

Two Blind Men

Acts 9:1-18

"I am grateful to Dr. Boris Nikolayevich Kornfeld, who is sitting beside my cot and talking to me all evening. The light has been turned out—so it will not hurt my eyes. He and I—and there is no one else in the ward. Fervently he tells me the long story of his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. ... I am astonished at the conviction of the new convert, at the ardor of his words. We know each other very slightly, and he was not the one responsible for my treatment, but there was simply no one here with whom he could share his feelings. He was a gentle and well-mannered person. It is already late. All the hospital is asleep ... the door from the corridor gleams in a yellow electrical glow. But there is such mystical knowledge in his voice that I shudder. These were the last words of Boris Kornfeld." - A. Solzenhitsyn

God is secretly at work in people and in places that we would never expect to advance His kingdom to people and places that we would never expect.

I. People We Don't Expect: The Radical Conversion of Saul - Acts 9:1-6

"But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." - Acts 9:1-2

The zeal of Saul against the church of Jesus Christ is no match for the zeal of Christ for His church. The authority of Saul from the high priests has no authority over the Great Priest and King – Jesus Christ.

"The identification of the community of Jesus' followers as 'the Way' is derived from Isaiah 40:3, which tells of the way on which the Lord will travel when Israel is

restored from exile. 'The Way' in Isaiah is new-exodus language and out of exile imagery... It is the path on which God takes them out of Babylon..." - P. Schreiner

"A voice cries 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'" -Isaiah 40:1-5

The Glory of the Lord will be revealed:

"Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'" Acts 9:3-6

- **Both Callings are a Theophany**

Exodus 3:4 - "Moses, Moses..."

Acts 9:4 - "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Exodus 3:14 " God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' "

Acts 9:5,6 "And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

- **Both Callings are Commissionings**

Exodus 3:10 reads, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Acts 9:5,6 reads, "And he said, 'Who are you Lord?' And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

Christ chooses to save unlikely people in order to send them to unlikely people in order to set them on mission for the gospel.

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent... But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." -1 Timothy 1:12-16

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." -2 Corinthians 5:18-20

"The doctrine of God's sovereignty has a significant impact on our missions' work. To begin with, it gives us boldness and confidence because we have been commissioned by the King of the universe to proclaim an unstoppable message that can transform even the most resistant hearts. As we have seen, not even the hardened Saul of Tarsus was impervious to the power of that message." - Jimmy Winfrey

II. Means We Don't Expect: Blinding Saul and Sending Ananias - Acts 9:7-16

"Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias'. And he said, 'Here I am, Lord. And the Lord said to him, 'Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold he is praying and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' " – Acts 9:10-12

But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.'" Acts 9:13-16

Salvation is of the Lord:

It's not about Saul's authority and reputation but it's about Christ's authority and position.

- Christ's Authority Over Saul's Physiology – Blindness
- Christ's Authority Over Saul's Psychology – Dreams
- Christ's Authority Over Saul's Ministry - Gentiles, Kings, Children of Israel
- Christ's Authority over Saul's Methodology - Suffering

Christ chooses the most unlikely methodology to advance His kingdom: the cross. The cross is not just the message we proclaim but the methodology we use.

See Christ's authority over our bodies, minds, ministry and methodology in the following passage:

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you." 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

III. The Remarkable Re-Commissioning of Saul - Acts 9:17-18

“So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened.”

-Acts 9:17-18

“We are fools for Christ’s sake...” 1 Corinthians 4:10

“ To be a Christian, to be obedient to God’s word, to be truly wise in Corinth, in Athens, and in the halls of an academic institution, you must become a fool. Thoughtful fools? To be sure. Hope-filled fools? To be sure. Happy fools with lots of serious joy? To be sure. But fools, nevertheless — unashamed, happy fools. Not self-pitying, not dour, not defensive, not forlorn, not miserable, not “oh-poor-me” fools, but unashamed, happy, hope-filled fools for Christ.” John Piper