

The Conversion of the Worst of Sinners

I Tim. 1:11-16

Introduction

- The title expresses how the Apostle Paul identified himself many years after his conversion as he wrote to Timothy about the mercy, grace, love, sacrifice and longsuffering of God
- Translations:
 - KJV -- ...sinners, of whom I am chief
 - ESV -- ... of whom I am foremost
 - HCSB -- ...sinners, and I am the worst of them
- As Paul looked back on his life before his conversion, he saw one who was...
 - A blasphemer → one who spoke against and compelled others to speak against the name of Christ.
 - A persecutor → Acts 7:58; 8:1,3; 9:1,4-5; Acts 26:10; Gal. 1:13
 - Injurious → insolent, a wanton aggressor. (Acts 26:11)
- As we look at the conversion of Saul, we see the greatness of God's love, mercy and longsuffering.
- We see his total dedication for the cause he once violently opposed.
 - The persecutor became the persecuted.
 - The afflicter became the afflicted.
 - The pursuer became the pursuer.
- Lesson: What do we see as we look at the conversion of Saul.

I. Ignorance Is No Excuse – The Necessity of Knowing

- Many believe that God will simply overlook sins that are committed in ignorance, and that there is safety in not knowing. (Why not in the physical realm?)
- From the life of Saul we see just how dangerous and destructive that ignorance really is.
 - Before his conversion, Saul lived in total opposition to God because he was ignorant. (I Tim. 1:12-13)
 - Paul understood the perils of ignorance. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren." (I Cor. 10:1)
- God does not want us to be ignorant.
 - Hosea 4:6
 - Acts 17:30-31
 - Matt. 11:28; Jn. 6:44-45; II Tim. 2:15
 - II Pet. 3:18; Heb. 5:12

II. The Insufficiency Of Sincerity Alone – Truth Is Irreplaceable

- "Let your conscience be your guide, and it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere, are false, dangerous religious concepts. NO ONE WOULD ACCEPT THIS IN VITAL THINGS OF THIS LIFE.
- Saul was sincere even when he was persecuting God's people. (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11)
- Sincerity is essential, and truth is irreplaceable: Rom. 10:1-3; Jn. 4:24; Rom. 6:17-18; Jn. 8:31-32; Jn. 17:17; II Thess. 2:10,12

III. One Can't Be Content To Simply Follow The Religion Of Their Relatives

- Many are what they are, believe what they believe, and do what they do in religion because they are following relatives.
- Paul was zealous in practicing the religion of relatives. (Gal. 1:14)
- Jesus said we must love him even more than our own family. (Matt. 10:34-35)

IV. The Relationship Between Christ And His Church

- In persecuting the church, (Acts 8:1-4), Saul was persecuting Christ. (Acts 9:4)
- Many fail to see a vital connection between Jesus and the church.
 - He is the builder. (Matt. 16:18)

- He is the head of the spiritual body. (Eph. 1:22-23) To have a relationship with the head, we must be a part of the body.
- He reconciles the body to God. (Eph. 2:16)
- He is the Savior of the body. (Eph. 5:23; Acts 2:47)
- That which puts us into Christ (Gal. 3:26-26) puts us into his body (I Cor. 12:13)

VI. *Saul Was Saved By Calling On The Name Of The Lord*

- Many misunderstand what it is to call on the name of the Lord:
 - Saved by faith only.
 - Confess your sins and pray to God for salvation.
- Saul, who had been praying, knew who the Lord was, was told to be baptized so that his sins would be washed away, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)
 - Acts 2:21 → whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
 - Acts 2:38 → repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord for the remission of sins...