

Acts 9:17
(Acts 9:1-19 for the context)

“Brother Saul”

Saul, powerful, persecutor, the enemy. Now sitting in a house in Damascus, blinded, confused and shocked by a dramatic vision.

Ananias, one of those appalling Christians that Saul had come to ruin, has been told by God to visit him. Ananias understandably wrestles with this. This does not feel to be a good or safe idea, but then obediently he goes. He knocks on the door and is shown to where Saul is sitting.

“Brother Saul,” begins Ananias.

Had anyone dared called Saul ‘brother’ in recent times? Even his friends must have been slightly disturbed by his passionate hatred for this bizarre but harmless sect. The man who had calmly looked after the coats of those who had stoned Stephen must have had, to say the least, a certain icy reputation. His words in his letters after his conversion to Christianity still have moments of real ferocity. What he

must have been like before his conversion and introduction to the love and forgiveness of Christ we can only guess.

And here was one of the persecuted, calling him 'brother'.

Brother Saul

'Brother' and 'Sister' are deep words, speaking of respect, equality, heritage, affection, unity and loyalty. In the troubled places of the world, genuine commitment to these words would do much to bring peace. In the troubled places of our own lives genuine commitment to these words would transform so many of our homes, schools and workplaces.

Saul hears the greeting and receives it, and the welcome behind it. He does not leap up and demand to be treated with the respect due to his status and authority. He is not only blind, he is broken. He receives the greeting, the prayer and the healing. His vision is restored. Physically and spiritually he is learning to see again.

We hear no more of Ananias. But we know that Paul never forgot him, otherwise Luke would not have known about, and then written about, this meeting. "Brother Saul" was a greeting of courage, love and respect. Perhaps it was part of Paul's healing and restoring journey.

Whatever one's faith position, it can easily be argued that Paul is one of the most influential people in history. Ananias, the first Christian he

truly engaged with, opened the conversation by calling him 'brother'.

That may truly have been rather significant.