

Hi folks. Hope you have a great week! Don't forget bible study this wed. carry-in meal at 6pm, bible study at 7pm

God bless you!

Pastor Don

OFFERING: Gaylord Kambarami is the general secretary of the bible society in

Zimbabwe. One day he was passing out New Testaments. A certain man

Was particularly belligerent to him. The man said if you give me a bible, I will tear the pages out and use them for cigarette rolling papers. That will be fine as long as you promise to read each page before you smoke it. The man said he would do that. 15 years later these 2 men met at the Methodist convention in Zimbabwe. The man told Gaylord that he kept his promise. He smoked Matthew, Mark, and Luke but when he read John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" "I couldn't smoke anymore. My life was changed from that moment on. He asked Christ into his heart and became an evangelist. Aren't we glad that God's book is more than just words on paper?"

"I Saw The Light"

Acts 9:1-19

April 14, 2013

Farmer Browns wife went into labor and he went and fetched the doctor. It was midnight and dark in the dimly light house. The doctor asked farmer Brown to hold a lantern so he could see better. Soon out came a bouncing baby boy. Farmer Brown lowered the lantern but the doctor said don't lower the lantern, there is another baby on the way. A short time later, out came a second baby boy. As Farmer Brown lowered the lantern he said how a bout that, twins. Doc said don't set it down yet there's another one! Soon he delivered a little girl. Wow triplets exclaimed Farmer Brown as he lowered the lantern. No we aren't down yet said the doctor; raise that lantern. As Farmer Brown raised the lantern he was puzzled. He said gee doc, do you think it's the light that is attracting them?

A man was out cruising in his brand new Mercedes. The top was down, the breeze was blowing through his hair and he decided to open her up. As the

needle jumped up to 80mph he suddenly saw a flashing red and blue light behind him. "There ain't no way they can catch a Mercedes," he thought to himself and floored it. The needle hit 100 and then 120 but the lights were still behind him. "What am I doing?" he thought and pulled over. The cop came up to him, took his license, examined it, and said "I've had a tough shift and this is my last pull over. I don't feel like more paperwork so if you can give me an excuse for your driving that I haven't heard before you can go!" So the man said "Last week my wife ran off with a cop, and I was afraid you were trying to give her back!" "Have a nice night" said the officer.

Christians are commissioned by Christ to go into all the world and make disciples. We are to convert sinners to Christ. But we can't convert anyone; each person must choose Christ for themselves. We are all responsible for our own actions. No one can make us chose Christ just like no one can make us sin. Christians are to tell others about Jesus and live a life showing Him to everyone. Are we good examples of Christ? Are we telling others about Jesus? Can they see Christ in us? Does He look inviting to them?

Don Calhoun had \$2in his pocket when he left work and went to the Chicago Bulls game. When he arrived at the stadium, he was told that his ticket had been chosen to participate in a promotional event. Mr. Calhoun had a chance, one chance, to make a 3quarter shot. He was to stand at the opposite foul line and shoot the ball at the far basket, 75 feet away. He swished the shot!!!! He won \$50,000.00 a year for the next 20 years!!!! Sometimes one action, one decision, one moment can change our lives forever. That is what happens when we chose to receive Christ. Have we chosen Jesus for ourselves? Have we seen the light? Would you pray with me as we begin today's message. [Pray]

(Vs.1-2)Saul of Tarsus was a zealous persecutor of the church. We are 1st introduced to him in Acts 7:58 where he held the coats of those who stoned Stephen to death. Stephen was the 1st martyr of the church. Stephen was the 1st deacon board chairman. He was the leader of the 7 men chosen to look after the widows and orphans. He was falsely accused of blasphemy and stoned to death. Saul not only approved of this, he became one of the chief persecutors of the disciples of the Lord. This persecution forced believers to travel from Jerusalem to Samaria and all of Judea. God used this persecution to spread Christianity throughout the world. Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." God has ways to work out His promises. He works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. Who would have thought that any good could come from persecution? But Romans 8:28 promises us that "all things work together for good to them who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Do we believe that?

Chapter 9 opens with Saul seeking arrest warrants for any and all believers he may find in Damascus. Damascus was a big commercial city roughly 150 miles N.E. of Jerusalem. Lots of believers had fled there to avoid the persecution in Jerusalem. He went there to persecute and arrest those of "The Way". Believers were not yet called Christians. They were 1st called Christians in Antioch in Acts 11:26. But just before he arrived at his destination, Saul himself met Christ. Saul the persecutor was about to become Paul the proclaimer. Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle; the man who wrote over 1/3rd of the New Testament. Verses 3-6 tell us of Saul's conversion. (Read)

Suddenly, Saul was surrounded by a bright light; a light brighter than the sun. It was so bright he and everyone with him fell to the ground. Then a voice spoke to him. The voice simply said Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me? Not recognizing the voice Saul, asks who are you Lord. Saul wanted to know exactly who it was that was speaking to him; he found out. It was Jesus, whom he was persecuting, that's who was speaking to him. Since each Christian is in Christ; all Christians make up the church. When Saul was persecuting the church, he was in fact persecuting Jesus. Christians are the body of Christ. We are His hands and feet; God works through us if we let Him. This is why He gave us the Holy Spirit. We can do all things through Christ. Are we doing all that we can?

