

April 24, 2016

Heroes of Faith, Part Two

A series on Heroes of the Old and New Testament

"The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd," Hebrews 11:3 The Message

"Paul: (Pastor Dan)

Blinded by the Light Brings a Turnaround"

"As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?' 'Who are you, lord?' Saul asked. And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!'" Acts 9:3-5

A. A little bit about Saul-turned Paul...

1. Paul was from the Roman city of Tarsus in Turkey. Acts 21:39
2. Paul was not physically impressive and not necessarily a great speaker. 1 Corinthians 2:1; 2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6
3. Paul had a sister and a nephew. Acts 23:16
4. Paul was educated in Jerusalem under the famous Jewish teacher Gamaliel and spoke 3 or 4 languages. Acts 22:3
5. Paul was a Pharisee and a tentmaker. Acts 26:5; Acts 18:3
6. Paul was a Roman citizen from a wealthy family. Acts 22:25-28
7. Paul participated in the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Acts 7:58

History tells us...

8. He was imprisoned 5 ½ to 6 years.
9. He wrote 13 out of 27 NT books.
10. It is possible that Luke was a relative and he stayed with him. Acts 16:8,11
11. He was the most significant turnaround character in the NT.
12. He was believed to be married and a widower who chose never to remarry.
13. He was beheaded around the age of 58 in Rome under Nero.

"Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death

again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."
2 Corinthians 11:23-28

B. Saul's turnaround to Paul...

"Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit..." Acts 13:9

1. Although Saul was proud of his Jewish heritage, Philippians 3:5, he took his Roman name, Paul, as he was called to be "the apostle to the Gentiles," so that he could be "all things to all people." God changed his heart.

"I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law." Philippians 3:5

2. Paul was blinded so that he could see. God changed his direction.

"But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!'" Acts 22:21

3. Paul went from privilege to poverty. God changed his values.

"I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done."

Philippians 3:7

4. Paul went from public enemy to Christians to passionate friend to believers. God changed his mission.

"All they knew was that people were saying, 'The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!'" Galatians 1:23

5. Paul went from Roman citizen to a citizen of heaven. God changed his destination.

"But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior." Philippians 3:20

6. Paul went from powerful leader to prisoner. God changed his focus.

"For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ." 2 Corinthians 1:5

7. Paul went from restless to content. God changed his mind!

"Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have." Philippians 4:11

C. What is your turnaround story?

1. Where is your heart? What has changed in your heart since you gave your life to Christ? Is it evident to those in your world?
2. Where is your life headed? What plans are you making to open your eyes to the future God has for you?
3. What do you value most? What are the decisions that reflect your eternal values? What does your calendar and your check book say? What would your friends and family say matters most to you?
4. What gives you the most satisfaction in life? What truly brings joy to your life? What wakes you up in the morning? What do you want to see God accomplish through your life?
5. Where are you planning on spending eternity? How do your daily choices reflect your eternal values? If you truly believe our present choices affect our future, then how is that affecting your words, your lifestyle, and your time?
6. What are your goals? What matters most in your life; is it your position or the lives you are touching along the way?
7. When is your mind at rest? Does worry destroy your peace? Are you growing in your trust that God can handle the circumstances of your life?

"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

Next week...

May 1, 2016

"Abraham: (Pastor Erik) Believing the Impossible"

"It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them." Hebrews 11:11-12