

## From Wolf to Sheep to Shepherd

### A. Slide1 **Announce:**

B. Slide2 Food Drive - tomorrow morning, June 8th. 9-11am

C. Slide3 Wed Night - 3-part series, *Confidence in Crisis*. Ps.23 This week *The Guide & His Traveler*.

D. Prayer: I think Hal David & Burt Bacharach were right when they wrote in 1965, *What the world needs now Is love, sweet love. It's the only thing that there's just too little of. What the world needs now Is love, sweet love. No, not just for some, but for everyone!* [God you've called us to be the vessels of *Your love & Your change* to our world. *Fill us with Yourself so we might be that*]

## II. Slide4a **Intro:** From Wolf to Sheep to Shepherd

A. We love stories of *conversion*. Especially when it's *dramatic*.

1. Adoniram Judson, was one of the 1st missionary sent out of North America in the early 1800's. Missionary to Burma, bible into Burmese. Lost 2 wives & 7 children on the field. Spent years in prison & 7 years with no converts. But back when he was 20's...

B. Slide4b Adoniram Judson father was a pastor. Adoniram was being led away from the faith in college by a student named Jacob Eames, who was a *deist*. He kept this concealed from his parents till his 20th b-day, when he broke their hearts that he had *no faith* and he was intending to go to NY to study theater. He did, and got in with a group of guys where he lived *a reckless, vagabond life*, finding housing where he could.

1. One night he stayed at an **Inn** where he had never stayed before. The innkeeper explained that *his sleep might be interrupted as there was a man critically ill in the next room*. Through the night he heard **groans** and **gasps** and he started thinking about that man & how he might not be *prepared to die*. Then he wondered about **himself**, he had thoughts about his own dying. **He felt foolish because a good deist didn't struggle with these things**. When he was leaving he asked if the man next-door was **better**. *He is dead* said the inn keeper. Judson was

struck with the *finality* of it all. On the way out he asked, *do you know who he was?* Oh yes a young man from the college in Providence named... **Jacob Eames**.

a) His conversion was not **immediate**, **but** was now **sure**. God was on his trail, like the apostle Paul, and there was **no escape**.

C. **On one hand**...the **salvation story** of a **5 year old** who is saved from a lifetime of *heartache and bad memories* is every bit **a work of grace** as the salvation of the *most shameless sinner*. A person doesn't have to have a **dramatic** salvation story to have **true faith** and **depth**.

D. **On the other hand**...if you are converted we all have miraculous & dramatic stories.

1. **Slide4c** You might think, *No I have a pretty bland story*. **But** still, it was **God's-miraculous-and-merciful-pursuit-that-saved-you**. Wait till you get all the details from Him one day!
2. Amazing Grace line, *Twas **Grace** that taught my heart to fear, And **Grace** my fears relieved*. [grace = the free/no-works & unmerited/not-deserved favor of God]
3. God is **gracious** to **change** anyone, **and** God is **gracious** to **use** anyone in His service.
  - a) **Slide4d** I hope **1st this morning**, God will remind us of **our** story of grace.
  - b) **And 2nd** that he would **empower** us to share this story and be emboldened for the mission Christ has for each of us.

E. **Here we have** *the most famous conversion in church history*. So important that Luke included it **3 times** (ch.22 & 26). *Saul: From **Wolf to Sheep to Shepherd***.

1. **The hunter becomes the hunted**. [poacher/lion/game parks]

### III. **Slide5 WOLF (1,2) Saul the wild beast**

A. If we ask *what caused Saul's conversion?* there's only **one answer** possible. *The sovereign **grace** of God through Jesus Christ*. Saul **did not** choose Christ, he was **persecuting** Christ. It was rather Christ who choose him & intervened on his behalf.

1. Plotting their liquidation he was *ravaging the church* (8:2 *the tearing of a body by an animal*). Same as Ps.80:13 used of *wild boars devastating a vineyard*. Saw this at *Domenagoni family ranch* up north, quail hunting).
  2. Now here in vs.1 *Saul the Terrible* was *still breathing threats & murder against the disciples* (the *panting & snorting* of wild beasts).
- B. *Slide6* Saul hated the *Jerusalem* believers (aka, *The Way* most common term for 1st century believers) *but* also the *Damascus* believers.
1. Damascus was the **capitol** of Syria, it is one of the **oldest cities** in the world. Saul almost completed the **150 mile** journey, about a **week** to travel from Jer.
- C. Saul, *his heart filled with hatred, his mind poisoned by prejudice*. In his own language (26:11) *a raging fury obsessed him*.
1. He only left one thing out of his calculations...*the sovereign grace of God!*
  2. When Saul was *farthest from Christ*, then came his turning point.
  3. Spurgeon said, *They may shut us out, but they cannot shut Him out.*
  4. Who is the last person you'd think ever will get saved? *What Hope!*

