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Acts of the Apostles

Living Praise Presbyterian Church - Home Cell Group Bible Study Feb-Jul 2001



ROAD TO DAMASCUS

.....

I stand six steps from the bed's edge. My arms extended. Hands open. On the bed Sara - all four years of her - crouches, posed like a playful kitten. She's going to jump. But she's not ready. I'm too close.

"Back more, Daddy," she stands and dares.

I dramatically comply, confessing admiration for her courage. After two giants steps I stop. "More?" I ask.

"Yes!" Sara squeals, hopping on the bed.

With each step she laughs and claps and motions for more. When I'm on the other side of the canyon, when I'm beyond the reach of mortal man, when I am but a tiny figure on the horizon, she stops me. "There, stop there."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure," she shouts. I extend my arms. Once again she crouches, then springs. Superman without a cape. Skydiver without a chute. Only her heart flies higher than her body. In that airborne instant her only hope is her father. If he proves weak, she'll fall. If he proves cruel, she'll crash. If he proves forgetful, she'll tumble to the hard floor.

But such fear she does not know, for her father she does. She trusts him. Four years under the same roof have convinced her he is reliable. He is not superhuman, but he is strong. He is not holy, but he is good. He's not brilliant, but he doesn't have to be to remember to catch his child when she jumps.

And so she flies.

And so she soars.

And so he catches her and the two rejoice at the wedding of her trust and his faithfulness.

I stand a few feet from another bed. This time no one laughs. The room is solemn. A machine pumps air into a tired body. A monitor metronomes the beats of a weary heart. The woman on the bed is no child. She was, once. Decades back. She was. But not now.

Like Sara, she must trust. Only days out of the operating room, she's just been told she'll have to return. Her frail hand squeezes mine. He eyes mist with fear.

Unlike Sara, she sees no father. But the Father sees her. *Trust him*, I say to us both. Trust the voice that whispers your name. Trust the hands to catch.

From When God Whispers Your Name by Max Lucado



When Chuck Colson, the American politician became a Christian in prison, almost everyone reacted with skepticism - Christians and non-Christians alike. Of all the leading characters in the Watergate scandal, he was one of the most notorious. Could such a calculating man sincerely come to God? Could a person like him be saved at all?

REFLECTION:

Whose conversion to Christianity has seemed most ridiculous to you? Why?

DISCOVERY:

1. Read Acts 9:1-31. Review what you know about Saul (7:58 - 8:3). What further insights do you get about him from 9:1-2?
2. Whom did Saul meet on his way to Damascus? How?
3. What the the voice from heaven tell Saul about his past and his future?
4. How long did Saul have to wait for further instructions from the Lord? Why?
5. How did Ananias minister to Saul? What's significant about this ministry?

6. How was God's power revealed in Saul's life?

RESPONSE:

A. With which person in the story do you identify: Saul, his companions, or Ananias? Why?

B. What does the passage teach us about God? About people?

C. Describe your conversion experience. Why is it helpful to share our stories with one another?



Before he encountered Christ, Paul had been somewhat of a hero among the Pharisees... Blue-blooded and wild-eyed, this young zealot was hellbent on keeping the kingdom pure - and that meant keeping the Christians out. He marched through the countryside like a general demanding that backslidden Jews salute the flag of the motherland or kiss their family and hopes good-bye.

All this came to a halt, however, on the shoulder of a highway...That's when someone slammed on the stadium slights, and he heard the voice.

When he found out whose voice it was, his jaw hit the ground, and his body followed. He braced himself for the worst. He knew it was all over....He prayed that death would be quick and painless.

But all he got was silence and the first of a lifetime of surprises.

He ended up bewildered and befuddled in a borrowed bedroom. God left him there a few days with scales on his eyes so thick that the only direction he could look was inside himself. And he didn't like what he saw.

He saw himself for what he really was - to use his own words, the worst of sinners.

...Alone in the room with his sins on his conscience and blood on his hands, he asked to be cleansed.

...The legalist Saul was buried, and the liberator Paul was born. He was never the same afterwards. And neither was the world...

The message is gripping: Show a man his failures without Jesus, and the result will be found in the roadside gutter. Give a man religion without reminding him of his faith, and the result will be arrogance in a three-piece suit. But get the two in the same heart - get sin to meet Savior and Savior to meet sin - and the result just might be another Pharisee turned preacher who sets the world on fire.

From *The Applause of Heaven* by Max Lucado



Topical Study: The Deity of Jesus Christ

He preached CHrist...that he is the Son of God (Acts 9:20).

The main truth that Paul emphasized as he preached in the synagogues of Damascus immediately following his conversion was that Christ was the Son of God (Acts 9:20). In his role as persecutor, Paul was not anti-God. In fact, he thought he was pleasing God by persecuting the Christians. Then, fresh from the vision that showed him who Jesus really was (Acts 9:5), he wanted to retrace his steps, as it were, and tell the people, whom he had radically misinformed, who Jesus really was.

Many people today say they believe in the *divinity* of Christ but not his *deity*, meaning that they believe Him to be Godlike, proceeding from God, but not that He is God. The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus Christ is God. It teaches this by direct statement (e.g., John 1:1-2, 14) and by attributing to Christ divine names, attributes, and offices that belong only to God. A few of these are as follows (read all the passages cited):

I. Divine Names

1. Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace (Isa 9:6)
2. Immanuel ("God with us," Matt 1:23)
3. Lord (Matt 7:21-22; Luke 1:43; 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 16:31; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11)
4. Son of God (John 5:21-26; 10:36)
5. God (John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1; cf. 1 Tim 3:15-16)
6. Alpha and Omega (Rev 1:8, 17; 22:13)
7. Logos (John 1:1-5; 9:14; Rev 19:13)

Sources:

Irving Jensen. **Acts - A Self-study Guide.**
Max Lucado. **When God Whispers Your Name.**
Max Lucado. **The Applause of Heaven.**

II Divine Attributes

1. Eternal (John 1:1-3; 8:58; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:8-12; 7:3; 13:8; Rev 1:8; 22:13)
2. Self-existent (John 1:4; 5:26-27; 10:30; 14:10; Phil 2:6)
3. Holy (Luke 1:35; John 8:36; Acts 3:14; 4:27; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26)
4. Omnipotent (All powerful); power over disease (Luke 4:39); death (Luke 7:14-15); nature (Matt 8:26-27); demons (Luke 4:35-36, 41). (Read also Matt 28:18; Mark 1:27; John 5:19-21; 1 Pet 3:21-22; Heb 1:8)
5. Omniscient (all-wise) (Matt 9:4; 12:25; Luke 5:22; 22:10-12; John 2:24-25; 4:16-19; 16:30; Col 2:3)
6. Omnipresent (present everywhere) (Matt 28:20; John 1:48; 3:13)
7. Of perfect love (Mark 10:21; Luke 23:34; John 10:11; 14:31; 15:13; Rom 5:8; 8:37-39; Eph 3:19)
8. Unchangeable (Heb 1:10-12; 13:8)

III Divine Offices

1. Creator (John 1:3, 10; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-18; Heb 1:2, 10)
2. Preserver (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3)
3. Forgiver of sins (Matt 9:2; Mark 2:5-10; Luke 5:20-24; 7:48)
4. Conqueror of death (John 6:39, 44; 11:25)
5. Judge (Matt 13:39-43; John 5:22-23; Acts 10:42; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1)

A Final Thought:

Think over the ways in which the conditions named in Acts 9:31 are evidences of a healthy church:

rest
edification
fear of the Lord
comfort of the Holy Spirit
multiplication