

(Acts) Saved and Serving

by Brian Brodersen

Saul of Tarsus, a former persecutor of Christians, is converted and becomes a passionate advocate for the faith, preaching the Christ in the synagogues and contending for the faith.

Duration: 52:39

Scripture: Acts 9:1

Topics: "Conversion Experience", "Christian Service"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the extraordinary conversion of Saul of Tarsus, Christianity's most ardent opponent at the time. The preacher expresses his regret for not being able to fully cover this topic in a previous sermon. He emphasizes the importance of serving the Lord and encourages the congregation to realize that God has work for them to do wherever they are. The preacher uses the example of Saul, who immediately began preaching about Christ after his conversion, to inspire the listeners to step out and impact the world around them.

Transcript

Let's pray. Father, we pray now as we look together once again at this great study in the book of Acts. Lord, we pray that you teach us about the Christian life, we pray you teach us about the church, we pray you teach us about ministry.

Lord, all those things that are packed into this great little history of the early days of the church, teach us through these things. And Lord, as we're praying tonight as a body, we want to also just remember our country. We want to pray for our president and our leaders, Lord, that you give them wisdom and the critical decisions that they're making at this time.

We pray, Lord, for our military, that you would be with them. And we pray for those who are believers among them, that they would really shine bright at this time and be used by you. And Lord, we pray that you would use these things that are happening, the various crises that are developing to awaken people to the need to be living for eternity and not for just this moment.

So use these events in the history of our nation to turn people's hearts toward you, we pray. We commit these things to you in Jesus name. Amen.

Cover, of course, the extraordinary conversion of Christianity's most ardent opponent at the time, and that, of course, was the man Saul of Tarsus. And we looked together last week at those verses that dealt with his conversion. Unfortunately, I told the Monday Night Study people I felt like I was preaching from another planet last Saturday night.

I was still in another time zone. And, you know, I was so looking forward to that particular portion. And I looking back on it, I wonder what in the world did I say? I was just so spaced out.

But hopefully between my lips and your ears, God did something to communicate clearly to you about that great event that happened, the conversion of this man, Saul of Tarsus. So as we pick up in verse 20, we're picking up the story. Saul, as you remember, he was on his way to Damascus as the chief persecutor of the Christians.

He'd been given authority by the high priest to go to Damascus and find anyone in the synagogues that was believing that Jesus was the Messiah to arrest them, bring them back to Jerusalem and imprison them, try them, put them to death, whatever they were going to do. He was on a mission to do that. And then, of course, we find that the Lord arrested him.

He was going to arrest the believers and the Lord arrested him, knocked him off of his horse, blinded him. And Saul looked up and said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I'm Jesus, whom you're persecuting. And then, of course, he humbled himself and he said, Lord, what would you have me to do? And Jesus said, get up and I'm going to show you the things that you're going to do.

And then he went into Damascus and he was there for three days and three nights. He didn't eat anything or drink anything as he was just contemplating this and no doubt living in all this remorse of what he'd been doing now that he understands that he's been persecuting the very Messiah that his people had been hoping for all of these years. And no doubt he would have himself been a person who was looking for the Messiah, but he missed him when he came in and he was persecuting him.

But all of this is now changed and the Lord is commissioning this man. So he sends Ananias and Ananias says, but Lord, I've heard all kinds of things about him. And Jesus said, don't worry, just go.

He's a vessel of mine that I've chosen to take my name before Gentiles and the kings and the rulers of Israel. And so Ananias went and laid hands on Saul and he received his sight because he had been blinded and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. All this happened there in Damascus over the following days, immediately following his conversion.

And so now we come to verse 20 and notice it says immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues that he is the son of God. So Saul didn't waste any time. The moment he was able to get back up and get going with the same kind of intensity and passion that he was going about trying to destroy the church.

