

Community Group Discussion Questions

“The Salvation of Paul”

Acts 9:1-19a

Sermon Series Title: “Church Beginnings”

Sermon Series Summary: From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

Setting: The book of Acts is a transitional book between the resurrection of Jesus and the established local churches of the epistles. With Jesus’ call to the church in Acts 1, we see how the gospel spreads to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.

Summary: In our passage, we see the story of Paul’s salvation. The persecutor of the church encounters Christ and then is mobilized to be one of the greatest theologians and missionaries in history. In this story, we see the blindness of sin, the grace of God, the humble obedience of a servant, and the glory of salvation.

Sermon Points:

1. A Divine Encounter
2. A Humble Obedience
3. A Beautiful Salvation

Main Idea: *“Trust in Christ, and you shall be saved.”*

Opening Question

1. Have you ever tried to love an enemy? What happened?

(Answers will vary.)

After finishing our look at D. Philip last week, we see Luke bring us to Paul’s conversion story. He was an enemy of the church and of Christ, persecuting and killing Christians. However, we see God’s grace of salvation on his life, and in his story, we see our own salvation story.

Read Acts 9:1-19a

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2. What are some lessons we can learn from Paul's salvation story?

(Paul was a persecutor of the church. He was like a dragon, trying to inflict as much pain as possible upon Christians. He was an enemy of Christ. But Christ meets him and saves him, even though Paul was running in the opposite direction. And Christ calls him by name, personally and intimately. He is blinded by the light, representing his spiritual blindness in his sin, and at the end of the story, his sight is restored.)

If God can save a sinner like Paul with his past, He can save sinners like us. Just like Paul, in our salvation, God calls us first, while we were enemies, running in the opposite direction. We were blind in our sin, but now we are able to see with the light of Christ.

Paul asks who the Lord is, and this is the same question that we will ask when we are confronted with the holiness and greatness of God. Who are you, Lord? This may be one of the most important questions we can ask.

In Paul's encounter with Christ, we see Jesus asking Paul why he is persecuting Him? Paul never directly persecuted Christ, while He was alive on earth. Jesus is referring to Paul's persecution of the church. This shows us that Jesus is united to the church so much that persecution against the church is persecution against Christ. Through this, we can learn that Christ hurts and weeps with us when we mourn and hurt. Not only that, this verse calls us to think twice if we want to hurt our neighbor in Christ.)

3. How does Ananias' humble obedience move you?

(Answers will vary.)

After Ananias hears the call of the Lord, we see apprehension. He is honest before God about how this man has committed evil against the saints in Jerusalem. And he knows that Saul has the green light to persecute the Christians in Damascus. Saul may have killed his friends or even family. He probably has imprisoned people he cares about. So, we understand his apprehension. It may be out of fear of death. It may be doubting God's call- are you sure, God? It may be just a hatred toward this evil man.

What I love about this exchange is that Ananias is so open with God, and God doesn't meet him with condemnation. He welcomes it. He hears it. And he addresses it, by affirming the call for Ananias to go.

Despite all these reservations, when God calls Ananias to go, he humbly submits and obeys. He goes and lays hands on his enemy. He shares the gospel with him. He calls

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Paul a brother. He is an instrument used to save the greatest missionary and theologian in history. And he is never mentioned again in Scripture.

May it be our prayer to know Christ as our Savior and submit to Him as our Lord like Ananias.)

Final Thoughts: *In the salvation of Paul, we see our own salvation story. This is all possible because of the work of Christ. God pursued us first in Christ while we were enemies. Jesus became the enemy of God on the cross, so we may be received as family of God. We can receive the light of Christ, because He received the darkness of our sin. He received the silence of God on the cross, so we may receive the call of God. Jesus was the greater Ananias, humbling himself, not just risking His life but laying down His life, so that we may be saved. He was forsaken, so we can be forgiven. Have we experienced the salvation of Christ?*