

## **MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BIBLE #10**

### **Are You a Paul or a Timothy?**

**By David Carlson**

One of the most dramatic events in the New Testament is the story of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, gave three accounts of this life-changing moment in the life of Paul. Paul in his letter to the Galatians also described this event.

To this day, reading about Paul's conversion makes Christians pause in wonder at the mercy of God. Saul/Paul (the first being his Jewish name, the second being his Greek name) was one of the leaders of the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem. He is listed as one of those present at the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, who was the first martyred Christian. After that, Paul takes the job of a type of religious bounty hunter, tracking down Christians and bringing them back for trial in Jerusalem. As someone studying to become a rabbi, Paul thought he was serving God by fighting against the new heretical movement, the Christians.

It was on one of these missions to round up Christians that his life was abruptly changed. He was knocked from his horse and heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Paul asked the identity of who is speaking to him and heard, “I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting.”

At this point, the world that Paul understood was changed. He realized that the Christians whom he was rounding up for trial were right about Jesus while he had been terribly wrong. Paul no doubt expected to be punished by Jesus, perhaps killed on the spot. Instead, he heard that he is to bring the message of Christ to the Gentiles.

It is difficult to read this story and not think “Wow, what a miraculous change of life.”

The story of Timothy lacks this heightened degree of drama. While we know far less about Timothy than Paul, we do know that his father was a Gentile while his mother may have been a Jewish woman converted to Christianity. At some point, Timothy follows the path of his mother and enters the

Christian community. We also know that Saint Paul often trusted Timothy with visiting churches and building up their faith in Christ.

For Paul, becoming a Christian happened literally in a flash. For Timothy, becoming a Christian was a slower process, as he was raised by a Christian parent. So, who is the better Christian?

Some of our evangelical and fundamentalist Christian brothers and sisters insist that every person has to have a dramatic life-changing experience like Saint Paul had to be considered a true Christian.

Yet, more Christians have had the experience of Saint Timothy. Raised in families that honored Christ, we grew in Christian faith slowly, as the faith of a parent or friend guided us into a love of Christ and His Church. Like Timothy, we may not be able to cite a particular day when something dramatic happened, yet we know that Christ lives in our lives and, more importantly, we live in Him.

While some Christians will insist that we are not true Christians without a cataclysmic Damascus road experience like Saint Paul had, we should remember that Saint Paul himself never doubted the faith of Saint Timothy. Paul calls Timothy “my true child in the faith” (I Timothy 1:2), a “brother” (I Thessalonians 3:2), and worthy to be considered an “apostle” (I Thessalonians 2:6).

In reality, the Church is a mix of those who have been raised slowly and steadily in the Christian faith over a lifetime and those who have had a dramatic conversion experience. The important truth to remember is that all Christians have had and continue to have their lives changed by Christ. In whatever way Christ found us and drew us to Himself, that way was exactly the right one for us.



Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church  
3500 W. 106<sup>th</sup> Street, Carmel, IN 46032  
Father William J. Bartz, Presiding Priest  
Father Jarrod Russell, Assistant Priest  
317-733-3033 [www.holytrinityindy.org](http://www.holytrinityindy.org)