

FAMOUS Chapter 9

Acts 9: God at work

Sometimes there is a plot and a story in the book your reading. If you go back two chapters from Acts 9 you will read of the stoning of Stephan. Near the end of that chapter the religious rulers laid their cloaks at the feet of a young apprentice named Saul. If you read further, you find that God is at work through the disciples. God is pushing his message all over the region. At one point the story turns back to Saul. He is asking for more power to persecute the people of the way (Jesus followers). The Bible has plot and story too.

This chapter 9 is famous because of one of the most influential writers of the Bible named Saul. He is renamed by God as Paul. This man wrote several epistles (small letters) in the New testament. This particular chapter is called the conversion of Saul. God did a crazy thing. He took a known villain to the way (Christians) and crossed him over to their side. Yet, he did it unknown to them. To make matters worse, God then asked the people of the way to accept Saul as one of theirs. You have to realize how dangerous it would have been. Saul had been on a campaign to rid the empire of the Christians.

I can't imagine me hating a certain football player, and then he comes to my team. Do I just accept him? It would be tough. What was God thinking? There is the other side of it. What if the guy you get is smart, talented and well versed in your way? Plus, he knows the enemy well because he was one of them. God knew that Paul was the right guy. He was tenacious, God centered, and very smart. He is perfect for the job of spreading God's message.

Sometimes we judge people on first glance. I know because I've done it. Yet, in time I can see what God sees. I went to school to be a pastor. The church has rejected me. They see the talent, yet I am not their way. I see potential in people that are not church people. It takes time. That is generally not the church way. I want to invite the dirty into the church. Give them time to grow. Be Jesus for them rather than too them. There is a difference. Hence, I am rejected. Too much dirt.

Paul goes on a long journey to become the man who writes the Bible. God took the time to work with Paul. Possibly around 13 years between Saul and the becoming of Paul. I believe he would be horrified that his writings made it in the Bible. He was a very humble man. However, Paul knew God from his upbringing as a Pharisee (Bible) student. He was the best of the best. God believed in this man.

Paul is called an apostle to the gentiles. I think that is partly why people pay attention to him. It means he is talking about Jesus to those who are not Jewish. There are many people who feel outside the church. Paul knows. His writing reflects Jewish knowledge to the unchurched people. He talks plainly most of the time. Paul was schooled that God is holy. Yet he knows that goodness and holiness take time and work in human beings (13 years for him).

I feel this chapter represents the rest of us. We believe in God more than the church. Paul hopes to bring us to the church. Paul also knows what church should look like. The marriage between people and the church is one of progress. We see that in God taking the killer Saul and bringing him into the new way as the renewed Paul. This story of Paul brings hope that anyone can come to Jesus and be accepted. It shows that God's plan does not care about your past. This chapter is famous because it has compassion and hope for a bright future for anyone.