

Acts of Jesus, Lesson 21: A Life Changing Faith

- **I Cor. 13:1-8a** – Hard to believe that the guy who wrote that was the same guy who stood over the stoned, lifeless body of the martyr Stephen giving approval.
 - What happened to him? Why was there such a night and day difference between the Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus breathing out threats and murder against the Church and the Apostle Paul (name means little or humble) who gave his life in service to that same Church?
 - To understand what happened to him is to understand the nature of what the Bible calls being born again...the nature of the salvation that comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - Faith in Jesus changes a person inwardly and makes them right with God and it changes a person outwardly making him right with his fellow man.
 - Paul's efforts to stop Christians eventually brought him face to face with none other than Jesus Christ Himself.
- 1. **We are going to be taking a look at the conversion of the very unlikely character of Saul of Tarsus.**
 - God saved Paul to save him, but He also saved Him and recorded that salvation experience with us in view.
 - Since this was written with us in mind, we need to learn from it.
- **Acts 9:1-5a** – isn't that interesting: a man steeped in the Bible, steeped in religion and yet he did not know the God of the universe!! **Don't let it be you.**
- **VV. 5-18** – Why did God go to such lengths to get Saul's attention? Saul was a tough nut to crack.
- 2. **There are several things to point out about Saul's salvation experience that will help us in our walk today.**
 - First thing to point out is that this was shocking.
 - The saints in Damascus knew Saul was coming to persecute them...to capture them and haul them back to Jerusalem.
 - I can almost guarantee you that they didn't pray for the events that took place that day.
 - Paul's conversion came totally out of the blue, he wasn't open to the message of Christ at all.
- **Lesson: If they're still breathing, there is still a chance don't quit praying!!!!**
 - A Second thing to point out: God's church is precious to Him.
 - Jesus doesn't say, "why do you persecute the church" but "why do you persecute ME".
 - To touch the church or any individual within it is to touch Him;
 - Be careful what you say about and the way you treat other believers. **Jesus takes it very personally!!**
- A Third thing to point out about Saul's salvation experience: Salvation involves saying you were wrong.
 - This is the most difficult part of placing your faith in Jesus Christ:
 - It means you have say that all your religion, all your schemes, all the things you thought would get you to Heaven won't.
 - It's called repentance.
- The fourth and final thing to point out is the fact that Saul's salvation experience was personal.
 - Here's the implication of that: every person must have a personal conversion experience.
 - You don't have to see a light from heaven or here a voice or see Jesus in order to receive God's gift of eternal life.
 - You must personally encounter Christ ---
 - Encounter His opinion of your sin (that even one will send you to Hell)
 - Encounter His Sacrifice as He laid Himself down as your substitute,
 - Encounter His resurrection as He rose again proving that He alone saves,
 - Encounter Him in faith as you trust Him alone to save you.
 - You must have a personal conversion experience