

Paul

I have always been fascinated by the story of Paul. Paul first appears to us as Saul in the book of Acts at the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:58-60 with the words "Then they dragged Stephen out of the city and began to stone him and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord do not hold this sin against them." When he said this, he died. And Saul approved of their killing him." Paul went on persecuting the followers of Jesus until Jesus caught up with him on the road to Damascus. Paul became a committed believer, he traveled to towns to convert others, he was jailed many times, and his faith did not waiver, he was God's disciple. His faith strengthened him, and his writings have strengthened us. Even in prison he preached and converted others while surrounded by guards and walls he went on and did the work he was called to do. God saw in Saul a believer waiting to be discovered. God had a plan for him, and God made it work. God has a plan for each one of us and sometimes that plan frightens us but as someone once said, "If God brings you to it, God will get you through it." I was once a person that when asked to do something in the church would think of any excuse possible to get out of it. It wasn't that I didn't want to, I just never could see myself as good enough. Finally, I was asked to lead the Staff Parish Relations Committee. I was already serving as a member of the committee, but I really said I couldn't be the chairperson. The Pastor almost jumped down my throat literally and said, "Well I say you can." I asked for 24 hours and decided after much prayer I would give it a try. The most that they could do is deem me unfit and remove me. In my service to the church, I have served a combined 20 years on that particular committee, 17 of them as chairperson and it has been my favorite committee. The committee I am most proud of, the one I have learned the most from and given the most to and the one I have felt the closest to the church in serving and the one that has brought me closest to God as I prayed about decisions made and endings and beginnings. The job I didn't want and didn't seek has brought me the most joy and satisfaction. Have you heard that voice calling you? Is there somewhere you would like to serve? Answer that call, you will not regret it. Paul was an enemy of the church, and he became one of its best supporters and leaders.

Here am I, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

Dear Lord, we thank you for this day, for the joy of family and friends, for your church which calls us together. Be with those who are sick and who grieve not only for loss of loved ones but for loss of self, for loss of that which makes us unique. Be with those that seek your word, may they find our doors open and welcoming. Help us Lord to serve when called, to be the hands and feet of Jesus here in this time and in this place. Be with our Pastor and bless him and be with his family. Be with his daughter as she returns to good health, bless her and her family. Be with our staff and leaders, be with them in their work for our church and guide them. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Grace Epperson