#### IV. *Slide7* **SHEEP (3-9)** *Saul the wolf becomes a sheep*

- A. Don't miss this, Christ shows as *unlimited patience* towards Saul. *That* ought to be an encouraging example to us.
- B. (5) *I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting* – undeniable proof He was **alive** & His claims were **true**.
1. *But* also note *the extraordinary way* in which **Jesus** identified with His followers. *To persecute them* was to persecute **Him**.
  2. *The light he saw* was the glory of the Lord. *The voice he heard* was the voice of Christ. John Stott
- C. *Slide8a* (5b,6a *missing but in 26:14*) *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.* 6 *So he, trembling & astonished, said, Lord, what do You want me to do? Then the Lord said to him*

1. Jesus was *pursuing Saul, prodding, & pricking him*, like a farmer using goads to break him in.
2. Goad 1, watching Stephen's death/angel. Goad 2, the light. Goad 3, the voice. Goad 4, took him to the ground (to humble him, not crush him). Goad 5, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? appealing to his reason & conscience (thus not demeaning Saul into a robot or into a hypnotic trance). Pricking his mind, heart, conscience, eyes, ears & will.
3. Saul's conversion was grace, all grace. Gradual grace, gentle grace, divine grace. Sin imprisons, grace liberates.
  - a) 1Jn.4:19 We love because he first loved us.

D. Slide8b C.S.Lewis in his last ch's of his autobiography said, *Sensing God's relentless pursuit of him, he likens him to the great Angler playing his fish, to a cat chasing a mouse, to a pack of hounds closing in on a fox, and finally to the divine chess player maneuvering him into the most dis-advantageous positions until in the end he concedes 'checkmate'.*

1. What illustration would you use to describe God's pursuit of you?

## V. Slide9 SHEPHERD (10-19) Saul the sheep becomes a shepherd

A. Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel - Saul the Shepherd.

B. Ananias - (not infamous Ananias & Sapphira). A forgotten hero of the church.

1. He only receives a few lines, a bit part, but what a man of faith, obedience, boldness, courage, hutzpah. [Paul doesn't mention again]
2. But gets to lead to him to Jesus.

C. (10-12) The detail in this prophetic vision is remarkable:

1. God told Ananias specifically who he'd meet by name (Saul of Tarsus). Exactly where he was (Judas' house on Straight St.). What he was doing

at the moment (praying). His new condition (**God's chosen vessel**). What Ananias was supposed to do (**lay on hands & heal the blindness**).

He also told Ananias that Saul would be *expecting him personally* (12).

D. (11) **A street called Straight** – still Damascus' main **East/West** thoroughfare.

E. (11) **For behold, he is praying** – a sure witness of a man's conversion.

1. **Not**, *behold he sings*, **or** *behold he reads Scripture*, **or** *behold he preaches*.

2. But if, in God's sense of the term, *really prays*, we may be sure that he **has passed from death to life. :)**

3. **Before** you might have heard him *repeating words*, **but now** he utters *groans, cries, sobs, & tears*. **Before** he would have *said his prayers*, **now** he *wrestles for his life*. **Before** a *performance*, **now** *doing real business with the Most High*. **Behold, he is praying.**

F. (15) **A chosen instrument/vessel** - A vessel not self-made, nor self-kept, but made & kept by the Potter.

1. It's *empty, clean, useful, quiet & ready* to be filled with contents of more value than itself.

G. (16) **Suffer?** - **And now** the added element...*he must suffer for the sake of My name*.

H. (17) **Paul's Pentecost!**

I. **My favorite** - *brother Saul*. Words of fraternal welcome. Full inclusion, **not** *we'll be watching to see you'll do*.

J. A Sunday School teacher, a **Mr. Kimball**, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, **Dwight L. Moody**, became an evangelist. In England in 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of **Fredrick B. Meyer**, pastor of a small church. **F. B. Meyer**, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named **J. Wilbur Chapman**. **Chapman**, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, **Billy Sunday**, to do evangelistic work. **Billy Sunday** held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing

**Mordecai Ham** to town to preach. During Ham's revival, a young man named **Billy Graham** heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ.

1. Only eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that **one Sunday School teacher, Mr. Kimball**, who invested his life in the lives of others.
2. TY Mr. Ananias.