

“A.D. The Bible Continues”- Week 9
“Significance of a Nobody”
New Life Community Church

INTRODUCTION

The newly converted Paul faced mountainous obstacles as he began his ministry. But there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome through Christ. As Paul’s mission unfolds in our study of Acts, we discover how God was at work to prepare the person, as well as the way, so that Paul might take the gospel to the world.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Apart from your parents, who had the most significant influence on you as a child?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

GOD PREPARES THE PERSON

Q1. Read James 4:6, Philippians 3:4-6, Acts 22:2-3, Philippians 3:7-12

Paul did not begin as the ideal candidate to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless God chose him for that purpose. But before God could use him, Paul had to come to an end of himself and his pride (i.e. he had to become a nobody- see James 4:6). In Philippians 3:4-6 and Acts 22:2-3 Paul recounts some of the reasons for his earlier arrogance. But Paul’s perspective changed significantly. What did he find to have “surpassing greatness?”(see Philippians 3:8) Paul’s righteousness had been based in his ability to keep the law. What are some of the things we are tempted to believe will improve our own righteousness?

GOD PREPARES THE WAY

Q2. Read Acts 1:8, Acts 2:5, 9-11, Acts 8:1, Proverbs 3:5-6

The plans of God are in place long before we are aware of them and He is actively preparing the way. As an example of this, Jesus prophesied that His disciples would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (See Acts 1:8) He prepared the way for them first by gathering of Jews of many nations in Jerusalem to witness the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Then believers were scattered to those very nations by the persecution of the church (Acts 8:1). Has your life ever taken an unexpected turn only to find that God had already prepared the way for you and had a purpose in it? If so, share that with your group. How does Proverbs 3:5-6 shed light on how to find the way God has prepared for you?

GOD’S PERSON ACTS IN FAITH

Q3. Read Colossians 4:2-3, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13

When we humble ourselves and seek God’s direction, we can expect to find opportunities, or open doors, to share God’s Word. In his ministry, Paul

sought open doors (see Colossians 4:2-3). What do you expect might happen if you prayed that God would open the door for you to share His Word? Once the door is open, we still must choose our response. Paul did not walk through every open door (see 2 Corinthians 2:13). What are some of the ways you could test to see if a door is open and if you should pursue the opportunity it presents?

THE WORLD IS CHANGED

Q4. Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Philippians 3:13-14, Acts 20:24, Hebrews 12:1-2

Paul’s ministry changed the world, but it would not have been so if he hadn’t persevered. Each of us will be tested with unique challenges in our lives to be faithful. Our time on earth is short in the span of eternity, and God wants us to finish strong (see 2 Timothy 4:7-8 & Philippians 3:13-14). Can you summarize in one sentence what you feel God has called you to do, or the ministry he has given you? In Hebrews 12:1-2 Paul encourages believers to set aside the things that keep us from “running with endurance the race set before us.” What is one thing that you need to deal with in order to faithfully fulfill God’s call in your life?

WRAP-UP

Before his conversion Paul was arrogant and prideful, but his encounter with Jesus changed his perspective and humbled him. Paul was now prepared to be used by God, who had already prepared a way for him to take the message of the Gospel to the world. Paul prayed for, and tested the “open doors” before him and utilized those opportunities to carry out the ministry he had received from Jesus. If we humble ourselves, and seek God for the opportunities to bring the Gospel to the world, He will prepare a way for us, as well. It is up to each of us to set aside whatever hinders us, and faithfully persevere in the calling God has placed on our lives.

Memory Verse

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

Acts 20:24 NIV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space) _____

Challenge: Take the first step in humbling yourself. Ask God to reveal any areas of pride or arrogance that you need to deal with.

Q1 James 4:6 ESV - 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Philippians 3:4-6 ESV - 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Acts 22:2-3 ESV - 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.

Read Philippians 3:7-12 in your Bible

Q2 Acts 1:8 ESV - 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 2:5, 9-11 ESV - 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ... 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

Acts 8:1 ESV - 1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV - 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Q3 Colossians 4:2-3 ESV - 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—

2 Corinthians 2:12-13 ESV - 12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, 13 my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

Q4 2 Timothy 4:7-8 ESV - 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Philippians 3:13-14 ESV - 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Acts 20:24 NIV - 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV - 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Prayer requests con't _____

