

World Upside Down: The Book of Acts

Acts 9:1-22

1. When has Spring officially sprung? [POLL]

2. Public Enemy #1 persists in persecuting the Way (9:1-2).

But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

- Acts 8:3

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

- Galatians 1:13

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- John 14:6

3. The Church is the Body of Christ (vv. 3-6).

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

- Ephesians 1:22-23

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27

4. Saul experiences the essence of conversion (vv. 7-9).

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

- Matthew 18:1-4

“We progress by regression and go forward by falling backward.”

- William Willimon

5. God confounds the world, makes Saul His chosen vessel (vv. 10-16).

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

- 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

- 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

6. In the essence of grace, an enemy becomes a brother (v. 17).

For this perhaps is why [Onesimus] was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

- Philemon 15–16

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

- 1 Timothy 1:12–16

7. Saul embodies the process of conversion (vv. 18–19a).

1) Hear

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13)

2) Open

He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” (John 9:25)

3) Wash

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

4) Eat

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:41-42)

8. Saul pieces together Jesus as the Son of God (vv. 19b-22).

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

- Luke 24:44-48