Now he's going to become its most ardent advocate, and he begins immediately by preaching the Christ in the synagogues there in Damascus. You know, it's interesting that for those that God does call into the ministry, the ministry of teaching and preaching his word, quite often the ministry begins for them at the moment of their conversion. There was a man in this country back in the eighteen hundreds named Charles Finney.

Charles Finney was a great evangelist and was used mightily by God to bring about the conversions of many people. And it's interesting when you read the story of his own conversion, he was converted, baptized in the Holy Spirit and became a preacher all in the same day. It just like we're reading about Saul here.

It was just an immediate sort of a thing. And I've I was thinking about that. And I've noticed that, you know, there is sort of a pattern for those that God is calling into that kind of thing.

Often times, from the moment of their conversion, the ministry begins for them. I think of somebody like Raul Reese and who would have ever known back at the time that Raul got converted, that he would be a pastor like he is today, that he would be shepherding a large flock, that he would be used in a worldwide ministry. But back in those days, the moment he was converted, he went out and he began to preach just much like what we're reading about Saul here.

He went back to his old high school and he asked if he could come on the campus and he stood up and started preaching to the students. And there are many that you find as you look at their testimonies, those who are serving the Lord in preaching and teaching ministries today who were more or less thrust right into the ministry, in a sense, not in the fullest sense, but in a sense, from the very beginning. And I think there's some truth to that in just about every one of our lives, really.

Whatever God is calling us to do doesn't call everybody to be preachers or Bible teachers or that sort of thing. But it seems to me that when the Lord really gets a hold of somebody's life, immediately they want to do something for the Lord. They want to just they want to serve the Lord.

They don't you know, it doesn't matter anything will do anything. And that's just an indicator of a of a genuine work of God in somebody's life. They are touched by the Lord.

And so they want to do something. They just and we've had many people over the years who would come to the church and just say, I want to do anything. I don't care what it is.

I'll pick up trash, I'll pull weeds, I'll do whatever needs to be done. God has touched my life and I just want to give something back to him. And so that pattern, I think, is fairly consistent when God touches a person.

So Saul immediately begins to preach the Christ in the synagogues. He begins to preach that he is the son of God. Now, you see, that was the very.

Bone of contention that the Pharisees and the Sadducees both had with Jesus, they were appalled by his claim to be the son of God. Now, you see, to them, when Jesus claimed to be the son of God, they understood him to be claiming equality with God. That's crystal clear from the pages of the New Testament.

You see, sometimes we think of this term, the son of God, and we can almost think that, well, of course, Jesus is the son of God. But that doesn't mean he's God or that he's equal to God. And we sometimes sort of interpret the son of God as a term that defines him as less than deity.

But as a matter of fact, it defines him as deity. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John, verse 18, it says that they sought to stone him because he being a man continually was making himself equal with God because he claimed that God was his father. You see, claiming that God was his father personally, that was a claim to deity because, of course, the son has the same nature as his father.

And you remember, perhaps at the trial of Jesus, when Caiaphas said to him, finally, he said, he said, I adjure thee by the living God. Tell me, are you the son of God? And Jesus said, I am. And he ripped his clothes and said, what further need do we have of witnesses? That's the blasphemy right there.

Jesus was claiming equality with God. So this was the main contention that the Pharisees and Sadducees had with him. But now Saul, this Pharisee, this.

Advocate of Judaism is now proclaiming that the Christ is indeed the son of God now. That's what the scriptures taught and how it is that the Jews missed it or rejected it or still refuse to embrace it today is a bit of a mystery, because that's certainly the teaching of the Old Testament. If you look at the second Psalm, for example, remember there in the second Psalm, as the Lord is talking about the the kings of the earth gather together and the why do the heathen rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth gather together against the Lord and against his Messiah against his anointed.

That's the word for Messiah or Christ. And then it goes on to say that was it going to say my mind is going blank right now, but give me a moment and I'll come back. Oh, you know, then it goes to the thing.

