

Kinds of People that Jesus Saves, Part 3: The Enemy

June 23, 2024

Acts 9:1-31

Saul, the Greatest and Most Significant Conversion in Church History. 1) With Saul, the plan of God stated in Acts 1:8 takes an immediate turn to fulfill what Christ promised, “and to the ends of the earth.” Saul would bear the name of Christ to the Gentiles, Acts 9:15. This calling referenced 3x in Acts: 9:15, 22:6-21, 26:16-17. 2) Saul’s conversion is a great template for all conversions. Jesus saves us. He saves His enemies, Rom. 5:8 & 5:10.

Saul (Paul’s) Conversion Gives Us 5 Examples of Jesus’ Work:

1. **Example of Jesus’ Gracious Work:** Paul was the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15. “Least of the apostles,” 1 Cor. 15:9. But Paul received grace from Jesus, 1 Tim. 1:14, 16, 1 Cor. 15:10.
 - a. Paul was breathing threats against the disciples, Acts 9:1 (1st Reference Acts 8:1). Paul was enraged (exceedingly mad) against believers, punishing them often, Acts. 26:11. Paul was on the road to Damascus at around noon, Acts 22:6. Paul’s zeal to persecute the church was beyond those of his day, Phil. 3:6, Gal. 1:13-14.
 - b. Paul was the least likely to be saved because of his life’s work and bent. But grace towards him was exceedingly great. Jesus is glorified in Paul’s conversion, 1 Tim. 1:16-17.
2. **Example of Jesus’ Commanding Work:** 1) Location: about 150 miles from Jerusalem, you can’t escape the Lord’s reach. 2) Situation: Paul is a pharisee of the pharisees concerning the Law. Saul is an antichrist persecuting the church and opposing the Lord. He knew the Scriptures beyond most. Because of the power of God, no sinner is safe! 3) The Tone: “Why are you persecuting Me?” Christ makes a demand and commands Paul to stop, Acts 9:6, 17:30 (as men are commanded to repent). 4) Humiliation: the transformation caused humility. Paul repented and was baptized. The command of Christ was an effectual call, bringing salvation to Paul, reviving his soul (Eph. 2:1)
3. **Example of Jesus’ Regenerating Work:** Paul was blinded physically and spiritually, Acts 9:8. Paul was led by the hand into Damascus. As Paul was, so we are dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), walking (walking as our is life and course) as sons of disobedience, walking in blindness. Acts 26:11, Paul was enraged and blinded as are unbelievers, Eph. 4:17-18. Eph. 2:4, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,” made us alive. We were blinded by our sinful nature, deceived by Satan, and possessing a darkened mind, 2 Cor. 4:3-6, but God commanded light to shine in our hearts, and to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
4. **Example of Jesus’ Transforming Work:** It will have an impact. Those who lived in darkness and practiced darkness no longer walk as such, Rom. 1:28-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-11. Paul went from breathing threats and murder against the church to be persecuted and many attempting to murder him, Acts 9:23, 29. God strengthens in us what is useful to Him and helps us to put off what is not. The Holy Spirit working in us to make us like Christ, Rom. 8:29. We must be born again to be saved, John 3:5.
5. **Example of Jesus’ Community Work:** 1 Cor. 1:26-27, those Christ saves confounds the wise of this world. Those God has humbled to believe in Jesus, those are the ones God has saved. Believers cannot function independent of the body of Christ. Paul’s conversion emphasized his need for the church (Ananias, Acts 9:17, fellow believers, Acts 9:25, and Barnabas, 9:27). They witnessed his conversion, saw his baptism, and testified of his suffering for Christ.

6. **Example of Jesus' Protecting Work:** Jesus is control of all of His enemies as seen in the life of Paul and He is in control of the enemies of His church, Acts 9:4. Jesus knows our enemies. Psalm 17:7-8, God saves His people and knows those who persecute them.
>>Paul began immediately preaching, he was recognized as a member of the church there (Acts 9:25) and was protected by the Lord. Christ cares for the church as He promised and in the likeness of someone caring for themselves, Eph. 5:29, 32.

Further Discussion and Application

Jesus cares for His church as demonstrated by Saul's conversion. It seems the world hating one man more than others, put a target on him. How is God's goodness reflected by how He cares for His people? What has He given us? How does He sustain us?

Looking at the life of Paul and his regeneration by the Holy Spirit, what is the fruit of salvation in our lives? What changes about us once we have come to the Lord and been transformed in our spirit from death to life? What happens to our speech? Our desires? Our hopes? What do we love and desire to do as a believer that we didn't before?

The grace of Christ was demonstrated mightily in the life of Paul. Looking at 1 Tim. 1:12-17, how might you summarize Paul's description of God's grace, God's work, and the response to the great grace of God? Why does the Holy Spirit reveal that the sins committed by Paul were done in ignorance and unbelief? What allows God to cover our sin and shame? Why are we still accepted as heirs of God and heirs together with Christ? What is the basis of our adoption and being members of God's household?

The command of Jesus towards Paul is strong. What was the result of Jesus' command in the life of Paul? Why was Paul willing to suffer? Why was Paul willing to die for the cause of Christ? How might we imitate the passion and zeal for Paul in our lives and in the things that God has called us to do? According to Romans 12:11, how should we serve the Lord? What does that life look like when you are serving with a fervent zeal for the Lord?