Jesus said it is hard to kick against the goads. A goad is a stick shaped into a sharp spike. It is used to train oxen to pull plows and carts. When an ox was yoked to a plow the first few times, it would kick and try to free itself from the yoke. The one steering the plow would have a long staff with one of these goads on the end positioned by the heels of the ox. Every time it kicked it would kick the goad. Soon it would stop kicking because it learned that kicking produced pain. Eventually it got used to the yoke and submitted its will to the masters. Saul was resisting God in a similar manner. Saul was ignoring the facts written for us in the scriptures. He soon was using these facts to bring others to Christ. Do we know these facts? Do we believe Jesus is the Messiah?

Saul asked Jesus what He wanted him to do. Talk about your instant conversions.

Do we ask Jesus what He wants us to do, or are we too busy telling Him what we want Him to do? Jesus told Saul to continue into Damascus where he would be told what to do. (Read Vs. 7-9)

Just as suddenly as it appeared, the light and the voice vanished. Saul's companions heard the voice but could not understand the words. Everyone saw the light. In Rev. John describes Jesus like this Rev. 1:13-16 "And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. He had in his right hand seven stars, out of his mouth went a two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength."

Saul had just had a life changing experience; he had just met the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was now officially qualified to be an Apostle; he had been hand picked by Jesus Himself. His whole life and the world was about to change. When this encounter was over, Paul could not see anything. He was blinded by this great light. His companions led him into the city where he fasted and prayed for 3 days. Saul's physical blindness helped him look inward where he saw his spiritual blindness. He now sought this same Jesus he had come to Damascus to persecute. (Read vs. 10-19)

Ananias was a man of God and a believer in Jesus Christ. Ananias was open to God's voice and obedient to His commands. God called Ananias to go to Paul, restore his sight, and baptize him. Ananias obeyed, even though he was a little hesitant. He asked God a question. He said I have heard about this man Saul. He has brought much harm to your saints in Jerusalem, and he has come here to take believers back to Jerusalem for trial

before the Sanhedrin. But God calmed Ananias' fears. He told him that Paul had been chosen as a vessel to bear Christ's name before Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel.

God had a plan for Paul, just like He has a plan for each of us. Paul was willing to allow God to fulfill His plan for his life, are we willing to let God fulfill His plan for our lives?

Ananias greeted Paul with the title brother. This shows Paul that Ananias knows of his conversion. All Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to love each other at all times. Jesus told us in John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Can the world see our love for fellow Christians?

Ananias not only called Saul brother, he laid his hands upon him. The laying of hands upon someone is symbolic that you are in agreement with them; that you support their ministry and you affirm God's call upon them. We still practice this today. When we anoint someone for healing or dedicate someone to a new mission for God. It is a symbol of Christian love. Then he reaffirmed that Paul truly had seen Christ on the road. Ananias believed it was a real encounter with Jesus, not just a dream or a vision. Christ is real and he really did speak to you Brother Saul. Paul was now one of the very few who had seen the resurrected Christ. Ananias told Saul that the Lord Jesus who appeared to him on the road has sent me to you so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes; his vision was restored and he arose and was baptized. Then he ate and was

strengthened. He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus. Saul was a new man. He was now Paul the Apostle. The same people he came to destroy were now feeding him with both spiritual and physical food. They helped him to understand what it means to be a Christian.

Soon Saul was proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. (Read v 20)
"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Now Saul had come full circle. He changed his name to Paul & began preaching Jesus in the synagogues.

Saul, the persecutor of the church, now is Paul, a spokesperson for the church. He preached Jesus with the same zeal he once opposed Him. This is what a personal encounter with Christ will do for us. Have we had a personal encounter with Christ? Do we know him as our personal savior?

Even more important than the words he spoke, was the life Paul was now leading. Everyone could see the change Jesus had made in his life. Paul changed more than just his name; he changed his life. Christ will do that for us. Has Christ made a difference in our lives; in the way we live; in the way we talk; in the way we act?