And the Lord says, yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. And then it says, moving to the second person speaking, the second person of the Trinity, I will declare the decree. The Lord has said to me, you are my son today.

I have begotten you. And then later on in that song, as you approach the end of it, the author, David, the Holy Spirit says, kiss the son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way. So the second song made clear that the Messiah would be the son of God.

The 30th chapter of Proverbs speaks of God's son who has ascended or descended, who has gathered the wind in his fist, who has gathered the waters in his garment. What is his name and what is his son's name? And then, of course, Isaiah nine, six would be the classic passage. Therefore, unto us, a child is born unto us, a son is given a son whose son God's son.

And so Saul, who would have resisted and opposed and no doubt was persecuting Christians because of their claim that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, was deity, that he was the son of God. Now that's the first thing he begins to preach in the synagogues that Jesus, the Christ, is indeed the son of God. Then all who heard were amazed and they said, is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem and has come here for that purpose so that he might bring them bound to the chief priest? They were baffled.

You see, Paul was preaching this in the synagogues and they were, you know, undoubtedly initially when he would stand up to speak and they knew who he was, they thought, oh, here's the guy who's come to persecute the Christians. Let's hear what he has to say. What's the plan? What's the strategy? What are we going to do to these heretics? And he stands up and starts to preach their message.

And they're saying, wait a second, isn't this the guy that was coming to arrest them? And now he's actually proclaiming the same message. But Saul increased all the more in strength and he confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. And so he just became stronger and stronger.

And he was confounding the Jews. The implication is that he was debating with them. He was contending.

He was challenging them and he was, you know, sparring with them verbally and showing them that Jesus is the Christ, and then, of course, again, he would have gone through the Old Testament scriptures. He didn't have the New Testament at the time because he wrote most of it.

So he wouldn't have turned to Romans or Ephesians or any of those places. He would go back to the Jewish scriptures himself, and he would no doubt point to the the prophecies concerning the Christ. He would point to his lineage being the tribe of Judah, being of the house of David.

He would point to the fact that he was born in Bethlehem. He would point to the fact that he died the death that he died, that he was betrayed by a friend, that he rode into Jerusalem triumphantly on a donkey, as Zechariah had declared. He would have gone back and showed them all of those things, proving to them that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul was a preacher. He was an apologist as well. He was one who contended for the faith.

And there's a place for contending for the faith today. Some people have to be convinced we live in a world that is immersed in skepticism when it comes to. Spiritual things, well, when it comes to biblical things, at least I think spiritual things in a general sense, you can get a lot of people to believe almost anything, but the truth, it's unbelievable the stuff that people will follow after.

But because there's such a skepticism that has pervaded our culture, it's important that we, like Saul, know how to contend for the faith. It's important that we know what we believe and that we know why we believe what we believe and that we can stand up against the opposition that comes. That's what he was doing there.

And we have examples of that all throughout the scripture. So it's our responsibility to educate ourselves. It's important that we know the facts and are able to address people with the facts and to clear up the misconceptions, to clear up the confusion, to clear up the doubt that so many people live with because they've been listening to all the wrong voices and just assuming that.

Well, you know, these brilliant people have said there is no God, so there must not be a God. The scientists have declared there's no God, so they must be right because they're scientists or whatever the case might be. We've got to be able to contend against that.

Peter reminded us that we're to sanctify the Lord in our hearts and be ready always to give every man an answer for the reason for the hope that is in us. And the word there for answer is an apologia or as we call it, an apologetic, a defense of the faith. And that's what Paul was doing.

So it says now in verse 23, after many days were passed, the Jews plotted to kill him. Now, here's an interesting thing. Luke.

As the historian. There are certain things that he just completely passes by. This is not by any stretch a thorough history of the early days of the church.

Luke has a purpose in mind. And so he's just choosing out certain things and he's going to address those things. Other things he completely leaves out of the account.

