

**"The Turning of Saul"** Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Acts 9:3-9, 15-19, Luke 10:1-9

**① 【Change in the Light of God】**

Today I would like to talk about Paul's conversion. His original name was Saul, and he belonged to the Pharisees, a strict group of Jews who learned the Law from a famous teacher named Gamaliel and faithfully followed his teachings. For Paul, the teachings of Christianity were unacceptable. The fact that there was a prophet named Jesus who said he was God (or the Son of God) and that any sinner could believe in this Jesus and be forgiven of his sins and accepted into the Kingdom of God even if he could not keep the Law was a blasphemous teaching and a Jewish heresy, which could never be tolerated. He persecuted the Christians with great zeal.

On his way to Damascus, he is suddenly illuminated by a light from heaven and falls to the ground. Then he hears the voice of Christ. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me" (Acts 9:4). Paul asks him who you are, and he says, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Get up and go into the city. Rise up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Ibid. 9:5-6). (Ibid. 9:5-6). He opened his eyes, but he could not see anything. For the next three days he was blind and unable to eat. From this point on, Paul is completely helpless and silent. His entire sense of righteousness collapsed, and his very self was shattered.

●Pastor Yasuro Enomoto said, "The reason why there is something hard in our hearts, or why we have not melted away who we are, is because we have not been illuminated by the light of Christ, like a pillar of frost that has not been illuminated by the sun. God gave Saul, who was furious, one such holy experience."

The same is true for us. In order to be made God's instruments, vessels to let Him in, we must be broken as who we are. To do this, we must let the living light of God shine in our hearts.

**② 【On the Calling of Ananias】**

Ananias was a person who was inevitably indispensable for the birth of Paul, the great evangelist. He had already been called as a Christian and was living in Damascus at this time. Even today, if you go to Damascus, you will find the Church of St. Ananias built in the basement of the place where Ananias' house would have been, and in the courtyard, there is a statue of Ananias baptizing Saul. In the courtyard, there is a statue of Ananias baptizing Saul. Go to the street called 'Straight Street' and visit a man from Tarsus named Saul, who is in the house of Judah. Now he is praying." (Acts 9:11) But when Ananias complained to the Lord

that he had heard what terrible evil he had done to the Christians, the Lord said, "Go. That man is a vessel whom I have chosen to carry My name to the Gentiles and to kings, and to the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15). So Ananias took courage and went out and baptized him. God's plan requires the dedication and faithfulness of those who have been called to be Christians before us in order for it to bear fruit. Ananias was called first so that Saul could be born as Paul. The meaning of our prior calling as Christians is also for the salvation of someone else. We thank God that it took the sacrifice, prayer, and decision of faith of many people for one believer to be born.

### ③ 【On Calling】

Why did God choose Paul, a Christian persecutor, to be an apostle to the Gentiles? There was a deep plan of God. In his letter, Paul says, "God, who chose me and separated me from my mother's womb and called me by grace, has, according to his will, shown me his Son so that I might preach his gospel to the Gentiles" (Galatians 1:15-16), and the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Before you were born from your mother's womb Before you were born from your mother's womb, I sanctified you and set you up as a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). (Jeremiah 1:5).

Since God has a plan for everyone and He foreknows everything, He chooses "a certain person" in advance to do His work and sanctifies him or her from the time he or she is in the mother's womb. Sanctification means to separate, to set apart from other things.

●Motokichiro Osaka writes: "Paul believed that the fact that a sinner like himself had been chosen was inevitably a preordained part of God's plan. Paul believed that the fact that a sinner like himself had been chosen must inevitably be considered as God's predestination. ...For some people are predestined, and for some individuals there is a period of depravity during which they must wander for some years. But those who are destined for the angels, though they stumble and sin along the way, are destined to come to God at last. ...All religious people are born, and here is the root of holiness."

I think I understand somehow. Looking back on my own life, I can see why I lived even though I was a premature baby, why I went to the Unification Association, and that it was all to make me a pastor.

●Motokichiro Osaka also wrote The words "mission" and "vocation" did not exist in the Meiji Era, but were coined after that time. A mission is something related to a person's vocation, which is still of this world. A vocation, on the other hand, is a calling of God before the creation of the world, and is not merely a matter of vocation, but means that the whole person born is called by God. In other words, vocation is a return to the destiny that was set forth in the beginning, to which the

believer must come. Saul, who used to boast of his family background, his strict observance of the law, his erudition, and his health, heard a voice from heaven calling him Saul, Saul. The believer is the one who is called and possessed by Christ who calls in this way. We must respond to this solemn call."

The mission is that we are given work to do in this world, and it is only for this world, but the vocation is eternal, to be Christ's and to be heirs of eternal life.

It is no big deal if we cannot do many things in this world. Some people boast in the things of this world, but we boast in Christ. We are not called to be good at the things of this world. In heaven, no matter how well we do the things of this world, they will not work. In heaven, you have to have faith. I was chosen and called to speak of Christ, even if I cannot do the things of this world. Therefore, I will not stop talking about Christ. Let us all consider the meaning of our call as Christians and respond to this solemn calling.