

Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word

A Most Unlikely Convert

Acts 9:1-22

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God's Spirit can change and use some of the most unlikely people to be a part of what He is doing all over the world.

I. The Most Hateful Opponents Are Sometimes the Most Fearful

Acts 9:1 "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest"

This new message of the Gospel dismantled the very core of who he was as a Pharisee. Christianity was a threat to his entire identity and worldview.

The fact that many people won't give Christianity a fair shake or equal hearing is because the evidence for it—that is rooted in the resurrection and the credibility of the Bible—makes them so uneasy and nervous.

II. God Can Save Suddenly and Without Permission

A. God Saved Paul Suddenly and Despite His Animosity

Acts 9:3-4b "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground..."

Paul describes his conversion this way:

Galatians 1:15-16 "But when it pleased God... [He] called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles..."

Paul was in the prime of life – a self-righteous Pharisee who knew who he was, what he believed, and what he wanted next. This did not stop Jesus from bursting into his life and claiming him for His own!

"... at the age of 36, I was one of the few tenured women at a large research university, a rising administrator, and a community activist. I had become one of the [quote] 'tenured radicals.' By all standards, I had made it. That same year, Christ claimed me for Himself and the life that I had known and loved came to a humiliating end."

-Rosario Butterfield

We have a God who can interrupt and intervene at any time because He's not looking for seekers... He's looking for sinners!

Romans 3:10-12 "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside..."

B. God Saved Paul Authoritatively and Without His Permission

Acts 9:4-5 "Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus...'"

Jesus doesn't ask Paul to make a decision. He tells Paul exactly what to do!

Acts 9:6 "... Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what to do."

Jesus is more than a gentleman! He's a King...on a mission of mercy to seek and to save those who are lost.

Jesus came to set people free even when they're not looking for Him!

When you come face to face with the living God, the repercussions of that impact reverberate out into every area of your life for the glory of God!

Paul puts God and the glory of Jesus Christ at the center of salvation when he says:

2 Corinthians 4:6 "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

III. God Can Use Those Same People to Defend What They Tried to Destroy

Acts 9:20 "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

Acts 9:22 "But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ."

Paul went from religion to a relationship with Jesus Christ! **See *Phil. 3:3-9***

I Timothy 1:15-16 “ This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ —and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of His great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in Him and receive eternal life.”

No one is too far gone... no one is too far away... and no one is too hard a case for the power and mercy of God!