

Jerusalem Pilgrimage 2019
CONVERSION of ST. PAUL
Acts 22:3-16, Mark 16:15-18

In some respect, it's strange that the Church celebrates **the moment of St. Paul's Conversion**... His time of METANOIA – his CHANGE OF HEART! And the reason why I say it's strange, is because the Feast Days of Saints and apostles in the churches calendar usually celebrate the entirety of a person's life and **not just a specific moment in their life.**

So what's the deal here? The deal is that no matter who we are, all of us are called to open ourselves up to this moment – a MOMENT in time whereby we choose to make a radical break from who we are as the old man, the old woman and take on **the NEW IDENTITY we've received by the power of God's Spirit made available to us in Christ.**

For TRUTH BE TOLD, prior to Paul making his choice for Christ, he was by far **the least likely person on earth to be converted.**

Jewish by birth, a Pharisee – meaning a Hebrew BLUEBLOOD! Combine that reality with his also be Greek by learning, meaning he was steeped in the world's philosophy having studied in the finest university in the world. He was Roman by Citizenship, which made him an ELITIST IN A PAGAN CULTURE. **He was the immovable object who could not be moved until he met the irresistible force – the RISEN LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

"Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

Let's not kid ourselves, Saul wasn't some guy who had a few issues with Christians, SAUL had reached a point in his life whereby he was now making a one 150 mile trip from Jerusalem to Damascus (**and that's 150 miles without a truck!**) his sole PURPOSE and FOCUS – was to stamp out the fire of Christianity and to snuff out the light of the Christian faith.

When all of a sudden and without warning, Paul was bathed in "**SON LIGHT**" – note the play on words here – the LIGHT that shone upon him was brighter than the sun's light in the sky for according to Acts 26:13 **this was high noon when the sun would have been at its very brightest.** This LIGHT that shone brighter than the sun, was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord said it in Jn. 8:12, and he meant it: "**I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.**" David said in Ps. 27:1, "**The Lord is my LIGHT and my Salvation.**" Whatever light came upon Paul, it was of such a nature that he ended up being **BLINDED BY THAT LIGHT.**

"Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one..." Again, let's not underestimate *THE SHEER TERROR* of such an experience. Paul was none only blinded but also **BROKEN** by that light. He had to be led by the hand like a 3-year-old boy needing helped across the street all the way into Damascus. **Imagine that!!!** I mean just a few days ago, Paul imagined himself entering Damascus **ROARING LIKE A MIGHTY LION:** ready to devour Christians, **have them shackled in chains and put to death.** And now, he enters Damascus like a blind, meek, helpless lamb.

Had Paul not died in that light, **he would've died in the dark...** for the same light that blinded the eyes that exist in his head is the light that opened the eyes of his heart! Paul spent the rest of his life finding and living out the answer to the one question he asked our Lord in that vision: "**Lord, what do you want me to do?**" This Feast Day reminds us that this ought to be the question that we wake up with each and every morning!

To live out METANOIA every day is the demand and expectation of Christian life. I love the way that A. W. Tozer, a man after God's own heart once said: "**Every soul belongs to God and exists by His pleasure. God being Who and What He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on His part, and COMPLETE SUBMISSION on ours.**"

St. Paul – pray for our ongoing conversion...