



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

Acts 9:1-31 – April 25th, 2021

- I. **Starter Questions:** Have you encountered someone in your life who was vehemently anti-Christian? Maybe on the internet, Facebook? Your family, at work? At church? (children's church") What do you think fueled their fervor? Did they ever repent? Is there hope for them?

II. Discussion of Scripture:

Background Information: Saul, Paul was from Tarsus, a great Hellenistic city on the Mediterranean Sea. A Hebrew of the Hebrews. Taught under Gamaliel, most famous Hebrew teacher in Jerusalem. Probably never saw Jesus or no doubt, would have mentioned it. Why was Saul so vicious? He knew the Hebrew scriptures, inside and out. He knew what the Christians were teaching. Stephen was also a Hellenistic Jew, like Saul. Saul was furious, a raging bull, angry that these blaspheming heretics would say that Jesus was the Son of God, one with God. That's why they killed Jesus, for claiming to be equal with God. Saul felt fully justified for attempting to eradicate the Christians from the world. Luke tells us in Acts 8:1 that Saul approved the execution of Stephen. Undoubtedly, one of his prouder moments up to this time.

- A. **Acts 9:1-9:** But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Comments and thoughts:

Breathing threats- breathing in, inhaling- This was his very purpose, his life source, sustenance

Damascus- NE of Galilee, Caesarea Philippi, old, old city, before Abraham, thousands of Jews and tons of synagogues. Now it was said to be infiltrated with followers of "the way", probably a derogatory term, (but who said, "I am the Way"?) Saul wanted to root them out of the entire country, the earth.

Why had the Christians scattered? Was Saul largely responsible for the scattering of

Christians around the country? He wanted to stamp out those ants he had uncovered.

How bright was this light, brighter than the sun? His blindness probably more light blindness than darkness. Looking into a welding torch, imprints the image on your eyes for a while. Saul could see nothing else for 3 days.

We are told that at this time, Jesus appeared to Saul. Acts 9:17-“the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road”, and in 9:27 Barnabas told the apostles how Paul had seen the Lord on the road. And in ch.22:14, how he was appointed to “see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.”

I always thought that Saul was just knocked down to the ground, blinded and he must have somehow just assumed that the voice he heard was truly Jesus. But he actually saw Jesus, we are told.

Talk about walls crashing down, the very structure, support of his meaning in life. He lived to kill those who said Jesus had risen from the dead, and now Saul knew, He knew that Jesus was, in every way, ALIVE!

He saw what Stephen saw as the stones were crushing his head. He too, saw Jesus, alive. This imprinted memory, as he had gladly watched them bash Stephen to death, and he was likely grinning proudly, this memory, and Stephen still showing the forgiveness that only Jesus can flow through us, had to be a shattering blow to his previously stable world. It all came crashing down.

Was Paul saved now? In Acts 26, Paul tells us that he replied to Jesus, “Lord, what shall I do?” This is what happens with salvation. God confronts us, we recognize our sin for what it is, and we submit to Him as our Saviour and Lord.

Paul knew what the Christians were saying about Jesus. It all flashed into convergence as he saw Jesus there before him. It is all true!

Side note: In Acts 26:14, Paul includes how Jesus, during this encounter, told him, “it is hard for you to kick against the goads”. It is hard, it hurts, not beneficial, self-damaging, to resist God and His urgings, His convicting, the convicting of the Holy Spirit. Yet, some still resist God. It is not impossible to resist God, but it is definitely, as Jesus put it, “hard”.

B. The Courage of Ananias

Acts 9:10-19 - ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” ¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your

name.”¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”¹⁷ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened.

Discussion Questions:

- 1- How should we respond in our views and interactions with those who hate Jesus and His followers?
- 2- How have you responded to such Christ-Haters? Do you have some victories for Jesus that you have witnessed in your acquaintances?
- 3- Were you friendly, neutral or antagonistic to Jesus before you were saved?

C. Continuing Adventures of Paul- (never a dull moment)- Acts 9:19-31 For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.²³ When many days had passed, the Jews^[a] plotted to kill him,²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him,²⁵ but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall,^[b] lowering him in a basket.²⁶ And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.²⁸ So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.²⁹ And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists.^[c] But they were seeking to kill him.³⁰ And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

So, now Paul, who had been used by God, like a boulder thrown into a lake, to scatter the Christians around the world, was now, again, useful as he was riding the wave across Greece and the world, spreading the love and mercy of God in Jesus.

III. Responding in Prayer:

- Pray for the unlikely lost, those around us who are kicking against the urgings of the Holy Spirit, who refuse to accept the truth as we all see it in His creation.
- Ask God to be useful vessels to carry His love to this world that needs Him.
- Pray that we would be responsive as Saul and Ananias were in God's plan for them and His church.