick against the pricks') and affirmed Saul's divine calling as 'a chosen vessel'. 'Straight Street' was seen as the direct path to transformation, and the fact that 'Saul increased in strength' (9:22) shows the power of God to work through those who turn to Him.

Conclusion

Saul's story is a powerful testament to the transformative power of God's word and grace. His journey from persecutor to preacher underscores the possibility of redemption and the profound impact of encountering Jesus. The reflections shared during our Sunday Evening Reading & Listening Session provide valuable insights into the key themes of this narrative, reminding us to seek God's will, embrace spiritual clarity, and allow Him to use us as vessels for His glory.