

## 200119 Acts 9 Saul Preaching and Persecuted

- Remind one another of the context (Saul's recent conversion) and then the story by reading Acts 9:19-31. NB. Luke crams 3 years of history into these 12 verses.
- Vs. 20 tells us that Saul began to preach immediately. What he was using to destroy the church he now uses to grow the church. Have a look at the following examples (and add in any of your own) and give ideas as to how things can move from being used for our own often selfish purposes to God's purposes. First example is a freebie to reflect on. Romans 6:15-23 may help in this.
  - Anger. Might be used selfishly to get what we want and could be redeemed for God by having a righteous anger at injustice on behalf of others.
  - Business and financial success
  - Intelligence and sharpness of mind
- What do you desire God to redeem in you for His purposes?
- Read Acts 9 vs. 21 and 26. How did Saul's past affect him in his ministry? (feel free to use examples from elsewhere in Scripture too).
- What do you think about this Instagram quote: "You can be who you chose to be, your past does not define you"? Look at the following Scriptures and allow them to shape some discussion around this: 2Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:7.
- Saul's past did not mean that he had no future, but at the same time his past did have an impact. Saul goes on to use it as a story of God's grace, owning his past. What negative in your past can now be pointed to as a story of God's grace in your present and future?
- How does Stuart's prophetic word on the morning about God using the weak and broken people – not allowing our past shame to disqualify us – fit into our response to this?
- What were the roles of Barnabas and Ananias in bringing Saul into faith community? Who has the greater responsibility on welcoming people into a church community – the individual or the community?
- Read vs. 31. The church was in a time of peace. Sometimes we can be in times of crisis and at others in times of peace. When in times of peace the temptation is to switch off and drift away from our need for God. Look at how the Jerusalem church grew in a time of peace:
  - They enjoyed the peace. How easy do you find it to 'enjoy' peace? Why do you think some people prefer living from crisis to crisis or in drama rather than peace?
  - They were strengthened. How do we strengthen ourselves in our faith?
  - Living in fear of the Lord. What does this phrase mean? What does recognising God's awesome nature and developing a reverence for Him lead to in our lives?
  - Encouraged by the Holy Spirit. Discuss what this looks like in your lives?