

Acts 9:1-31: Mercy And Grace.

1. Saul's Conversion (1-19): Mercy

Damascus was 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem, at least a six-day journey on horseback and Saul's willingness shows how committed he was to his cause. "A man of moderate stature...crooked legs...and long [hooked] nose..."

Christianity is referred to as the Way; used five times in Acts; Christianity is more than a belief or a set of opinions or doctrines. Following Jesus is The Way of living as well as believing.

A goad was a long, sharp stick that was used to get an ox guided and going whiling ploughing; kicking the goad is a futile endeavor. Persecution is a futile kick on Jesus (and His children); in fact He is the one being persecuted.

Mathew 5:10-12 - Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Philippians 3:5-6 - circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Galatians 1:13-14 - ...I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

God choses Ananias, an ordinary believer to be a vessel through whom Saul regains his sight and receives the filling of the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 1:13,16 - Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief...However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...

Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve; withdrawing His righteous wrath from us. God found Saul as he was but never left him the same; is going from a persecutor to preacher, from murderer, to hunter of souls who would later on *be the battle scared warrior of the Cross.*

2. Saul's Starts Ministry (20-31). Grace.

Having known the truth, Saul now preaches the Jesus He had fought against and the message he tried to silence with even more zeal before **gentiles, kings and the children of Israel.**

Saul is converted, preaches and he is sought after, to be killed by his fellow countrymen, the Jews. This essentially begins the many things he must suffer for Jesus's sake. Saul now becomes the hunted instead of the hunter!

Galatians 1:17-18 - *but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.*

Often, God wants the comfortable to be afflicted (gaining the fear of the Lord) and the afflicted to be comforted (by the comfort of the Holy Spirit).

1 Corinthians 15:10 - *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

Galatians 1:15-16 - *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...*

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.

Grace is God giving us everything that we don't deserve. The privilege to serve Him.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 - *Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*