



Articles and Sermons :: The transformation of Saul to Paul

The transformation of Saul to Paul - posted by vivmeeraj (), on: 2012/6/5 5:07

The word of God has many instances of the transformation one has to go through in order to become a child of God. Religion doesn't offer this transformation. It is only an encounter with the Spirit of God, one gets transformed. It doesn't come from knowledge but through revelation. Let us look at the transformation of one person God used mightily, by transforming him to Paul from Saul. We have many lessons to learn from this.

In Paul's own words, we know what Saul was.

Acts 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

Now let us understand the implications of his descriptions of himself. A Jew considers himself as God's own, Saul was an adept in Law given to Moses and was trained in the best academy of Gamaliel, and he was zealous for God. But what was he doing despite all these qualities? Persecuting and killing people for speaking in the name of Jesus Christ the Messiah they were expecting but never recognized. The following verses describe Saul's activities.

Acts 8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 8:3 But Saul {began} ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 9:1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, Acts 9:2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Saul, though educated in Law, zealous for God etc was doing the worst for God. One's knowledge, tradition, zeal or sincerity would not help one to become spiritual (of one Spirit with God). It is only by a divine intervention and resulting revelation. Let us pause for a moment and try to understand the problem. We will come back to Paul in a while.

We can see the same situation around us, quite often. Many zealous men of God and believers working in a direction that the Lord cannot say is in tune with "My Father's will".

Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven {will enter.}

We know, the Jews were zealous for God. Many of us are also zealous. But do we check if our plans, thoughts and actions are according to His will? Dear brethren, it is in our best interest to do so. If not, we would also get into the religious stream and think we are going in the right direction but the word of God warns us, we are not.

Matt 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

Majority takes the broad way and soon they define standards. We can see this strength of the majority in almost every area, politics for an example. But when it comes to following Jesus, the yardsticks are different. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. Do we believe He is the way? Do we follow or at least (like many of us) seek this way?

Unfortunately, most of the people are following the majority and not the way, Jesus showed us. And it is a struggle when someone shows the way Jesus gave us, trying to put people on the right path like Paul did like many men of God did in the past. The reason is that the majority is used to different traditions, styles, beliefs and practices, the narrow way is often considered as false teaching. Some of the common stumbling blocks are the following.

• Traditions, rituals and practices Jesus never gave us – some groups strongly advocate.

- Primary focus on material benefits and looking at god as a source of supply of material blessings.
 - Self justifying life of external holiness and external work in the name of god with no sense of internal cleansing, love or humility. This would only help one to be self righteous.
 - An overburden, laid upon believers and self in the name of holiness by extreme and unscriptural practices.
- Let us carefully examine the teachings, doctrines and rituals that we have acquired from our spiritual elders, pastors or denominations. Let us take it to the word of god, to Jesus Christ Himself and ask Him if they are according to His will and if He is glorified by a particular practice.

Jesus said,

Matt 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. Matt 11:30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Now, this is a tough exercise. Many sincere believers are sincerely deceived by a spirit of delusion.

2 Thess 2:9 {that is,} the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and wonders, 2 Thess 2:10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 2 Thess 2:11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 2 Thess 2:12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Unfortunately, we see this type of manifestations in groups and leaders which are far from the Spirit that Jesus Christ, the apostles or the early church had. But even when one points out this difference in spirit, from the word of God, there will be resistance, tough resistance. The reason is that people are already deceived in the first place and secondly, there is a comfort in following the trend. This comfortable path is the broad path that leads to destruction. But there is a different path that we ought to take and this difference is primarily a difference in spirit.

Matt 7:14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

There will be criticisms and ridiculing for being different from the majority. People having a spirit of the world or Satan can never understand the spirit of God. There is no wonder as Jesus Himself was severely criticized for being different.

Matt 12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads {of grain} and eat. Matt 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw {this,} they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

The traditionalists criticized Jesus for being different and breaking their 'laws'. Jesus said,

Mark 2:27 Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:28 "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

The people under law did not leave Jesus so easily.

Matt 12:10 And a man {was there} whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"--so that they might accuse Him.

Matt 12:12 "How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Paul got this as a revelation, and strongly advocated this as he knew well, any of such practices mean nothing to god as a New Covenant was given. There were much higher spiritual aspects to be taken care of.

Col 2:16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--Col 2:17 things which are a {mere} shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Col 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on {visions} he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, Col 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Let us not judge or criticize others but at the same time have the discernment that we need to have. Let no one, no tradit

ion, no ritual or burden be laid on you other than the commandments in the New Testament. We can see many denominations and groups adding additional burdens on the believer by picking out verses totally out of context and proportion. If one seeks the Spirit of God, He shall guide one in truth.

