

2-7-21 Damascus Road

Acts 9:1-19.

Who is that one person that you hate... wait we are in church, you strongly dislike? None of you, good and upstanding followers of Jesus would ever hate anyone.

What would you think if someone that hated believer's, beat them, imprisoned them, used family against them, and even murdered many, if God were to save them?

What if God saved someone who personally beat and imprisoned you, or killed one of your family members?

What if God sent someone like Saul, later changed to Paul into our life/church?

Acts 8:3, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."

Galatians 1:13-14, "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."

Acts 26:9-11, "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things [a]contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities."

Read Acts 9:1-2.

Saul got a letter from the chief priest to travel 135 miles, a week's journey to extradite any followers of "the way." Saul probably thought this trip to Damascus was super annoying and couldn't wait to get it over with. Little did he know he would never be the same.

Read Acts 9:3-7.

I wonder after Saul fell to the ground did, he remember **Ezekiel 1:28, "Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."**

Notice Jesus says, "why are you persecuting me?" Jesus doesn't say, "why are you persecuting the church or followers of the way?" Jesus said, me! I must remind myself of this all the time, it's not me that is under attack, it's the message, the truth I represent that is hated.

Paul is on the ground speaking and seeing something the men with him cannot. Now it's up to them to take him into the city because he was blind. Well, for the first time in his life he was gaining real spiritual truth, and it hurt.

Read Acts 9:10-19

Who wants Ananias' job? Remember I asked earlier who wants to see those we hate; I mean dislike to be saved?

Paul's conversion was huge and began God's plan to reach the Gentiles. Paul's life/ministry is found in **Acts 9:15**.

Let's read a couple of passages where Paul gives his personal testimony of this road to Damascus experience.

Read Acts 22:1-21.

Read Acts 26:12-18.

1. **You are not too sinful to be saved.** Since Jesus saved Saul, He can save anyone, even you. It doesn't matter what you've done or how you've been living. You may be religious, you may be rebellious, or you might just be a regular person. Either way you need to be saved.

God may have knocked you off your high horse. If so, it's not because He hates you but because He loves you. He's not trying to pay you back; He's wanting to bring you back. God's not after retribution; He longs for you to experience reconciliation with Him.

2. **Don't lose hope for others to be saved.** Some of you have been praying for a loved one for a long time. Don't give up. **Romans 12:12: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." "Rejoicing, (in)expectation, enduring affliction, preserving (in) prayer"**
3. **If you're saved it's time to serve.** Both Judas and Ananias were faithful to the tasks they were given. Judas opened his home and Ananias opened his arms to Paul. Just as Paul was God's instrument, so are you. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.
4. **Prepare yourself for persecution.** Like Paul, we will suffer for following the Savior. Persecution is a promise. Paul wrote in **Philippians 1:29: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake."**
5. **Never tire of telling your testimony.** Paul couldn't stop talking about his salvation. Every one of his letters begins with a greeting of grace and he retells his testimony in **Acts 22** and **Acts 26**. Here's a simple outline taken from his approach before King Agrippa in **Acts 26**.
6. **Hold on tightly to your relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ.** If you are in a saving relationship with Christ, you and I are spiritually related. I am your brother. You are my sister or brother. The Greek word for "brother" means, "from the same womb." That means we've been "birthed together."

Conclusion

God can and is willing to save anyone. If you haven't trusted in Jesus and the work, substitution for you on the cross, why not do it today?

We are called to witness to all the world. Even to those who we would rather not. In this time of tension and arguments about everything, are you searching for some common ground to reach others? Or content at them going to hell?