So we shouldn't think when we read the book of Acts that this is all that was going on at the time. This was the only thing that was happening because there are a lot of other things that were happening that were

simply not told about. And how do I know that? I know that because this reference to the many days here, when you go into Paul's epistle to the Galatians, you find out that the many days is actually more than a three year period.

So many days is right. I mean, you know, you might read many days, many days. OK, what's many days? I don't know.

Ten days, 20, 30 days, many days. No, three and a half years, probably. That's the reference based on Paul's statement in Galatians 1:18.

There, Paul tells us about things that happened that Luke is recording, but not going into any detail on. And so what actually happened, according to Paul, is after his conversion and after his initial ministry in the synagogues, according to Paul in Galatians, he left Damascus and he went into Arabia. Now, at that time, Arabia bordered Syria right there close to Damascus.

And so Paul went into Arabia for a period of time. He doesn't tell us exactly how long he spent in Arabia, and he doesn't really tell us what he did in Arabia. But the implications are that he went into a deserted area and it was there that he was personally instructed by the Lord Jesus.

He talks quite frequently about how he did not learn his gospel from man. He wasn't taught it by man, but he was actually taught it by revelation from the Lord. And so it was during that three year period that Paul was getting his education from the Lord.

Remember, the other apostles had had a three year period of preparation with Jesus, and now he gets his three year period or so by going out into this wilderness area there in Arabia. Some have actually conjectured that he went to Mount Sinai, which he would later say Mount Sinai is in Arabia. And there were Moses was given the law.

Paul was given the gospel for the Gentiles. That's speculation. We don't know if that happened, but it might have.

Yet we do know that there is a three year period of time that elapses here. And then Paul comes back into Damascus and obviously would continue to teach in the synagogues and continue his disputing with the Jews. And so after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him so they couldn't contend with him verbally.

They couldn't refute his theology. They couldn't deny that what he was saying was not a very real possibility. So they decided, let's just get rid of him.

Let's kill him. But their plot became known to Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Now, remember, Jesus had said to him or he had said to Ananias actually regarding Saul, he had said, I will show him the great things that he must suffer for my sake.

And that began pretty quickly. So the one who formerly was the persecutor is now the persecuted. The one who formerly was seeking to put the Christians to death.

Now he himself is being sought and they're wanting to kill him. So then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. In the 11th chapter of 2nd Corinthians, Paul mentions this.

Event. And he tells us something that is of historical interest. He tells us that it occurred under artists, the king of Damascus.

Now, historically, we know that artists reigned from 37 to 39 A.D. So what that tells us is that Paul was converted somewhere between probably 34 and 36 A.D. Jesus. Was crucified in probably 32 A.D., that would seem to be the best reckoning 32 A.D. So it was just a couple of years after the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ that Saul of Tarsus was converted. So between 34 and 35, that's when artists was the king of Damascus, and that's when this event occurred that he tells us about in 2nd Corinthians 11.

That's recorded by Luke here where they let him down in a basket. Now, in those days, of course, houses would have been built on the wall of the city. And so perhaps some believers lived in those houses and they hid Paul in the house.

And then at night they would lower him through the window down. And there he was able to flee and he escaped with his life. He left there and he went to Jerusalem.

So he's been a believer now for over three years and for the first time he comes to Jerusalem. Now, again, in Galatians chapter one, he tells us all of this. He says, I didn't immediately confer with flesh and blood once I became a believer.

I didn't immediately go to visit the other apostles and to be instructed by them. No, he says, I went into Arabia and that's where the idea is comes from that he went there to be personally instructed by the Lord. He says, but then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem and I spent 15 days with Peter.

And so that's what we're reading about in the history here. So he came to Jerusalem and he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him and did not believe that he was a disciple. So even though this lengthy period of time has passed.

He left Jerusalem on a mission to persecute the Christians and nobody's seen him since then, but word obviously had come back that he had been converted. Yet there were a lot of skeptics. There were a lot of people that thought, no way that is not possible.

