

Paul Speaks to the People

Key Verses: *“He said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.”*
—Acts 22:14,15

Selected Scripture:
Acts 22:1-21

religious, and from a Pharisee family. He was zealous for the Law and God's promises to Israel. (Acts 26:2-5; Phil. 3:4-6) He was not evil as the Early Church understandably viewed him, but sincere and devout in his actions. Believing that Christians opposed Moses' law, Saul persecuted them in good conscience.

Because Paul was sincere but spiritually blinded, the Lord stopped him in order that he might change course.

In today's lesson, we hear the Apostle Paul recounting before his Jewish brethren in Jerusalem the experience of his conversion to Christ on the road to Damascus. God's choice of Saul of Tarsus, his name being later changed to Paul, baffled the Lord's disciples when it took place. There was an open hostility between the Early Church leaders and Saul because they knew him only as a persecutor of Christians. They did not appreciate that his birthplace, education, and background prepared him for his special mission to the Gentiles. He was a Roman citizen, well educated, deeply

His zeal was redirected from persecuting the church to serving Christ and his followers. This was not the turning of a corrupt man, but the correction of an honest one. God was now going to appoint him as one ideally suited to preach the Gospel message to both Jews and Gentiles.

God does not force belief on anyone but opens his Truth to honest hearts. Saul was wrong in judgment but right in intention, so the Lord opened his eyes. On the road to Damascus, Paul recounted, a bright light from heaven surrounded him and he fell down blind. Then he heard, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” When he asked who was speaking, the answer came: “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.” (Acts 22:6-8) This shows how closely Christ identifies with his people. To persecute them is to persecute him. That Truth should guide our conduct toward every member of the body of Christ.

Saul immediately asked, “What shall I do, Lord?” (vs. 10) This was a complete surrender of his will. Once he understood the Truth concerning Christ, he was ready to give his life to him. The same response should mark believers today. Those once blinded by error, yet sincere, should answer Truth with gratitude, zeal, and a life of service.

The Lord sent Saul to Damascus, where Ananias, a respected and devout disciple, learned that this new convert had been specially chosen to carry Christ’s name before Gentiles, kings, and Israel—and to suffer for that calling. Saul had not seen Christ in full divine glory, but he saw enough to know with certainty that Jesus had been raised and glorified. (vss. 11-13) Ananias was the one who spoke the words of today’s Key Verses to Saul, setting him on his mission to preach the Gospel message as a “witness unto all men.”

Paul was a faithful witness to what he had seen and heard. The same should be true of us. We must first understand Truth ourselves before we can share it faithfully with others. Like Paul, let us trust in God’s will as we witness the Gospel message. ■