

Peter, Paul and Who?

(Series: Reimagining Church; Message Twenty-Two)

Acts 9:19b-43

A. God is never pleased with an independent spirit

“Out of the night that covers me, Black as the pit from pole to pole. I thank whatever gods may be, for my unconquerable soul...It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” (Invictus, William Ernest Henley)

B. In wanting to control our own destiny, we ignore we belong to God

1. We were created for dependency; we were created for community
2. Our culture ignores developing time-forged character
3. God takes His time; he prefers to work with the humble, broken, and bruised

PAUL (ACTS 9:19-31)

A. God goes to work to dissipate Saul’s stubborn will and replace it with His

B. Saul is gifted and intelligent; but unprepared for the challenges ahead

1. Forming Paul for ministry will take time, training, and suffering

“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10)

2. It is a fundamental Biblical principle and a process God loves to use

C. Saul’s words were viewed as a balm by some and a threat by Jewish leaders

1. So the hunter had become the hunted; the proud is humbled
2. His fellow “Christ-followers” (notice: no names) come to the rescue

a. The man destined to be a proud leader in the Sanhedrin places his life in the hands of the very group of disciples he once sought to destroy

b. Learning to trust others is just the first step. Then comes the waiting

“Paul’s career began like that of Moses, with a flight and then with a long period of waiting, waiting, nothing but waiting” (R.C.H. Lenski)

c. Then comes the rejection - being shunned because of one’s past

3. God brings a relatively unknown, a “who” we’ve met only once (4:36) to assist: *“Barnabas...out of nowhere...steps up to advocate for Saul”*

4. The city Saul once “owned” turns against him and Saul is gone!

D. Without Saul the church flourished (Acts 10:31)

1. So much for being indispensable. Saul learns he needs God and others more than God and others need him

2. As his transformation continues, Saul will change his name to Paul (from the Greek word *Paulos*, meaning “small, little”)

PETER (9:32-43)

A. Peter was the oldest and “first” of the Disciples

1. Peter is the disciple who “betrayed” his Rabbi; not once, but three times!
2. Peter is the disciple Jesus asks, not once, but three times: *“Do you love me?”*
3. Peter went through the humiliation protocol so God could use him

B. In Lydda, Peter encounters a man paralyzed for eight years

1. Peter heals him saying, *“Jesus Christ heals you! Rise up and make your bed”*
2. Luke makes the source of Peter’s healing power clear: Jesus!

C. In Joppa, a woman named Tabitha (Dorcas) falls sick and dies!

1. Saul kneels by her and prays, and then he tells her to rise! She does!
2. God answers our prayers. The power comes from Jesus. Many believed

“With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27)

3. Notice the evidence of the slow and transforming work of God

AND WHO

A. In this passage the Christians are called “saints” (9:13,32,41)

1. Saul uses the word (*hagios*) to designate a church member
 - a. The word translated “*holy*” has the root meaning of “*different*”
 - b. God’s people are to be holy - distinguishable from the rest of the world
2. We are called to depend on God and serve with others

B. The secret to building a great church is building it God’s way

1. It is not about us; it’s about God
2. We are neither masters of our fate nor captains of our soul
 - a. All believers, even Saul and Peter, have to learn that before God will use us
 - b. It will hurt; it always does. But in His time, he’ll make our dependent spirit beautiful and use us to build His church!