**Truth Sowers Life Group**

January 27, 2013

**Who Was the Apostle Paul?**

**His Conversion on the Road to Damascus**

**Introduction:**

Last week we discussed Paul’s childhood in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia and his education at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He first comes on the scene as we see him “consenting to the death” of Stephen as the Jews who stone Stephen lay their cloaks at his feet. Saul was referred to at this time as a “young man.” We know that he was in his late twenties to early thirties and became a member of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem around this time. Membership in the Sanhedrin required that you be a minimum of thirty years old.

Our key scripture for this study is:

**1 Thess 5:12, 13**

*12And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*

Seeing that Saul/Paul was entrusted with, what has been dubbed, the “Pauline Revelation” for the Church and wrote between one-half and two-thirds of the New Testament establishing most of the doctrine of the church, it is important that we get to know him as we are told in our key scripture.

Paul was clearly of the Pharisee’s belief, not the Sadducee’s since he believed in a bodily resurrection as we see him write about in 1 Corinthians 15 later on.

1. Now, at Stephen’s martyrdom, we see Saul of Tarsus at about 30 years old probably around 35 A.D. Probably a couple of years after Christ was crucified and ascended to Heaven.

**Acts 7:51-60 NKJV**

*51“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” 54When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. 55But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” 57Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

**Acts 8:1-8 NKJV**

*1**Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. 4Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. 5Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8And there was great joy in that city.*

1. The fear of Saul was used to scatter the believers throughout the region.
	1. God did not intend for the Christians to just stay around Jerusalem after Christ ascended to Heaven.
	2. He wanted them to take the gospel to the furthermost reaches of the earth.
	3. Through persecution, the people were scattered.
	4. **What Satan intended for evil, God used for good!**
2. Paul caused “havoc” in the church, entering people’s homes sending them to prison for their beliefs.

**Acts 9:1, 2**

*1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

1. We have no reason to believe that Philip (not one of the original apostles) was an “ordained” minister.
	1. He took it on himself to go to Samaria to preach the Gospel.
	2. He had good results, many were saved, demons were cast out, many were healed, and there was much joy in the city.
	3. You do not have to be called to the ministry or ordained to preach the gospel!
	4. Matthias was ordained to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

**Acts 1:21-26**

*21“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” 23And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” 26And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

* 1. Paul was **NOT** one of the original 12 Apostles.
	2. Paul did not consider himself worthy to be an apostle

**1 Cor. 15:5-9**

*5and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.**9For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

1. Yet Paul still saw the Holy Spirit move through his ministry.
2. He saw the gifts of the Holy Spirit move through his ministry.
3. He teaches us about the gifts of the Holy Spirit
4. He teaches us about the gift of tongues, the gift of interpretation of tongues and the gift of prophecy and says that he wishes we all spoke in tongues. **1 Cor. 14:5**.
	1. Even if you do not believe THE GIFT OF TONGUES AND THE GIFT OF INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES AND THE GIFT OF PROPHECY ARE FOR TODAY, YOU MUST BELIEVE THEY WERE FOR SOMETIME IN THE CHURCH BECAUSE PAUL TEACHES US ABOUT THEM.(1 Cor 12 and 14).
	2. Some people think only miracles follow those who actually saw Jesus in the flesh.
		1. Paul’s miracles rule this out.
		2. Some say Paul was an exception.
		3. Not true. Jesus said it is more blessed to believe without having seen Him.

**John 20:29**

*Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed.* ***Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”***

* + 1. Paul taught spiritual gifts and miracles would follow those that believe (**1 Cor. 12 -14.)**
		2. Paul even taught that he wished you would ALL speak in tongues and operate in the spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. 14:5.
		3. Spiritual gifts ARE for today!
		4. People try to use silly reasoning to try and say they are NOT for today.
1. Saul’s Conversion on the Road to Damascus in Syria

**Acts 9:1-9**

*Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of* ***the Way****, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” 6So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” 7And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

* 1. In verse 4, the effects of the presence of God were that Saul was knocked to the ground.
		1. “Slaying in the Spirit”.
		2. Another example, when Jesus was resurrected and an angel of the Lord rolled the stone away from the tomb.

**Matthew 28:1-4**

*Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.*

* + - 1. Roman guards did NOT just fall down!
			2. The power of God must have been incredible.
			3. At Saul’s conversion, only Saul fell down.
			4. Jeffrey Schnellborne’s experience
			5. Praying with Caroline Taylor
1. Paul head Jesus speaking to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”
	1. Notice that Jesus took all of this persecution personally.
	2. Jesus will reward you personally!

**James 1:12**

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

1. **Acts 9:5-7**

*And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” 6So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” 7And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

* 1. Goad – a sharp stick to help round up cattle or a prick on a prickly pear cactus.
	2. The men with Paul heard the sound but not what was said. Paul explains in **Acts 22:9.**
	3. The same thing happened with Jesus.

**John 12:28-30**

*Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.” 29Therefore the people who stood by and heard it* ***said that it had thundered****. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.” 30Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.*

1. At the same time Paul had his encounter with Jesus, Jesus was preparing Ananias!

**Acts 9:10-19**

*Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” 11So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” 13Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” 15But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16****For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”*** *17And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus,[*[*b*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+9&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-27234b)*] who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. 19So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.*

1. Jesus appeared to Ananias in a vision.
	1. The Lord didn’t necessarily make it easy for Ananias to find Paul.
		1. He told him to go to Straight Street and find Judah’s house.
		2. Judah was a pretty popular name and Damascus was a very large city.
		3. Ananias obeyed the Lord even though he had heard about Paul and knew he was dangerous. ***This was a man of FAITH!***
		4. The Lord told Ananias He would show Paul how much he would have to suffer for Christ.
			1. Remember how we talked about Paul’s thorn in the flesh and how he was given a “messenger of Satan” because of the abundance of revelations he was given.
			2. The thorn in the flesh was NOT an eye disease.
			3. A lot of preachers completely misuse that scripture to say that it is not God’s will to heal.
			4. Don’t fall for man’s tradition.
			5. Be a “STICKLER FOR THE WORD OF GOD”.
			6. Ill. Joanne saying she can never live with Charles in Heaven.

Conclusion:

Saul’s life was changed on the road to Damascus. He had a vision of Jesus and was blinded. While he was blind the Lord was dealing with someone else to minister to Paul. Once everyone did what the Lord told them to do, everything worked out like the Lord said it would. It is so important to listen to what the Lord tells you to do and to follow His instructions implicitly. You never know who God may have coming to pray for you. Your Ananias may be on his way this afternoon.