

Beloved Enemy

Ray Stedman

I. Introduction.

- A. Text: Acts 9:1-20.
- B. God pursues a man or woman for His own purposes.

II. Paul's condition.

- A. Paul was breathing hatred for Christians and was dedicated to eradicating them. He was guilt ridden with the guilt of Steven.
- B. The early Christians were characterized by tolerance, love and acceptance, which Paul faced.
- C. Jesus planned for Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus outside of Israel because he was supposed to be the mighty Apostle to the Gentiles.

III. Paul's conversion.

- A. Paul's claim for discipleship was based on the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- B. Jesus' first words to Paul were significant:
 - 1. God first asks man, where are you? (Genesis 1)
 - 2. God asks Paul, why are you persecuting me? In other words, what is the motive?
- C. Conversion is a change from thinking that you run your own life to thinking that God runs the program and has the right to tell you what to do.
 - 1. Conversion is a radical change in life style that accepts orders.
 - 2. Paul would be told what he was to do.

IV. Ananias reaches out to Paul. Amidst the fears of persecution from Paul, he prays—the first mark of a Christian.

V. The calling of Paul.

- A. Paul's primary responsibility was to the Gentiles and then to the power structures of the day.
- B. Paul was called to suffer because love must always suffer in a fallen world.
- C. Paul only saw others through Christian potentiality.
- D. Paul was baptized.

VI. We can be changed like Paul if we discover the principle that we who are nothing can be filled with Him who is everything.

Application questions:

1. How does Paul's conversion experience reflect his later calling?

2. Why was Paul's conversion so radical to begin with?

3. What is the primary principle in Paul's conversion and how will that help you in a specific struggle you are facing today?
