

KEY VERSE:

Respecting the Lord by the way they lived, and being encouraged by the Holy Spirit, the group of believers continued to grow.

Acts 9:31



THE PARISH OF CHALFONT ST PETER

Encounter God, Encourage Others, Engage our World
Charity Number: 1146043



www.CSP-Parish.org.uk

FOUNDATION CAFÉ SERVICE

10th July, 2016

The Church Grows and Spreads 4: Saul and Barnabas



**CHALFONT
ST. PETER
PARISH CHURCHES**

KNOW WHAT:

- Today we continue with our theme: The Church Grows and Spreads. After Jesus' disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they met together, prayed together and saw God use them to spread the good news of Jesus to all kinds of people in many different places.
- We're looking at Saul (who was renamed Paul) and Barnabas, two very different men who became great friends.
- Saul was famous after Jesus' death for trying to hurt people who followed Jesus. Barnabas was famous for encouraging Jesus' followers. When Saul was on his way to persecute some Christians Jesus appeared to him as a bright light. Saul was filled with light and became a light to others.
- After Saul became a Christian none of Jesus' followers trusted him, they thought he was trying to trick them to hurt them. It was Barnabas who was brave enough to meet him and learn the truth – Saul did believe in Jesus. Barnabas encouraged people to give Saul a chance which encouraged Saul in his faith and led to him telling others about Jesus.

SO WHAT:

- There is no one that can't be changed by God, he is interested in even the 'worst' people.
- Christians are called to be like lights, shining bright to encourage others.
- Sometimes we need to be bold in telling people about God.

NOW WHAT:

- Let's ask God to help us to shine brightly and encourage others.
- Let's be bold in talking about Jesus, even to people who already know him.

LUKE'S LETTERS: 'Sorry' is the hardest word...

That's what people often say. It's in song lyrics, poems, books and a fairly common phrase to throw around in conversation. I'm not sure it's true though. I think 'forgive' is much harder than 'sorry'. People (particularly children) say 'sorry' all the time. It's that 'get out of jail free card' that we use when we've upset someone or forgotten something or got in someone's way on the pavement. Even in more difficult situations, such as family disputes, 'sorry' tends to be a fairly easy word.

'Forgive' on the other hand is much harder. To truly forgive when someone has let you down or hurt you can feel impossible. It means letting go of a grudge, giving up your right to be angry or resentful and it means trying to mend a relationship even if you're not the one who broke it.

As hard as forgiveness is, this is exactly what Christians are called to do. The Lord's Prayer presupposes that we are forgiving people, placing our own forgiveness within the context of our forgiveness of others. What's interesting is how powerful forgiveness is and how it cuts through so many issues when it is given sincerely. Some of the most powerful accounts of the holocaust or apartheid are those stories of forgiveness. So much is achieved when the person who is wronged speaks out in love and forgiveness.

Lauding the forgiveness and grace shown but others is one thing, but it is much harder to do that ourselves. That is exactly what the early church found in its encounter with Saul. 'How do we turn the forgiveness we have received into forgiveness for this murderer?' There are no simple answers to that question, yet it is a challenge that we as Christians are all called to take up.