Paul had a dramatic conversion experience; not everyone does. For some, the decision to trust Christ is a simple one. They quietly ask Him into their heart and follow him forever. Others, like Paul, have a spectacular experience and a huge change in their life which everybody notices. The best way to come to Christ is by whatever means He uses to bring us to Him. We are all unique individuals. God knows what is best for us. We cannot base our Christian walk on someone else's experience. We each will meet Christ like Paul did, individually, one on one, just Jesus and us. Some need to be knocked flat on their back like Saul of Tarsus; others just need a little help in understanding the truth.

Jacob Koshy grew up in Singapore. He had one driving desire, to be rich and successful. This ambition led him into a world of gambling and drugs. He became leader of an international smuggling network. His world came crashing down around him though in 1980 when he was arrested and placed in a government drug rehabilitation prison. He and his ambitions, goals, and dreams were locked a way in a tiny cell and his heart was cold and empty. He was a smoker but smoking was not allowed in the prison, so he smuggled in tobacco and rolled it in the pages of a Gideon Bible. One day he fell asleep while he was smoking. He awoke to find the cigarette burned out and the only thing that remained of it was one sentence written on the paper; Acts 9:4 "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Jacob asked for another bible. This one he read. He read all about Paul's conversion. He realized if God would forgive Paul and help him, He would forgive and help anybody. So Jacob knelt down in his tiny prison cell and

invited Christ into his heart. He shared his story with other prisoners. Soon he was released, found a good church, married a good Christian girl and became a missionary in the Far East. Jacob said "Who would have believed that I could find the truth by smoking the word of God?"

God can use any person if they are willing to let Him use them. God can even use a dog to lead someone to Christ. Missionary James King tells the true story of an African woman who always attended church with her old dog. She would always set next to the isle and the dog would lie in the isle beside her. The woman always went forward at the end of the service to the alter for prayer. The dog always accompanied her to the alter. The woman's husband was a cruel heathen who deeply resented her devotion to Christ. One day he beat her to death and denied her a Christian burial. After the woman's death the husband noticed that every Sunday and Wed. During church hours, the dog would disappear for about 2 hours. After several months of this strange behavior, the man was so curious he followed the dog. The dog went to the church and lay in his usual isle spot.

At the invitation, the dog went forward as he always did with the man's wife and lay where the man's wife had prayed all these past years. The man was so moved; he went forward and gave his heart to Jesus. Now the dog comes to church with a new master.

Billy Graham tells about another Christian wife in Africa. She was a mother of 2 and a banker's wife. As she got more and more devoted to Christ, her husband grew more and more distant from her. Finally his anger and bitterness toward her reached its peak. The man decided to kill her, the children and himself. But he needed motivation, so he thought he would accuse her of stealing his keys. He had keys to the bank, the house and his car on the same key ring. He left the bank early one afternoon and went to the bar to drink up the courage he needed to fulfill his plan. As he walked across the foot bridge over the Nile River, he threw the keys into the river.

His wife stopped by the fish market late that afternoon to buy a fish to fix for supper. When she was cleaning the fish, she found her husband's keys in its belly. She was puzzled but cleaned them up and hung them on their proper hook. Late that night the banker came home thoroughly drunk. His family was already in bed. He beat on the door until his wife opened it and he screamed at her "woman where are my keys?" Imagine his surprise when after she let him in, she took the keys from the hook and handed them to him. He immediately sobered up and fell on his knees asking both her and Christ to forgive him. He accepted Jesus right then and there.

The ways people receive Christ are as varied as they are. It is the act of receiving Him that is important. Every person must choose Jesus for themselves. It is a personal decision. We are all free to choose or

reject Jesus. Have we accepted Him or are we still rejecting Him? Are we wasting time persecuting and being jealous of believers; or are we joining them?

Christians need to make the Christian life look inviting to nonbelievers. We not only must pray for lost souls, we need to tell them what Jesus has done for us. Part of that is sharing with them our conversion experience, whether it is dramatic like Paul's or simple and undramatic. We all have a story to tell; are we willing to tell it? We must live a Christian life in their presence. Our life is the only bible some people will ever read. No one cannot learn of Jesus by inhaling the pages of scripture in tobacco smoke; we can only learn of Him by reading those pages. We can only learn of Him by listening to those who have a relationship with Him. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. We must share God's word. Our faith experiences are part of God's word; they are how we have interpreted them in our lives. Our Christian witness includes not just bible verses, but our actions, history and life style. In order to follow Jesus some people have really changed. Some are in the process of changing. The Christian walk is a life long journey. Christians need to help each other. Ananias helped Paul, who are we helping? Who helped us? Do we share our knowledge and love of Christ? Does our walk match our talk? Do we share our Jesus? Are we working for Christ, or are we persecuting him? Have we seen the light? Amen. Let's pray.