

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2015: *Missionaries*

Lesson 11 “Paul: Background *and* Call”

Read for this week’s study

Acts 9:1; Philippians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Acts 9:1–22, 26:18; Galatians 2:1–17.

Memory Text

“But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’” (Acts 9:15, 16, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Saul of Tarsus
- III. Paul, the Man
- IV. From Saul to Paul
- V. Paul in the Mission Field
- VI. Mission and Multiculturalism
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. In what way did Paul provide the decisive theological foundation for the ongoing contextualization of the gospel through the centuries? (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. What do we know about Paul’s previous life, background, family and beliefs before he became a Christian? Why was it so hard for him to grasp that Jesus was the Messiah? What aspects of the Adventist message are particularly hard for other Christians to grasp and appreciate? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. What do we know about Paul’s character and personality from the following texts (Acts 9:1; Philippians 3:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:16; Galatians 1:14; and 2 Corinthians 11:23-33)? If you could meet Paul today would you consider him a humble or a proud man? Do you think he would be forceful or timid in his preaching? Is it possible to be humble and yet write scathing rebukes like Galatians or Colossians? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Acts 9:1-22. How was this experience linked to Paul’s missionary calling (see also Acts 26:16-18)? If, like Paul, you were to share the gospel with someone out of

- your own personal experience, what about your own experience with Jesus would you share? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. According to the lesson, authentic missionary work always results in membership in God's church. Do you agree that this is true in ALL circumstances? Under what circumstances might that not be appropriate? (Tuesday's lesson)
 6. Read Romans 15:19. What crucial element for any kind of mission work is found in this text? How is that element elaborated in the following texts (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; Galatians 6:14; Philippians 1:15-18)? Read Colossians 1:28. What is the difference between evangelism and discipleship? (Wednesday's lesson)
 7. Think about the last time you witnessed about your faith to someone. How central was Jesus to that act of witnessing? What is the key to keeping Jesus central to all witness? (Wednesday's lesson)
 8. What was the crucial issue at stake in the council described in Acts 15? In what way do we face similar issues today? Read Galatians 2:1-17. How does this story illustrate the difficulty of actually living out the council's decision in Acts 15? How do you distinguish between the essentials of the faith and things that are purely cultural, social, or even personal preferences? (Thursday's lesson)
 9. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, the Bible's clearest description of what missiologists call "contextualization." What do you think Paul meant when he said, "To those not under the law I became as one not under the law." How far would it be appropriate to take this example when attempting to reach secular people? (Friday's lesson)
 10. How can one learn to make forgiveness central to all missionary work, both forgiveness toward others and forgiveness toward ourselves for mistakes we have made in relation to others? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: Here is Saul or Paul on his way to Damascus. . . . And Acts says that a great light flashed from Heaven and he falls to the ground. That's a very impressive use of force or power. Didn't it win Paul?

Graham: No, it just floored him. But He got his attention. And I would judge, with a man like Saul, nothing less would have gotten his attention. He was a firebrand!

Now, already he was quite tormented within because of the behavior of Stephen. And when Stephen said, "Lay this not to their charge," he must have remembered the report that when that Heretic died on the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them." And Saul knew his Old Testament so well; he knew that that's the picture of the ideal. And so in order to stifle the prickings of his conscience, he went out to conduct another evangelistic effort.

Instead of settling the theological problem, he went out to conduct this effort. So God floored him on the Damascus Road, and He got his attention. But then notice what God did. He just said, “Saul, you’re having trouble with your conscience, aren’t you?” And he said, “Yes, I really am.”

“Then why don’t you give in?”

“I give in. What do you want me to do?”

And Christ didn’t say, “The following, and be sure you do it.” No, the Lord said, “Your way is to overwhelm people. Mine is: go and talk to Ananias, one of your peers. That’s all I’m going to say.” And from then on, Paul never pressed anybody. He said, “If you disagree with me, well—let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

Before that he put them in prison or had them stoned. Now he realizes that persuasion can only really come when in the highest sense of freedom you are convinced yourself; and he adopted that method. Now he knew God. He didn’t change his diet, his Sabbath, his dress, his Bible, even the name of his God. But he changed his picture of God.

But he wouldn’t have done it if God had not hit him with a two-by-four on the Damascus Road. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #7 with Lou Venden, “The Question of Authority” recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/7MMCAG>

Recommended Reading:

Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 37-41. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992. <http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter3.html>

Further Study with Ellen White

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God’s own method of development. “Acquaint now thyself with Him” (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. {AA 126.1}

Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit’s working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them and to make them His sons and daughters. {ML 46.5}

The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God. {COL 98.3}

It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages. {DA 173.2}

The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. {SC 57.2}

Recommended Reading:

Steps to Christ Chapter 8 – “Growing Up Into Christ”

The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 12—“From Persecutor to Disciple”

The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 13—“Days of Preparation”

<https://egwwritings.org/>