

**Billy McDermott - A State of Grace**

**January 25, 2012**

**Words: 1364**

**Study:** Conversion of Saint Paul – Year B

**Opening Prayer:** [Saint Paul](#)

**Theme:** Who are you, Sir? / **Full Mass Readings (01/25/12):** [Acts 22:3-16](#) / [Psalm 117:1bc, 2](#) / [Mark 16:15-18](#)

**Passage:** Acts 22:3-16

(NAB) (3) Paul addressed the people in these words: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel I was educated strictly in our ancestral law and was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. (4) I persecuted this Way to death, binding both men and women and delivering them to prison. (5) Even the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify on my behalf. For from them I even received letters to the brothers and set out for Damascus to bring back to Jerusalem in chains for punishment those there as well. (6) "On that journey as I drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from the sky suddenly shone around me. (7) I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' (8) I replied, 'Who are you, sir?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazorean whom you are persecuting.' (9) My companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me. (10) I asked, 'What shall I do, sir?' The Lord answered me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything appointed for you to do.' (11) Since I could see nothing because of the brightness of that light, I was led by hand by my companions and entered Damascus. (12) "A certain Ananias, a devout observer of the law, and highly spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, (13) came to me and stood there and said, 'Saul, my brother, regain your sight.' And at that very moment I regained my sight and saw him. (14) Then he said, 'The God of our ancestors designated you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his voice; (15) for you will be his witness before all to what you have seen and heard. (16) Now, why delay? Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon his name.'"

(-or-)

**Passage:** Acts 9:1-22

(NAB) (1) Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. (3) On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. (4) He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you

persecuting me?" (5) He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." (6) Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." (7) The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. (8) Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. (9) For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank. (10) There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." (11) The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, (12) and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, that he may regain his sight." But Ananias replied, (13) "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. (14) And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name." (15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and children of Israel, (16) and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." (17) So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (18) Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, (19) and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength. He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, (20) and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. (21) All who heard him were astounded and said, "Is not this the man who in Jerusalem ravaged those who call upon this name, and came here expressly to take them back in chains to the chief priests?" (22) But Saul grew all the stronger and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

#### Expanded view:

- 1) Seed on the Rock (from reflection) (Parable of the Sower) (Matthew 13:3-23) (Mark 4:2-20) (Luke 8:4-15)

#### Background:

- Acts 22:17-22 (completes above)
- Acts 9:23-31 (completes above)
  - (Galatians 1:23-24).
- Acts 26:9-24 (First two accounts above. This is the third).
- Stephen – (Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-8:3).
- Luke 23:24, 46 & Psalm 31:5

#### More Background:

- Gamaliel (we see him giving advice in Acts 5:34-39). He was a leader of the Sanhedrin (Pharisees).
- Ananias obeys (Acts 9:13-19). So does Paul. Both say yes. We always must obey God.
- Saul = Hebrew (zealous for God) / Paul = Greek (gentile audience) (Acts 13:9).
- Paul was a Jew (Hebrew), of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). He was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) (strictest party) (Acts 26:5). He was from Tarsus (Acts 21:39). He was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25) (Acts 23:27). Because of this, he was afforded greater rights than Hebrews, who were just inhabitants of the land (Acts 22:26-29). Paul was a tent maker (Acts 18:3).
- Paul is forgiven (1 Timothy 1:13-17).
- Confirms Paul as an Apostle and Christ appearing to him (1 Corinthians 9:1-2) (1 Corinthians 15:5-9). Kephas = Cephas = Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5). Paul meets Peter (Cephas) (Galatians 1:18).
- I am what I am (1 Corinthians 15: 10-11).
- Paul's call to Christ (Galatians 1:11-17). He was a scholar of the law.
- Paul's Address (Acts 13:17-43).
- Welcome Gentiles (Acts 13:44-52)!
- Paul's Amazing Journey (2 Corinthians 11:21b-31).
- Paul's farewell speech (one of . . . ) (Acts 20:19-24).

#### **Did you know?**

- Acts was written by St Luke, Physician and aide to Paul (Colossians 4:14) (2 Timothy 4:11).
- Paul wrote 13 books of the Bible: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.
- Feast Day of Peter and Paul – June 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Imagine:**

- Being struck by God today on Staten Island. Jesus speaking with you. What would it be about? Is it a happy visit?

#### **Closing Prayer:**

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7) (NAB) (4) Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, (5) it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, (6) it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. (7) It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A symphony of hearts - prayer as one - (Matthew 18:19-20) (John 17:21).