

Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church!

I heard some feedback from last week's PastorBlast about wanting to learn more about the apostle, St. Paul so I thought I would share some more info today.

We first hear about St. Paul in the New Testament from the Acts of the Apostles (also known as the Book of Acts) chapter 7. He is known as Saul at this point. He is not a good guy in this part of the story. In Chapter 7 we hear about the killing of the disciple Stephen. Saul approved of the killing of Stephen. Saul was well known for being against the people that were following Jesus. He was a Jewish leader and he was trying to stop people from following Jesus even with force.

In Chapter 9, he was still trying to find more followers of Jesus to kill. He received approval from the authorities to bring any followers of Jesus he finds to Jerusalem for death. He was on the road to the town called Damascus when a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with Saul stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so the men led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

There was a follower of Jesus in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord told him to look for a man named Saul as this man named Saul was receiving a vision that Ananias would help him regain his sight. Ananias knew the reputation of Saul as one who has helped kill followers of Jesus so he questioned the Lord. The Lord said to Ananias that Saul will be an instrument to bring the Lord's name before both Jewish and non-Jewish people. Ananias followed the Lord's instructions and found Saul and placed his hands on Saul and immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and his sight was restored and he was baptized.

We often hear that Saul's name was changed to Paul at his conversion on the road to Damascus. We don't see that written in the scripture. We even see his name as Saul throughout the interaction with Ananias and after. It's not until chapter 13 that we see his name as Paul, also known as Paul. There is no Biblical explanation of when the name change occurred. Some scholars even believe he went by both names. Saul when dealing with Jewish people and Paul when dealing with non-Jewish people.

While there may not have been a dramatic name change, there was a dramatic conversion of Saul/Paul. He went from one day breathing threats and murder against the disciples of Jesus to proclaiming the name of Jesus for salvation.

Our congregation is definitely named after a faithful apostle. He wasn't perfect and he goes through his struggles yet never stops proclaiming Jesus. I say that is a good way to be – always keeping the faith in the one who loves and saves, Jesus the Christ.

Take care and God bless

*-PrAshley*

