

Sermon Notes



Sermon Notes: Saul's Conversion, Acceptance and Truth: Acts 9

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SERMON FOCUS:

As Saul/Paul related to the Philippians, we can relate to people with disabilities through:

1. Awareness
2. Attitude
3. Affection

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear God, we humbly ask You to bestow Your blessings upon the preaching of Your Word so Your Spirit may fill and teach us. May our minds be enlightened with Your truth. May our wills be conformed and obedient to Your will. May our hearts be filled with Your love and holy zeal. Help us live like Jesus and fulfill Your purposes to Your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THEME SCRIPTURES:

Acts 26:15-18, Acts 16:9-10, 1st Samuel 16:7, 1 Corinthians 12:18-27, Philippians 1:1-8, Philippians 2:1-5

Saul's life-changing conversion experience is found in Acts 9. He became aware of:

- who Jesus is
- the truth of the Gospel
- his calling from Jesus
- God's purposes for Gentiles

Note: Unlike "Biblical covenant stories" Saul's name did not change to Paul as a result of this event. His name was "Paul" in Greek, and therefore his audience (the Gentiles) knew him as Paul. "Saul" of Acts 9 is "Paul" throughout the New Testament.



Paul's mission work among Philippians (Acts 16) and his greetings:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. - Philippians 1:1-6 ESV

FIRST TRANSFORMATION: AWARENESS

It seems as if there are several reasons why Saul was made blind. Before Christ was in his life, Saul was separated and ignorant. After a face to face encounter with Christ, Paul had a Christ-like awareness of who the Philippians were to Christ. Paul saw them as Christ sees all of us.

Like the Philippians:

- Are we unworthy, wicked pagans? No!
 - ▶ We are saints! that is, holy ones—redeemed, forgiven and made righteous in Christ Jesus.

- Are we deserving to be cursed as outcasts from God's favored people? No!
 - ▶ We are beloved fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God—grace and peace to you from God our Father.

- Are we cause for God's condemning justice? No!
 - ▶ The Bible says: I thank my God every time I remember you.

- Is our spiritual growth impossible and hopeless to believe? No!
 - ▶ The Bible says: being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.

As Paul was changed in his awareness of Gentiles, we can be changed in our awareness of people with disabilities; it starts with understanding what we have in common. We are:

- created in God's image
- forgiven sinners, saved by grace
- born again through baptism and the Gospel
- beloved children in God's family with God as our Father
- valued and necessary members of the Body of Christ



We are infinitely valued

Now you are the Body of Christ and individually members of it.

-1 Corinthians 12:27 ESV

We are mutually connected and interdependent

God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose.

- 1 Corinthians 12:18 ESV

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." - 1 Corinthians 12:21 ESV

We are purposely gifted and equally needed

The parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable. - 1 Corinthians 12:22 ESV

We become aware face to face of who a person truly is

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. - 1 Samuel 16:7b

SECOND TRANSFORMATION: ATTITUDE (Reference Philippians 2:1-5a)

Before Christ was in his life, Saul was condemning and apathetic, not concerned with peoples' feelings. After a face to face encounter with Christ, Saul's attitude changed toward the Gentiles. God gave him a caring and respectful heart.

- God works to change our attitude to be like Christ.
 - ▶ As Saul's attitude changed toward Gentiles, our attitudes can change toward people with disabilities.
 - ▶ Focus on the person as a creation of God and beloved by God, as one in whom God is working.
 - ▶ When mentioning a disability is necessary, use person first language.
 - ▶ Be respectful.

Note: The origin of the word "respect" is a Latin term from which we get "spectator," that is, one who looks or watches. By adding the prefix "re" the literal translation is "to look again." In other words, get to know the person as they are; don't limit yourself to a first impression. Perceive with the mind and heart the true person inside, look beyond one's disability. See and value the person God created them to be.



THIRD TRANSFORMATION: AFFECTION (Reference Philippians 1:8 ESV)

Before Christ was in his life, Saul was hard-hearted and emotionally absent. After a face to face encounter with Christ, Saul's affection toward others changed. God moved him to be tender-hearted and compassionate.

- As Saul was changed to have Christ-like affection toward Gentiles, we can be changed to have genuine affection—which comes from Jesus and is like Jesus—toward people with disabilities, many of whom experience loneliness and a lack of close, caring friendships. We can make a difference—face to face.
 - ▶ Be present—“I am with you.”
 - ▶ Be attentive—“You are important to me.”
 - ▶ Be affectionately kind—“I care about you.”

PRAYER:

Dear God our Father, bring us face to face with people with disabilities. Enlighten our minds with Your awareness. Change our will to conform to Your attitude. Move our hearts to demonstrate Christ-like affection. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Resources

If you would like resources for disability ministry, go to BethesdaLC.org and cph.org/Bethesda.

Resources for reference or viewing during a service or Bible class.

- ▶ Nikki Celebrates Communion (2:23) <https://youtu.be/O5tIHW3pXd8>
- ▶ Alana Celebrates Confirmation (4:25) <https://youtu.be/DIXCD1ajtJc>
- ▶ We are Indispensable (2:19) https://youtu.be/3n0OI-WJ_98
- ▶ Psalm 139 (2:18) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFGOwJmnB9Y>
- ▶ Psalm 46 (2:01) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC9L0DoG7e>
- ▶ Chase Becomes a Leader (3:49) https://youtu.be/2JKU_ej-OSw

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