

Paul

“Loyal Followers”



“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” I Corinthians 2:9

One Sunday several years ago, we were studying Paul in our Sunday School Class. One of the women said “Just who did Paul think he was anyway?” She knew about Paul, but she was also re-emphasizing his determined behavior in talking with other people. Paul felt that he had the real word – and we believe he did. He was so eager to tell people about the love of Christ. In I Corinthians he tells them about the love that Christ has for them, but he also points out that they must accept this love as it is given to them. He didn’t seem to care if he offended people as long as he told them about Jesus. As he traveled and preached the word of Christ, he often was so strong that we notice in the Scriptures that different people traveled with him at different times. The reason is supposedly because he was difficult to be around for a long period of time because he was so intent on making sure that people knew about Christ and his love for them. One time he was stoned and left for dead. Acts 14:19 But that seemed to be the Paul that would reach hundreds of people in his life time, and always be the one that someone was ready to stone or hang!

In Paul’s early years, he was an advocate for keeping Jewish laws to a fault. He stoned and reprimanded people that he didn’t know and didn’t care to know. On a trip to Damascus to continue his persecution of people that were following a God other than his, he was blinded. After being helped to Damascus he went three days blinded and without food. In his early years he was known as Saul, but when his conversion experience took place his name was changed to Paul. From then on he has been known as the apostle to the Gentiles. We may not need to be physically blinded, but we are blinded by the wealth of the world, bigotry, or status and then realize that it is all temporary. Only one thing matters. Paul felt strongly that his mission was to tell the truth of God’s word. Because he was a Roman citizen, he had some privileges that others did not have and this heritage helped in his ministry. He was almost “untouchable” with respect to laws, property, and Roman law.

Paul was a man of his word and fought just as hard after he was filled with the Holy Spirit as he had worked to destroy the church. We have people today that have a conversion experience and many times people do not believe them. We want to think that this cannot happen. After all, how can one change so completely? Perhaps one of the modern men that had his life changed is Chuck Colson. He was linked with the Watergate scandal, but then he became a Christian and has worked very hard to help others know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. But many people did not want to believe him at first. They thought it was a ploy to set himself apart from the Watergate scandal. Time has shown that he was sincere.

We learn from this story about Paul that God will use us in His own time according to His own will to further His word. We don’t all have to go out and preach like Paul and Chuck Colson. Some of us can be teachers or just angels of mercy who help the unlovely, the homeless, the poor, the stranger, and the forgotten people.

Years ago, we had a woman in our church named Emma. I never ran into anyone that didn’t think she was an angel, not in the sense that she ran around with wings, because she was very unpretentious, but she was genuinely a great person, and her life showed Christ’ love all the time. She could preach with her actions, and didn’t need to say a word. Many stalwarts in the church have this sense of love that permeates everything they do and infects everyone with whom they come in contact.

We also learn from Paul that regardless how bad we are, God will forgive us. God wants us to have care and compassion. Paul was a miracle worker in many ways. We have that same opportunity to witness by our actions rather than our words. Paul’s letters are some of the strongest books in the Bible. They contain many of the truths upon which we all base our faith.

Prayer: You are an amazing God. You continue to love us even though we will never deserve that love. Please help us to seek to serve You and know that no matter how bad things get, we can depend on Your being there with us. Amen

1. Have you ever had a conversion experience? Was it anything like the one that Paul had? Please remember that not everyone has had a definite conversion like Paul had.
2. Are you skeptical of people that come on too strong? Why?
3. Could it be that we are embarrassed that we are not zealots in our words and actions?
4. What is our purpose here? Should we be preaching, teaching, showing by our actions?

5. Paul was willing to go to prison for his Lord and he offended many people. Are we ready to make that same commitment?

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