

Readings

Scripture

¹ 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.

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.

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.

- Acts 9:1-22 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

"Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" *The Acts of the Apostles*
Acts 9:1-22 Brad Anderson

We struggle to believe that Jesus can bring salvation to our enemies. (Acts 9:10-14)

How does Jesus continue to show us that he can bring salvation to our enemies?

By first revealing the enemy within each of us...

(Acts 9:1-6; Romans 5:10; Galatians 1:11-17)

By making us one with him in suffering...

- By aligning himself with our suffering... (Acts 9:4-5)
- By aligning us with his suffering... (Acts 9:7-9, 15-19)

By enlisting former enemies in his plan of salvation... (Acts 9:15, 20-22)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- As a child, of what person or "monster" were you most afraid?
- Saul traveled 150 miles to Damascus in order to expand what started as a local persecution against believers in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). What does this tell you about him?
- Saul's former teacher was Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). What had Gamaliel advised the Sanhedrin regarding Christians in Acts 5:34-39? How is Saul responding to this advice? What does this show about him?
- Describe what happened in Acts 9:3-9 from the viewpoint of one of Saul's companions.
- How would you feel in Ananias' place? Since Jesus had already appeared to Saul directly, why this time would he want a person to go to him? What is significant about the way Ananias addresses Saul?
- What types of people do you assume are beyond God's reach so that, if God spoke to you about them, you would question him? How does this story challenge these assumptions?