

SERMON NOTES: July 14th
SCRIPTURE READINGS...Philippians 3: 4-11, Acts 9: 1-9

FROM SAUL TO PAUL...there is no one God likes to change more than religious people. No one was more loyal to God than Paul, first known as Saul. He had both names before and after conversion. He used his Hebrew name Saul with Jews and his Roman name Paul with Gentiles. Named for Israel's 1st King, he grew up in Tarsus where Jews were a minority. We find his resume in Philippians:

By birth, a JEW; by citizenship, a ROMAN; by education, a GREEK. He was zealous, righteous, blameless.

After meeting Christ, he burned his resume. His impressive past was pointless. The best of his best, without Jesus, was worthless trash.

THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES....our God is a God of 2nd chances. What 2nd chances have you had? How silly we sound to God whenever we say, "I CAN'T CHANGE; IT IS WHAT IT IS." God made a Paul out of Saul; he changed his life from the inside out. Paul made many mistakes. The main one: he thought that he KNEW GOD WELL, and it was only after meeting Christ that he saw HOW WRONG HE WAS. Religion didn't make him holy; it made him bitter. His conversion isn't a story of a penitent sinner. He was a man on a mission, but it was the WRONG MISSION. Our views on God are partial; there is more to God than we know or can know.

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT...Paul is left blind by his encounter with Jesus. It wasn't a coincidence. He was blinded not only by Jesus' glory but his own ignorance. None are so blind as those who think they see. God loves us enough to accept us and he loves us enough to correct us. Though blind, he saw one thing clearly: the way to God wasn't through WHAT YOU KNOW but WHO YOU KNOW. Or, better yet, WHO KNOWS YOU.

AN INSTRUMENT OF GOD...a blind Paul is led by the hand and escorted into town. For 3 days he just sits and prays! When you stand corrected by God, that isn't a bad idea: just be still, pray, try to discern what God might be trying to tell you. He then meets Ananias. God used Ananias not only to restore Paul's sight but to introduce him to Church.

Saul is my instrument, Ananias, to bring my name before Gentiles
The God of bible is the author of change. He changes/corrects us, not to shame us but to use us.