

May 6, 2018

The Road to Damascus

by Michael Hickox

Olney Church of Christ

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Services

Sunday

Bible Study	9:30 am
A.M. Worship	10:20 am
P.M. Worship	2:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Class	7:00 pm
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Visitors are welcome
We offer Bible classes for all ages
We also offer in-home Bible studies

Acts 9 tells about a man named Saul who was heading to Damascus to persecute Christians (**verses 1-2**).

On the road to Damascus, Saul was met by Jesus. Following this encounter, Saul was converted to the truth. He became known as Paul, and was inspired to write about half of the New Testament. A number of important lessons can be learned from Saul's conversion detailed in this chapter:

We Cannot Overthrow God: On the road to Damascus, Jesus said to Saul, "***I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks***" (**Acts 9:5**).

The phrase "***it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks***" illustrates Saul's efforts to stop Christianity from spreading. His fight against Christ actually caused the Gospel to spread *more* (**Acts 8:3-4**). He did not accomplish what he set out to, and brought harm on himself as he fought against God.

Ironically, Saul's mentor Gamaliel (**Acts 22:3**) once commented about the foolishness of fighting against God. Speaking of the apostles, Gamaliel said "***Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God***" (**Acts 5:38-39**). No matter how hard man tries, no one can "overthrow" Christ and His church. No one can overthrow God.

Repentance is a 180° Change:

In **Acts 9**, Saul was transformed from one persecuting Christ (**Acts 22:19-20**)

The Road to Damascus

(Continued)

to one who “*straightway... preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God*” (**Acts 9:20**).

This is the nature of repentance. It is an “about face.” It is a 180° change. Saul’s conversion was manifested in an immediate, wholehearted turn to God. Like Saul, we must turn in the opposite direction when we have sin in our lives.

“Chiefest” of Sinners Can Be Forgiven: If there was ever a time for God to say, “*you’ve caused too much harm for me to forgive you,*” one might think **Acts 9** would be the time. Yet, when Saul did what the Lord required, his sins were washed away (**Acts 22:16**). Through Saul’s conversion, God showed us that the “*chief*” of sinners (**1 Tim. 1:15**) can be forgiven.

We have all sinned and grossly mistreated God (**Rom. 3:23**). Yet, as long as we are on earth, we all have the opportunity to submit to God’s terms for forgiveness.

Such assurance should not make us take the thought of future sin lightly or “procrastinate” obedience. It *should*, however, dissuade us from thinking we cannot be forgiven because of *past* sins.

Sinners Can Become Servants: Not only was Saul forgiven, he was granted the opportunity to “*preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*” (**Eph. 3:8**). One of the most influential preachers in the history of Christianity “*was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*” (**1 Tim. 1:13**), yet by the grace of God became someone who did much good.

Saul (Paul) remained humbled by his mistakes long after he repented (**1 Cor. 15:9**). Yet, he trusted in God’s grace, “tore off the rear-view mirror,” and failed to let his sinful past haunt him (**Phil. 3:13-14**).

The Truth Can Change Anyone (with the Proper Heart): As outsiders considered Saul, he may have seemed like the unlikeliest of individuals to follow Jesus. Those who “pre-judged the soil” (cf. **Matt. 13:19-23**) would have avoided him and sought someone else to teach. Yet, when Saul learned the truth, it changed his life.

God’s word has the power to do the same today. Those of us entrusted with spreading the truth should not avoid those we think will be unlikely to heed the Gospel. In so doing, we may ignore one who could one day become an excellent servant for Christ.

God’s Terms for Washing Sins Away:

In **Acts 9** (and **Acts 22** and **26**), we see an example of how one becomes a Christian and has his or her sins forgiven. Saul was a penitent believer (cf. **Acts 9:6**), but was told he also needed to be baptized to have his sins washed away (**Acts 22:16**).

Saul’s baptism did not assure all future sins would be forgiven. If he sinned *after becoming a Christian*, he would need to repent and pray for God’s forgiveness (**Acts 8:22**). Through his conversion, though, we learn what is needed for a *non-Christian* to get into Christ and receive forgiveness.

May both Christians and those outside of Christ learn from Saul’s example, and consider how these lessons apply to us.

Area Gospel Meetings

Casey Westside Church of Christ:
May 27-31 (with Andy Brenton)

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God's Plan for Saving Man

God's Grace	Ephesians 2:8
Christ's Blood	Romans 5:9
The Holy Spirit's Gospel	Romans 1:16
Sinner's Faith	Acts 16:31
Sinner's Repentance	Luke 13:3
Sinner's Confession	Romans 10:10
Sinner's Baptism	1 Peter 3:21
Christian's Work	James 2:24
Christian's Hope	Romans 8:24
Christian's Endurance	Revelation 2:10

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Words to Consider

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth:”

–1 Cor. 13:4-8a

Prayer List

Holly
 Barb
 Hickox's Granddaughter, Lyla (Leukemia)
 Harold (Prostate Cancer)
 Sandy (Foot Injury)
 Betty
 Mabel
 Norma's Grandson, Ryan (Head Injury)
 Snyder's Niece, Tessa (Serving in Jordan)
 Mike H (Prostate Cancer)
 Cheryl (Breast Cancer)
 Norma (Injuries from fall)
 June & Family
 Jerry G (Throat Cancer)
 Mattie (Leukemia)

Daily Bible Reading

May 6 – 1 Kings 8-9; Luke 21:1-19
 May 7 – 1 Kings 10-11; Luke 21:20-38
 May 8 – 1 Kings 12-13; Luke 22:1-30
 May 9 – 1 Kings 14-15; Luke 22:31-46
 May 10 – 1 Kings 16-18; Luke 22:47-71
 May 11 – 1 Kings 19-20; Luke 23:1-25
 May 12 – 1 Kings 21-22; Luke 23:26-56

“The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.”–Prov. 15:31-32

Prayer Leaders

Sunday, May 6, 2018

Bible Study: Harold

Worship: Roger

Evening: John

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Larry

Cleaning Building

Jeanette

Prepare Communion

Jeanette

Upcoming Reminders

May 26: Ladies' Bible Class @ 9:30 a.m.

June 9: Vacation Bible School

Assignments

Sunday, May 13, 2018

Reading: Harold

Announcements: Travis

Table: Dave

Serve: Mike

Dan D

John

Jim

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

Invitation: Mike

Anniversaries

May 30 – Larry and Patsy

Birthdays

May 10 – John

May 23 – Jeanette

May 26 – David