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| **The Conversion of the Apostle to the Gentiles**  *Promise: We are made Christ’s disciples by His amazing grace.* Pastor Timothy A. Duesenberg Acts 9:1-22; Psalm 30; Revelation 5:1-14; John 21:1-19 (Third Sunday of Easter), 5/4/25)  *But the Lord said to [Ananias], “Go, for [Saul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles.* – v. 15  **Lead In –** As much as I would have liked to stay with the Resurrection appearance of the Risen Christ in our Gospel Reading, I am drawn instead to the Risen Lord’s appearance to one Saul of Tarsus in our First Reading. What is special about this appearance is that it took place well after the 40 days following the first Easter when nearly all such appearances took place. It is also noteworthy that Christ appears to one who was not His disciple at the time. Far from it! In fact, Saul was on the way to Damascus “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” He wished to arrest and bring them to trial in Jerusalem. What takes place in our First Reading is often referred to as “The Conversion of Saul” or “Saul’s Damascus Road Experience.” And we can benefit from him in learning how the Gospel comes to us after Good Friday and Easter…   1. **It Is Worth Asking When Saul Was Converted**    1. Was it on the road itself with the blinding light?    2. Was it with his encounter with Ananias?    3. Jesus speaks about *making* disciples… a process? 2. **It Is Worth Asking How Saul Was Converted**    1. It wasn’t what he was seeking, nor can he take credit…    2. God had designs for Saul from before his birth…    3. The Third Article of the Creed, the work of the Spirit… 3. **Why Saul’s Conversion Was Exceptional**    1. He calls himself the least, but leading figure in spread…    2. Leading figure in Christian doctrine…    3. As a writer of the Scriptures he needed credentials…   **Final Word –** This most unlikely convert penned at least 13, possibly 14, of the 27 Books of the New Testament. From this Apostle we learn most thoroughly and clearly how we come to saving faith in Christ our Savior. Paul’s letters to the Romans and the Galatians especially stand out in that regard. The four Gospel Accounts narrate Jesus’ birth, life, teaching, and importantly His death, resurrection, and ascension. But it is largely the rest of the New Testament that speak of the significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection and of how what was accomplished on the Cross comes to us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit especially through the instruments of Baptism, Preaching, and Holy Spirit. So you, brothers and sisters in Christ, have been given new birth, brought to repentance, and handed the gift of forgiveness, and continued to be nourished at the Lord’s Table. It is by God’s grace.  **Ac 22:16** And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’  **Mt 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.  **Ga 1:15-16** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone… | **Acts 9:1-22 ESV**  *The Conversion of Saul*  1But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 5And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” 7The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.  10Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” 11And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” 13But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” 15But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 17So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19and taking food, he was strengthened.  For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 21And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” 22But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.  **3rd Art:** “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.  **1Co 15:8-9** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle.  **Ga 2:7** On the contrary, … they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised. (cf. Acts 9:15) |