



Sunday, February 19, 2012

Conversion of Saul: A Vision of Jesus

Speaker: Joe Boot

Scripture: Acts 9:1-31; Acts 22:3-16

Sermon Notes:

1. The conversion of Saul was critical to global gospel expansion, and to the writing of the New Testament itself.
2. Paul's Roman citizenship and education in classical and rabbinic studies prepared him uniquely for his apostleship.
3. However, in Acts 9 we find Saul breathing out threats and murder against the church in the name of God.
4. God prepares us in advance for a purpose and calling, by our education, trials, family, and experiences.
5. The persecution of Christ followers continues in our day, as humanism imposes its values on Christians in the public square.
6. The murderous attitudes against the church today may be done in the name of Allah, or in the name of equality under humanism.
7. In the face of this opposition, God is bigger and more powerful; the grace, mercy and laughter of God are manifested in the face of persecution.
8. When we are persecuted for standing for Christ, it's Christ Himself that they are persecuting.
9. A vision of God by the power of the Holy Spirit can change anybody, because conversion is the work of God (2 Corinthians 4:4-6).
10. The transformation of Saul is so radical that he turns from violent opposition to zealous preaching, willingly enduring perils and even martyrdom for Christ.
11. Even the most hostile opponents of the gospel can be subdued by a vision of Christ and brought under His rule and authority.
12. We have to be faithful in our calling, but leave the results up to God because He's omnipotent and we are not.
13. Much of what is dubbed 'emergent Christianity' today is based on pragmatism, sociological technique, and compromise; by contrast, the church with a living gospel has the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit.
14. God doesn't need our feeble pragmatism to convert people. It's His work.

15. Saul's conversion likewise rules out contemporary concepts of inclusivism: You can't be 'saved' without knowing it, by sincere adherence to false beliefs. Paul was a sincere, God-fearing man, yet a zealous opponent of salvation in Christ. He needed a Damascus road experience.
16. The revelation of the Living Christ is at work in His own people.
17. The Sovereign Lord is active not only in conversion, but also in the calling and assignment of Saul.
18. Paul receives a vision for the gospel and is transformed from arch-persecutor of the church into a chosen vessel to make known the gospel.
19. Paul is an instrument of God. There is equally a purpose to our calling (Acts 9:22).
20. After Paul is freed from his physical and spiritual blindness, he immediately preaches with boldness and power.
21. Ananias is sent to Saul so that he may receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 26:15-18; 28:25-28).
22. Jews and Gentiles in Christ are the new people of God. Those who reject the gospel made known by the Spirit, even if Hebrew by birth, are cast off (Acts 3:22-26).
23. Paul asks, "Who are you, Lord?" (identity) and "What shall I do?" (our destiny in Him) (Acts 9:5-6; Acts 22:10).
24. The Lord shows Himself to us, gives us a calling, and the power to do it.
25. We are not to be afraid in our calling. In the face of persecution, the Lord says to Paul, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent for I am with you..." (Acts 18:9,10).
26. The Lord says to Isaiah, *I will strengthen, help you, uphold you by my right hand* (Isaiah 41:10).

Application Questions:

1. How have the circumstances of our lives prepared us for service in the Kingdom of God?
2. What persecution does the Church in the Western world face today? How ought we to respond to the opposition and persecution we face?
3. How can we in the West help or comfort Christians facing violent persecution and martyrdom in other parts of the world?
4. What is inclusivism? Is there biblical support for the idea of inclusivism? Provide scripture references to back up your answer.
5. What part do programs, strategic planning, cultural analysis, and marketing techniques play in growing the Church? What makes a church's evangelism 'effective'?
6. Can a person come to salvation in Christ apart from the work of the Holy Spirit? Defend your answer with scripture.