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SAY HELLO TO JESUS

ACTS 9:1-31



Stephen and Philip have paved the way for the world mission of the church. One, by his blood. The other, by his words. Both, by following the example of Jesus. Luke now will tell the story of two notable conversions which launched the gospel to the ends of the earth. The first was Saul of Tarsus – the soon-to-be apostle to the Gentiles.

“WHO ARE YOU, LORD?” (9:1-9)

1. Read Acts 9:1-9. Luke has already mentioned Saul three times in Acts, each time as a bitter opponent of Christ and his church. His hostility and hatred of this new sect known as the Way¹ had not changed. Describe Saul according to verses 1-2. What are his intensions? What emotions are driving him on the road to Damascus?
2. What do verses 4-5 teach us about Jesus’s love for his church? What does Christ-like love for the church look like in practice?
3. Looking back at verse 2, what’s ironic about the way Saul entered Damascus in verses 6-8?

REDEMPTION

Samaritans, an Ethiopian, and Saul. God redeems all kinds of people. It is the work of God to deliver his people from slavery to sin and the penalty of death. This is the curse-cancelling plan God set in motion in Genesis 3. It’s the reason his Son comes to bear our guilt and die in our place (1 Cor 15:3). He comes to rescue rebels like us.

¹Early church believers apparently called their movement **THE WAY**. It referred to “the way to be saved” (16:17) or “the way of the Lord” (18:25-26); that is, the only way of life that God established by which people could be saved.

AFFLICTION & AFFECTION (9:10-19)

God can and will reach out to his most vehement enemies. He will defeat the uttermost human rebellion, but in doing so he does not crush rebels but loves and converts them to be the chosen instruments of his good news. It's the radical nature of grace and the source of our hope in the power of the gospel.

4. List five consequences of Saul's encounter with Jesus. Describe a time when the Lord completely upended your life with all its many plans. What does your experience have in common with Saul's?
5. Is Ananias one of the forgotten heroes of the Christian faith? What is the significance of his ministry to Saul? Knowing Saul's reputation among followers of Jesus (9:13-14), what makes Ananias's obedience doubly significant?

CONVERTED & CONVERTING (9:19-31)

The story of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 begins with him leaving Jerusalem with an official mandate from the high priest to arrest fugitive Christians and ends with him leaving Jerusalem as a persecuted Christian himself. Being a witness to Christ involves suffering for Christ. It is not an accident that the Greek word for witness (*martyrs*) came to be associated with martyrdom.

6. Read Acts 9:19-31. Luke focuses on Saul's new sense of responsibility to the world. What characteristics of Saul's witness does he mention? What lessons can we learn from Saul's response to his new-found faith?
7. Just as in Damascus, the believers in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul. What does Barnabas teach us about how to view and treat new Christians?

PRAY

Pray for people you know who, like Saul, would be unlikely converts to faith in Christ. Pray that God would not only save them but send them to be salt and light in the world. Pray for yourself, that, like Ananias you would obey the Lord, whatever the cost and, like Barnabas, you would speak up for new believers and welcome them.