I won't believe it until I see it sort of a thing. And some of them perhaps thought this is a plot of some sort. He's working out a plan to eventually get us all.

So there was a lot of suspicion concerning him. They just did not believe that he was a disciple. They had not imagined probably that such a conversion could occur.

They probably just thought that he was a person that was beyond the scope of the grace of God, like sometimes we do, like we mentioned in our last study, sometimes we think people are beyond the scope. There's you know, there's nothing that could be done for him. But Saul and many other since then have proved that that's not the case.

But Barnabas now, Barnabas comes back into the picture again. And remember, Barnabas, this was a name that was given to him. It means son of encouragement.

Son of consolation. And this name was given to him because that's the kind of a person he was. He was an encourager.

He was the kind of person who would come alongside and lift somebody else up. He was the kind of person that would come alongside and help another one into the things that God had for them. And so Barnabas, he took him and he brought him to the apostles.

Evidently, Barnabas had had some sort of an encounter with him. Perhaps Barnabas had gone up to Damascus and had seen him in action there. Maybe he had just had some contact with him once he arrived in Jerusalem.

Whatever the personal contact was, we don't know. But Barnabas was familiar with what had been happening with Saul, and he will report that to them. But he takes him and he brings him to the apostles and he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had spoken to him and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

So again, how Barnabas knew all of this, we don't know. But Barnabas, he reaches out to Saul. And as he reaches out to Saul, he brings him in to that circle of the apostles and they embrace him at this point.

You know, being a Barnabas is a noble. Calling being a person that reaches out to others, you know, this is a big church and it's easy for people to get lost. And it can be such a blessing when you come in and you don't know a soul and you don't have any idea, you know what's going on for somebody to just reach out and say, how are you doing? Are you new here? And just, you know, bring a person in.

I encourage you to do that. Look for those opportunities. You know, sometimes after you've been a Christian for a while, you sort of forget about some of the things that you even experienced maybe when you were a new believer.

I know I've done that a lot of times. You know, I've been a Christian for so many years now and so acquainted with the church and so comfortable in the church that you just walk in and you're at home. But a while back, for some reason or another, I just started thinking about what it was like when I first came here.

And I thought, wow, I forgot how intimidated I felt. I forgot how out of place I felt in some ways. I forgot that when I walked in here, I looked around this place and thought, I don't know a single person in here.

It was kind of scary. And I thank God that certain people reached out to me. Certain people came and introduced themselves and then introduced me to friends, and that is such an important thing to do.

And I encourage you to be a Barnabas, reach out to others, bring them in. One of the worst things that can happen in the church is to get the thing all divided up into a bunch of different cliques. You know, you walk in and here's a little group over here and and that's a closed group.

You know, you can't get into that group. And then over there you see another little group and a bunch of divisions all over the church. And you're standing there feeling just completely like an outsider.

I don't really think we have that problem so much these days. Doesn't seem to me that we do, but I remember when I first came many years ago, that's exactly the environment that I stepped into. And that is not a good thing because we're all part of the family of God and we don't want to be, you know, divided up over, you know, well, this group dresses like this and they wear their hair like that and they are into this kind of music and, you know, they're young and they're old and all of those sorts of things.

We're one big family and we need to all blend together with one another and not be divided at all over those kinds of things that everybody else outside is divided up over. So be a Barnabas, reach out to people, be a Barnabas in another sense. When you see God's hand on somebody's life, encourage him.

Sometimes people see God's hand on somebody's life and then they get jealous. And no, I don't want to encourage that because they might be better than I am. They might do more for the Lord than I do or something like that.

And that's just so childish. When we see the hand of God on somebody's life, we need to encourage those gifts. We need to promote that.

We need to. Bless that and thank God for that, because we're all part of the same thing. We're all part of the same kingdom and we're all serving the same Lord and we're all ultimately about.

