

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 12, 2020

Paul's Conversion
Acts 26:12-18

1. Jesus appears to Paul (26:12-13)

Paul's journey to Damascus was to persecute the believers who had fled Jerusalem (cf. Acts 8:1). Paul participated in a persecution that God used to take the gospel beyond Jerusalem through these dispersed believers. Paul was instrumental in God's work to reach the world even before his conversion.

Paul again notes that he was commissioned by authority of the chief priests (cf. Acts 26:10), in order to implicate them in these illegal acts of killing those faithful to Jesus Christ.

The appearance of Jesus to Paul is given with detail. The light brighter than the sun points to the divine origin of the light. This was clearly described as a real, external event, rather than simply a vision to Paul. This account of Paul's conversion is the only one that notes the bright light shone not just upon Paul but on those who came with Paul as well. Also, he and his companions all fell down to the ground. This supports Paul's conversion as there were witnesses to prove this dramatic phenomenon.

2. Jesus addresses Paul (26:14-18)

One detail that is unique to this account of Paul's conversion was that he was spoken to in Aramaic, the Hebrew dialect. This was the King of the Jews speaking to a Hebrew of Hebrews.

Notice that Jesus considered Paul's persecution of the believers to be "persecuting Me." The church is the body of Christ and what happens to true believers is happening to the Lord Himself. Let no one be so deluded to think that an attack against believers is a small thing.

Another new detail to the Acts 26 account of the conversion was the words of the Lord, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." A goad was used to prod animals in order to direct them. Thus this phrase speaks of the difficulty that occurs when the goad is resisted. The Lord prods us through our conscience and through our circumstances. When we resist God, His prodding will be felt by those whom He is calling. We may resist, but it only makes our life harder and harder.

Luke's account of Paul's speech is focused upon him being sent by God as a witness. The message of Paul is in a chiasmic structure of three parts: (1) his faithfulness to the Jewish teaching (26:6-8, 22-23), (2) the persecution of believers (26:9-11, 21) and (3) his witness (12-18, 19-20).

The Lord called Paul to stand, to serve and to speak of what he saw. This is the result of faith in

Christ, to respond by serving Him and speaking about Him (Matthew 18:19). As with Paul, all of how we will serve is not apparent yet (Ephesians 2:10). Like Paul, we are called by God to be sent by God (John 20:21).

The purpose of Christ sending Paul formed the essence of the gospel (26:18). As our eyes are opened, we turn from the darkness of Satan to the light of God. This is true faith and repentance.

The reception of the gospel has two main elements, the forgiveness of sins and the inheritance with our fellow believers. Thus we ought to speak of both the removal of the penalty of sin and the blessing of the inheritance of the kingdom of God, which together reference the glory of eternal life.

Verses 16-18 is found only in Acts 26. Paul included these words to communicate the gospel to the Gentile onlookers in Caesarea. Throughout Acts, Paul shapes his address according to his audience, conducting himself with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity (Colossians 4:5). May we take the same initiative to serve those whom we engage with the gospel of Jesus Christ.