Now let us look at Paul, who was Saul the persecutor once. He was adept in Law and a person who would kill anyone who utters a word against it. And let us see what happened on his way to Damascus. (Acts. 9)

Acts 9:3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Acts 9:5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He {said,} "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

Then we do not hear anything about a word that Saul spoke. I believe the incident gave him an instant REVELATION of Jesus Christ, and with that, his bondage to the Law vanished. God spoke to Ananias and prophecies about Paul.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; Acts 9:16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

And Ananias visits Saul, who gets his vision back and the next step was to be baptized, take food and immediately proclaim Jesus is son of god.

Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; Acts 9:19 and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, Acts 9:20 and immediately he {began} to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

He started out to kill those who were speaking in His name and ends up proclaiming the same thing. Did he learn it from Gamaliel? Did Jesus speak to him that He is son of God at the gate of Damascus? No, it came as a revelation. This is what we too need at this difficult hour. A revelation, followed by a mighty anointing and the resurrection power will make Saul, Paul. In this encounter with the Lord, Paul also realized what Jesus meant by saying "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting", as he had not personally persecuted Jesus. So the revelation gave Paul the picture of the body of Christ, the church.

1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and {yet} has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

Eph 4:4 {There is} one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him who is the head, {even} Christ, Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

This is the revelation that is required in Christendom today. People divide for every unspiritual and human reasons. The separation has to be from the systems of the world and the spirit of darkness, and NOT from other men. Let us see what happens when one gets this revelation

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

There is only one body and one spirit. Whatever differences are there, they mean only one thing, either one or both are away from this one body and spirit. So let us carefully examine ourselves even when we have the best of the doctrines, it is quite possible that we have built a wall around us and separated people. Let us not build walls, our Lord would do that when a separation is needed. We are here to reach out to people beyond boundaries.

One thing that we can see here is that traditions or learning of the scripture will not transform a person, only a revelation of god and the empowerment from the Spirit of god can. Let us look at some of the other results of this incident and the r

Revelation Paul got in a moment at the gate of Damascus. The Pharisee Saul when transformed to Paul the apostle in the encounter with the Lord writes later,

Gal 1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

Gal 1:12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

And this revelation makes him write boldly denying the practice of Law which was abolished with the coming of Jesus, His grace and truth.

Rom 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law {comes} the knowledge of sin. Rom 3:21 But now apart from the Law {the} righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Again Paul emphasizes that the Law is abolished. (Read Romans 7)

Rom 7:1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? Rom 7:2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

The above example of a marriage and relationship is explained to make people understand the following.

Rom 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. Rom 7:5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were {aroused} by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. Rom 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

The above background and word of God was shared with a purpose of looking at the present day churches and the spiritual state. Let us see what the purpose of the church (body) is and what it (earthly churches) is doing now. We need to distinguish these two. What makes the body of Christ is not what makes the earthly churches. The calling is for the individual, the parts of the church organ are made of individuals, so it is in an individual's interest to seek truth and a revelation.

Jesus clearly called His disciples to preach the Kingdom of heaven after He Himself preaching that.

Matt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matt 10:7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Jesus laid out the principles of entering and being in the Kingdom of heaven in the beatitudes (Matt 5-7). Apostles, who got a revelation of this, pressed every believer to seek things above.

Col 3:1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Col 3:2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Do we hear this from the pulpits as often and as strongly as it has to be heard? I fear not. The results are so disheartening; carrying people away from the purpose God has in our lives. We can see primarily four groups.

1. A vast majority of the prosperity oriented believers seek things of the world and to achieve their goals seek the help of God. Eternity is only an additional benefit and not the goal.
2. Another large chunk is made of the traditionalists stuck in adhering to their man made rituals, practices etc and consider that more important than a holy inner life.
3. Another group with the right doctrine and teaching become Pharisee like and extremely judgmental and do not mix up with others.

In all the above cases, Satan has taken victory by shifting people away from the purpose of God. Let us seriously consider the truths in the word and ask God for a heavenly wisdom and revelation so that we can do His will.

4. There is only a small minority seeking Christ centered teachings and spirit lead life. They are the one who take the narrow

row path. I would strive all my life to be there and to stay there.

When we seek things above, things that God wants us to do, we may have to deny our self, our will, our desires and a lot of that we would otherwise hold on to. This is the narrow path Jesus wants us to take and be led to the kingdom of heaven. This is the path that ensures abiding in Him. This is the path that Jesus took and said, "I am the way". This is what makes us Christ like (holy, humble, loving etc).

We need to hear from God, through the word, through men who speak the truth in love and grow beyond bondages of traditions. We need to seek things above by denying ourselves. We need to be simple and teachable at heart so as to listen.

There is so much resistance to truth these last days. Those who speak truth, even if it is 100% based on the word of God in letter and spirit are considered speaking of something strange. Satan deceives them with an actual strange doctrine that is popular and accepted now. Let us seek His grace and wisdom to know Him and to follow Him.

May our soon coming Lord and savior Jesus Christ shower His amazing grace and resurrection power in you.

Praise and glory to Him alone.

Re: The transformation of Saul to Paul - posted by Elibeth, on: 2012/6/5 9:31

vivmeeraj,

I do appreciate this truth that you are sharing with us.

Please continue.

Blessings,
Elizabeth