

Week 6 – “Tales of the Unexpected”: Unlearning and Reframing – God is always bigger

Context

Paul: We learn in Acts 9 that Saul, one of the men responsible for the stoning of Stephen and persecuting the early church encountered the Risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. He lost his sight and was later the Lord healed him by the hands of Ananias, received Christ as Lord, was baptised and much later became known as ‘Paul’.

Paul was on his way to put a stop to the Gospel. But God had a very different plan for him; to proclaim the Gospel, not quell it. He later became a prominent figurehead in the early church and penned fourteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

Peter: Peter received in a vision, a shocking message that completely went against the culture he was raised up in. To eat ‘unclean’ animals, forbidden by the law of Moses. At first, Peter refused and even questioned the message from God. But he was told to not call “unclean” anything that God has made “clean”. This vision pointed Peter to a much deeper truth: that God was going to include the Gentiles in His covenantal promise of salvation. This caused a number of heated debates in the early church.

Barnabus & Paul: Should Gentiles be circumcised and follow the dietary and other laws of Judaism? Paul and Barnabus visited the Apostles, including Peter and Church Elders to discuss this question. They were encouraged to hear that the church was growing amongst the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Peter pointed out two things: uncircumcised Gentiles were receiving the Holy Spirit, and that the Law of Moses is too great a burden to put on their shoulders.

Paradigm Shift

What things did both Peter and Paul have to realign in their thinking in these accounts?

- The Gospel is true and from God (Saul/Paul)
- God has a plan for the Gentiles outside of the law of Moses (Paul/Peter)
- God shows no discrimination between peoples and freely gave the Holy Spirit to those who trusted on the name of Jesus (Peter)

Application

God sometimes does the unexpected in both our personal and corporates lives. However, He doesn’t change. It is not His nature to be arbitrary. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is consistent. But sometimes, we need to change our view of God. We need to make room for other possibilities. By placing Him at the centre of our heart, soul, mind and strength, He will make our paths straight and illuminate where He wants us to go and what to do when we get there. God will provide in all instances, if we put *all* of our trust in Him.

Questions to reflect upon

What areas is God calling you to? Do you feel up to the task(s)? How has God challenged your view of your place in His plan this week?