



Stories that Change Derrick Shields "A Conversion Story" 8/13/23

Key Verses: Acts 9:1-19

Key Thought: Saul's encounter with Jesus transformed him from a persecutor of Christ (according to the will of Saul), to an apostle of Christ (according to the will of Christ).

Points to Consider:

- The story of Saul's conversation is set within the larger story of Acts: the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, and so the nations can be included in God's family!
- Prior to his encounter with Jesus, Saul had approved of the martyring of Stephen, and Saul had sought to destroy the church (cf. 8:1, 3).
- Due to the persecution in Jerusalem, Christians were scattered into surrounding regions. → Saul was traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians and extradite them to Jerusalem.
- On the way, Saul encountered... Jesus.
- Saul is struck blind and has to be led to Damascus.
- Paul shares a detail in his testimony before King Agrippa: Jesus said to him, "It hurts you to kick against the goads" (cf. 26:14). → "Goads" were pointed instruments which discouraged oxen from trying to resist their driver. → Jesus thus implies that Saul is trying to resist His call upon Saul to be His instrument of sharing the gospel with the nations.
- In a radical shift, Saul asks, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"
- Contra arresting them, Saul spends several days with the disciples in Damascus.
- Lessons from Saul's Encounter with Jesus:
 - i. Our life as Christians is launched via an encounter with Jesus.
 - ii. Like oxen, we can hurt ourselves when we resist Christ's call on us.
 - iii. Jesus will allow us to hit "rock bottom" so as to open up to him.
 - iv. Meeting Jesus enables true fellowship with God and other Christians.

Discussion Prompts:

- While it is likely far different than Saul's, can you share about an encounter that you've had with Jesus that changed your story?
- Have you ever experienced "tough love" from Jesus?
- How much is your heart characterized by the question: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Rate from 1-5, with an explanation.)
- Have you resisted a call from Christ? If so, can you share?