

Remnant Life Church
January 5, 2014
“A Life-Altering Change”
Acts 9:1-9

- The new year is welcomed differently by people often based on the year prior.
 - For some there is a longing or disappointment that a very good year has ended
 - For others it is welcomed, anticipating change, growth or a time ended
 - How should a Christian look toward a new year?
 - What model can we embrace?
 - Is it better to maintain where I am or desire for there to be more?
 - What would that process look like
1. One of the most dramatic life-altering accounts is that of Paul
 - a. Known as Saul prior to his encounter with God
 - i. From the tribe of Benjamin (**Rom. 11:1**)
 - ii. King Saul also from the same tribe possibly the origin of his name
 - b. A very unusual man
 - i. Born a Jew
 1. Approx. 5-10 years after Jesus' birth
 2. Into a prominent, educated, wealthy family
 - a. Tarsus a Greek speaking city of great culture
 - b. Paul designates himself as Hebrew to separate himself from the Hellenist in practice and language (**Phil. 3:5**)
 - c. His family also spoke Aramaic the language of their synagogue (**Acts 22** – addressing the Sanhedrin and the voice on the road to Damascus)
 - ii. A Roman citizen
 1. Birth – (**Acts 22:28**)
 2. Appointment – likely his father or grandfather
 3. Purchase – (**Acts 22:28**) – the commander of the Roman troops in Jerusalem
 - iii. Highly intelligent and educated
 1. Studied under Gamaliel the head Pharisee
 - a. The same man who helped spare the Apostles in **Acts 5**
 - b. Perhaps remembering his former pupil
 2. Lived in Jerusalem during his formative years
 3. Certainly knew of Jesus and the movement started by His teachings
 - c. He was a zealot
 - i. **Acts 26:9-11**
 - ii. He would even leave the safety of Jerusalem to pursue them
 - d. Damascus
 - i. Claims of it being the longest continually inhabited city in the world (mentioned in **Gen. 14, 15**)
 - ii. It was an old city in Paul's day – 2000+ years
 - iii. Approx. 140 miles from Jerusalem – about a 1 week long journey by foot

- iv. It lies east of Mount Hermon in the plains of Syria
 - 1. The heat of the desert region combines with cool air from the mountain
 - 2. Powerful thunderstorms arise very quickly with massive lightning strikes
 - 3. This is what would have been expected but God intervened in an even more impressive way
 - v. It was on this journey that Saul's life was forever changed
2. What did that change look like and what did it do to Saul?
- a. He was stopped from doing what his mind and flesh alone told him to do
 - i. We must have the Spirit of truth and love as an everyday part of our lives (**John 4**)
 - ii. Without that we have nothing to govern our actions
 - iii. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:16-17)*
 - b. All of his pride of knowledge was swept away by an encounter with almighty God
 - i. Paul himself says that he was the brightest and best student (**Gal.1:14**)
 - ii. His immersion in the law prevented him from understanding the love of God
 - iii. This is what Saul and all the members of the Sanhedrin were so concerned about - losing the power and influence that the law alone gave them
 - 1. But Saul's most important attribute was changed by his encounter with Jesus
 - 2. *For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:14)*
 - iv. A person committed to loving those around him cannot also live a life filled with pride
 - v. **I Corinthians 13:4-7** - *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*
 - c. It changed his very nature
 - i. Everything about Paul changed
 - 1. His name
 - 2. His purpose
 - 3. His focus
 - 4. His will
 - 5. His goals
 - 6. His thinking
 - ii. It took getting alone with God and away from the things that kept him trapped where he was
 - 1. Paul was isolated for three days; blind and dependent on others
 - 2. He did not know his blindness was temporary until he was alone praying - still he obeyed
 - 3. What is keeping you trapped?
 - iii. Paul accepted what was happening to him

1. He obeyed what he was told to do
2. He put away his pride and embraced humility and rejection
3. He accepted a life of difficulty to obey God's call on his life (2 Cor. 11:24-28)

3. Each new year should be a time of reflection

- a. Where am I now compared to where I was this time last year?
- b. Why are things the same that should have been changed?
- c. What should I be doing differently?
- d. What should I stop doing?
- e. Is God at the place He should be in my life?