

5/10/20

Solitary Refinement

Acts 9:1-22

Week 3: Paul on being blind

Opening question(s): *What questions do you find yourself asking a lot lately? What would you just love to know that you cannot get a solid answer on?*

Read Acts 9:1-22

*“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 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. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 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. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 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.” 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, 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. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”** 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. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 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.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 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?” 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, ESV)*

Paul was blind to his calling

Tell them: Michael’s first point was that Paul was blind to His calling.

Read Galatians 1:13-17 to see how Paul describes his blindness - *“For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.”* (Galatians 1:13–17, ESV)

Tell them: In his zealousness for his traditions, Paul was sure he was being faithful to God, but he was blind to his true calling.

Ask: *What traditions do you think he was zealous for?*

What traditions or freedoms do you think we sometimes are so devoted to that we can miss our true calling as believers?

Michael’s second point was that **Paul was blind to his conspiracy**

Tell them: What Paul thought was love for God turned out to be conspiracy against Him.

Ask them: Why do you think people can be prone to conspiracy?

Ask them to look again at Galatians 1:15-16.

Ask: *What do we learn about Paul’s salvation here?*

Ask: *Why do you think that God would use a conspirator against Him to preach the gospel?*

Ask them to look at Acts 9:13: *What was the reaction of believers to Paul’s conversion from conspirator to Christ follower?*

The third point was that **Paul was blind to his Christ**

He hoped for a Christ that met his standards, but he got one that he didn’t believe.

Ask: what is the issue with us expecting a savior to meet our standards?

Michael said that **Conspiracy against God is real**, and then he proceeded to talk about

3 Great conspiracies: **Ask:** Does anybody remember them?

1. **The Fall** – We find this in Gen 3. Eve believed that God didn’t have her interests at heart, so she needed to know what He knew. *In what ways do you think we attempt to know more so that we can protect ourselves?*
2. **The Crucifixion** – The crucifixion was man conspiring to kill God because it was the will of God. Take a look at Acts 2:23 - *“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”* (Acts 2:23, ESV)
How does this make you feel about our modern conspiracies? Do they lose their power or gain power in light of this precedent?
3. **The Last Days** – Bonus scripture (if you have time-) Paul writes Timothy about the last days in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Sound familiar?

Tell them: Michael said that, “There can be no conspiracy or blindness that succeeds which God doesn’t use for His glory.” **Ask:** *How do you feel about God using conspiracy and blindness to progress His plan? Does it scare you?*

Ask: How often do you rely on a plan to keep you from being anxious or to be content?

Ask: How do you feel about not knowing?

Ask: How can conspiracy glorify God?

Ask: How does the conspiracy Satan perpetrated on our first parents reveal God’s glory?

Ask: How does the conspiracy that sent Jesus to cross glorify God?

Remind them: Michael said that, “We are blind to far more than we’d like, but our job isn’t to be all-knowing. We’re to trust Him who knows all.”

Ask them: *How do you feel about trusting God to know things for you, even if he never fills you in?*

Tell them: **So what do we do?** Michael gave us three applications. Read the three then ask the questions:

1. **Ask God to reveal your true calling.**
2. **Ask God to reveal your conspiring heart.**
3. **Ask God to reveal the grace of His son.**

Ask: #1. Who do you look to, to decide your future? What are some ways that we seek others to reveal what we should do?

Ask: #2: *In what ways would you say that we conspire against God?*

Ask: #3 *When were you blinded by God in order to for God to get your attention?*

Tweetable quotes:

“I want us to walk on by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

“There can be no conspiracy or blindness that succeeds which God doesn’t use for His glory.”