

Saul Meets Jesus

(Series: Reimagining Church; Message Twenty)

Acts 9:1-19

A. What changed Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West's thinking? The evidence

B. Saul is a transformation story possible only by God's power and grace

THE CONVERSION

A. We first met Saul at the stoning of Stephen

1. Saul is on a fast track to be a Pharisee, Rabbi, and member of the Sanhedrin

2. Saul has made it his personal mission to eradicate Christianity

a. Without a hint of grace, he is pursuing the people of grace

b. To Saul, saying Jesus is Messiah means denying the law (Torah) of God

"If a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God" (Deuteronomy 21:22f)

B. At midday, a light from heaven shone around Saul (26:13)

1. The question is simple: *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*

2. No doubt this question came as an incredible shock to Saul

"If you have done it to one of the least of me, you have done it unto me." (Matt. 25:40)

THE CONTINUATION

A. God blinded him. Saul had to be humbly led into Damascus

1. For three days and three nights he lived in darkness

2. God has a plan for Saul - as he does for all of us - a story of grace

B. In Damascus, there was a disciple named Ananias

1. The Lord said, "Ananias, go!" God often says, "Go!"

2. There is no limit to God's power; there is no end to his grace; his love reaches farther than we can imagine!

3. There are no "lost causes"; grace never draws a line

"Right in the middle of our sin, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:8)

C. Jesus offers this persecutor forgiveness. Saul accepts

1. The community Saul has been persecuting embraces him as a brother

2. Saul is baptized and immediately starts talking to others about Jesus

a. Saul had an intellectual knowledge of God - of his Word, love and grace

b. Now Saul also has an experiential knowledge of God. Saul is Growing!

3. When we're forgiven, we can forgive; when we're shown grace we can be gracious; when we've been blessed, we can be a Blessing

4. Saul went from rounding up believers for death to rounding up unbelievers for life. Only God can do that. God loves doing it again and again

THE CHANGES

A. Everyone has to come to the point of facing Jesus

B. What Saul learned is something we all need to learn as we grow

1. Saul realized Jesus is alive

"Have I not seen Jesus our Lord" he responded years later when his apostolic mandate was questioned" (1 Corinthians 9:1)

a. This was a theophany at the level of Jesus appearance to his disciples following his resurrection - they changed dramatically; now Saul changes

b. The reality is - you cannot meet Jesus and not be transformed

2. Saul realized the cross had gone from a curse to a blessing

"Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2)

3. Saul realized salvation was by grace, not by works

a. Jesus enlists Saul into his service: from Sin to Salvation to Service

1) Saul discovered the Savior who forgave him for his sins

2) Saul discovered the Lord who would use him to build His Church

b. God forgives...and doesn't look back. It is what forgiveness and grace do

C. We are called to be a grace-filled community - embracing grace and extending grace - in Jesus' name

1. Can people tell by our lives that we've meet Jesus?

2. Could people prove Christianity is true by the testimony of God's saving grace and transforming power in our lives?