The business of the kingdom, not about our own business. I read a quote a few weeks ago from A.W. Tozer and the title of it was sort of a little article, really a couple of paragraphs. The title was I refuse to compete.

And basically what he was talking about was just all the competition that can sometimes go on in the church and how that hinders the work of God. But he said, I refuse to compete. I want to I want to embrace whatever God is doing.

And if God's doing something more on a greater level through somebody else than he's doing through me, I don't want to put that down. I don't want to judge that. I don't want to write that off because I'm not doing that.

I want to thank God for it because I am doing it. And when he said that, I thought that's exactly right. I am doing it because I'm part of the same body.

We're all members together. And what that person is doing, I'm doing and what I'm doing, you're doing. And we're all doing it together.

And Barnabas was one of those men. And, you know, as the history goes, Paul will eclipse Barnabas in the story, at least for sure. And in the ministry, I think it would be fair to say that Paul's ministry on a human, invisible level, it went far beyond the ministry of Barnabas.

But Barnabas was a big enough man to just say, I see the gift of God in this guy's life and I want to support it. And like John the Baptist, if I've got a decrease so he can increase, let it happen. That's the kind of mentality that we need to have in the church.

So he was with him. Barnabas was with Saul there at Jerusalem, coming in and going out, and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenist. But they attempted to kill him.

So first it was the Jews in Damascus. They wanted to kill him. He fled.

He came to Jerusalem. He spent some time here. He's going in and out.

He's ministering. And now he's contending with the Hellenist. Now, it's highly probable that the Hellenist here are a reference to those same Jews that had contended with Stephen.

Now, remember, they contended with Stephen. They had Stephen arrested. They had Stephen executed.

And Saul was part of that bunch originally. It's highly probable that he went to those very synagogues, the synagogues that were predominantly Hellenistic or culturally Greek. And contended with them there.

No doubt thinking that, look, I was with you. I was part of the the persecution. I was leading the persecution.

Now I'm here to tell you guys that we've been wrong. I was wrong. You're wrong.

And he's attempting to get them to see what he's seen. But their hearts are hard and they plot now to kill him. Paul would later on make reference to this right here.

And he said that the Lord appeared to him one night and said, get out of Jerusalem. And he said, oh, no, Lord, you don't understand. I need to talk to these people because I know where they're at.

I know how they're feeling. Remember, I was just like them. Give me that opportunity.

And Jesus spoke to him and said, no, they won't hear you get out. And that's probably a reference to what was going on right here. So when the brethren found out when they found out about this plot by the Hellenists to assassinate Paul, they brought him down to Caesarea, which would have been the port, and they sent him out to Tarsus.

They just said, you need to get away for your own good. He was stirring up things in Jerusalem and his life was in danger. And so they sent him back to Tarsus.

Now, this is the last we hear about him for now another period of time. He goes, he tells us again in Galatians that he goes into back up into Syria and then over into Cilicia. Tarsus was in Cilicia.

And remember, he is Saul of Tarsus, meaning that's where he originated from. So he's going back to his homeland. And based on what he says in Galatians, he he went and ministered in back in his own country.

Now, how long he spent there, no one really knows. Some people estimate as few as eight years. Some people even go as far as saying he was probably more like 12 years.

I personally don't think it was that long, but there was a lengthy period of time, a few years, no doubt when he was just sort of on his own, gone back to his home, ministering in an area that he would have been familiar with from childhood. And then at a later point, he's going to be sought out once again by none other than Barnabas. And they will ultimately hook up in the ministry.

But now Luke leaves Saul and he moves back into the the account of the ministry that's going on right there around Jerusalem. And he's going to go back into the ministry of Peter. But prior to doing that, in verse 31, he says, then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were edified.

Now, notice one thing. Notice the reference to Galilee. There there's no record whatsoever in Acts of anything that went on in Galilee, except here is a reference to the fact that there were churches in Galilee.

So again, like I was saying earlier, it just shows us that the book of Acts is not. Nor was it ever intended to be a thorough history of what was happening there in the early church. It was Luke's particular account

based on the things that he wanted to communicate.

You know, one of the things about church history that I find personally annoying. Is whenever you read church history or whenever. References are made to church history.

It really is a limited history, but it doesn't seem like most people acknowledge that if you would go over to the bookstore tonight and buy a book on church history, what you will find is that the history will deal predominantly. At least up until the 1700s, it will deal predominantly with Christianity in Europe. But yet the impression that's given is that that's the only place there was any Christianity, and that's why I think it's so unfortunate, because I personally believe just like there were many other things going on at the time that Luke didn't record.

I believe that there were many things happening all over the place that we don't have the record of. But nevertheless, the Lord was working. To think that God was just limited to the continent of Europe and a very small portion of it for so many hundreds of years, I just think it's a stupid position.

You see, the reason why Europe had such a. Well, the focus was so much on Europe is because in Europe, Christianity blended with. Blended with the culture, blended with the government and the governments became Christianized. Or the Christianity became paganized, and so, you know, you're really looking at a history more in the sense of just a cultural or a national history of various nations.

Christianity happens to be a part of that. And because it's it's a it's a national. Type of a history or a cultural history or history of various peoples, it was, of course, written down and Christianity was all part of it.

But I'm convinced that in other places where there was not any connection between Christianity and the government where Christianity remained pure, separated from the government, persecuted by the government, that there was plenty of activity that went on. But it's never come down to us in any official record because it wasn't part of the system. It remained separate from the system.

So that's just my little tangent that I wanted to go off on about church history. But anyway, going back to this, there were churches in Galilee and so no doubt all over the region. Jesus, of course, spent so much of his time ministering in Galilee, you know, in Capernaum today, you have to go on a trip to Israel.

There's a synagogue, the remains of a synagogue in Capernaum, and of course, Jesus taught, you remember, in the synagogue in Capernaum, this synagogue doesn't date back to the time of Jesus, but just shortly after his period, what they've come to believe actually now is that that synagogue was a synagogue of Messianic Jews or Jews who were believers in Jesus as the Messiah. There's certain decor there on some of the parts of the synagogue that they found that seemed to imply that these were believers. So that whole Galilean region and undoubtedly over into the Gentile parts of it on the other side of the sea, those places where Jesus would have ministered in his public ministry, churches were springing up all over the country at the time.

But again, all we're told about him is that. They were in peace and being edified, the churches there in Galilee, so they had peace, and I think the the implication is that the persecution calmed down. The Lord allowed the persecution to come because, remember, they kind of settled into Jerusalem and he wanted to get them out.

So he allows the persecution to come and they began to spread out. But now persecution has served its purpose. So God, I think, would intervene.

And now there's a time of peace and the churches are then being edified and they're walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. And they were multiplied. So things calm down a bit and there's a time of church growth happening.

There's a time of more people being brought in. Blessing comes to the church now from this point again. Luke takes us back over into the ministry of Peter, and we will go ahead and pick that up in our next study as we again see what Peter is doing and.

Remember again from Galatians, we find that. As things progress, Peter's ministry is going to center primarily on the Jews, Paul's ministry is going to center primarily on the Gentiles. And there's such an interesting twist to that.

You know, if you were to look at both men. As candidates for. You know, these two ministries, humanly speaking, it seems like.

The choice should have been just the opposite of what it was. I mean, after all, it seemed like if you wanted to reach the Jews, send them an ex rabbi. I mean, how could you find anyone better? This guy knows it all.

He's been there. He's been at the top. He's been a pupil of Gamaliel.

He's been a Pharisee. He might have been part of the Sanhedrin. If you want to reach the Jews, send them send them the best you.

If you want to reach the Gentiles, send them somebody that can relate to him, Peter, he's a fisherman, he's a Jew, certainly he's a devout Jew, but he's not a scholar. He's not a rabbi in that sense. He's not that highly educated person that Paul was or or any of that.

He was, you know, just an ordinary man. And the vast majority of the Gentiles, especially in that region, would have been much like that. And it seemed like Peter would have been the perfect person for the Gentiles.

But God does it just the opposite of what we would think he ought to do. Just goes to show us that so often what we're thinking is probably wrong. If we've got a bright idea, it's probably not a very good one.

It's probably probably the complete opposite of what God is actually thinking. That's why it's so important to pray about everything and get the mind of the Lord. You see, because God doesn't work the way we work.

And, you know, sometimes we can we can fall into that sort of trap today, even we can think that, oh, no, this is the person that needs to be doing that, because look at how I mean, they're just groomed for it there. And yet they might not be the person at all. And someone else might come along and you think, oh, no, no way.

But yet they're the person. God is still doing that today, because, as Paul would say, he's chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. He's chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty in the base things of the world to bring to shame the things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence.

And so, Paul, the great, brilliant mind, the Jewish theologian, theologian, his ministry is not going to really be to the Jews. He'll have occasional opportunities to minister to him, but God is going to send him to the Gentiles and Peter, the fisherman, the country bumpkin, the common folk who the Pharisees said these cursed people, they don't know anything about the law. They're just a bunch of hillbillies.

That's pretty much what they were implying about the Galileans. He's the one that's going to minister to the Jews. He's the one that is going to lead the work in Jerusalem.

He's been doing it already, but he's going to continue to do that. And so we learn so many things from this wonderful little historical book that we have here, but I want to close tonight again, just encouraging you to serve the Lord, because when God saves us, he saves us to serve him. And there's a million different ways that we do that, depending on who we are and where we are and what we do, but just know this wherever you are, God's got work for you to do.

You don't have to quit your job and come down to the church and fill out an application to be a pastor to serve the Lord. You need to just realize that, Lord, you've got me where I'm at now, God, how do you want to use me? What do you want to do? And like Saul, who immediately preached the Christ in the synagogues. Just step out and say, Lord, how can I be used by you to impact the world that you've placed me in? Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the great privilege of serving you. And Lord, it's true when you touch our hearts and save us, Lord, we want to give back. And yet sometimes, Lord, we don't even know how to do that or where to begin.

And so, Lord, just impressed upon us that it begins right where we are. And Lord, we ask you tonight to move us into service to you. Lord, maybe it's right on our job.

Maybe it's right in our home with our families. Maybe it's in our neighborhood. Maybe, Lord, it's right here at the church.

Maybe it's moving to another area. Maybe it's at a different church. Maybe it's in another part of the world.

Lord, we don't know. But, Lord, we know we want to serve you. We thank you that you served us, that you gave your life for us.

And Lord, we want to give back to you. Lord, help us to be bold in these days. Help us to be wise.

Help us, Lord, to educate ourselves so we can contend for the faith when need be. Lord, make us like Barnabas. Help us, Lord, to reach out to embrace others.

Help us to support others and encourage the work of God in their lives. Lord, spread your work and Lord, we pray for this place we live in Orange County. We pray, Lord, that you would pour your spirit upon this place.

We pray, Lord, for the people we work with and live near and are associated with. We pray that you would begin to convict their hearts of sin. We pray, Lord, that you'd open up doors and opportunities would be provided so we could invite them to even come to church with us.

Lord, we know that no man can come to you unless the father draws him. And so, Lord, we pray that you would draw people to yourself. In this county, Lord, we pray for the.

Hundreds of thousands that are here that are lost, we pray, Lord, that you would reach out and save many and use us, Lord. We pray use this fellowship. Bless the church.

And this community. That Lord. There would be a difference, a notable difference in our community because you have visited us.

We pray that in Jesus name and for his glory. Amen.

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