

WEEKLY REFLECTION

The story of Jesus' confrontation with the apostle Paul is one of the most dramatic in Scripture: Paul, who then went by his Hebrew name Saul, was actively persecuting the church. He was breathing threats and murder against the followers of Jesus (Acts 9:1), and even obtained a permit from the high priest to capture any Christ-followers he found in Damascus. (v.2) But on the way to Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared to him in a flash of blinding light, posing the question "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (v.4)

Saul's transformation from Saul to Paul happened because he was confronted by the gospel. He was confronted by Jesus Himself, confronted by the devastating news that there was nothing he could do to earn his salvation, nothing he could do to be righteous. For three days and three nights, Paul ate and drank nothing as he reflected on the truth of his blindness—that he had been pursuing God according to his own means, instead of chasing after Jesus whom God had set before him.

The rest becomes history after Ananias obeyed God's call to lay hands on Paul. Because of Ananias' obedience, we have the most prolific church planter in history. Because Ananias listened, the gospel was taken beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to Rome. According to church history, it might even have made its way to Spain, which was Paul's idea of the ends of the earth. All this couldn't have happened without Ananias' participation in God's plan, but it *wouldn't* have happened if Saul had not encountered the Person of Jesus in the first place.

Who are you, church, in the story of this confrontation that becomes conversion? Are you Saul, needing to be confronted by the Person of Jesus? Are you following your own way instead of the Jesus way? Are you Ananias, whom God invited to participate in His plan of salvation? Or are you Paul, a story of God's grace in progress?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Imagine meeting your younger self from 10 years ago. Would they recognize you? Why or why not? How different is your life today from the life you thought you would have, and what happened to make it different?

QUESTION TWO:

With whom do you identify more: Saul or Ananias? Before you answer the question, take the time to consider their different perspectives. Consider Saul's misguided zeal for God and his hatred for the church. Consider the threat of death for Ananias and his fear, but also what would have happened if he had refused.

If you identify more with Saul: what kind of wake-up call is God giving you? Why have you become blind to these areas that are leading you away from Christ?

If you identify more with Ananias: what fears are holding you back from obedience to God? What encouragement can you hold on to, as you strive to step out in faith and trust?

QUESTION THREE:

Saul's story is one of God's grace, mercy, and loving redemption. (v.15)

Is there anyone in your life to whom God is leading you to, whose conversion you are doubtful about? Is there grace that you need to extend to others as you walk the Jesus way today? How might the Spirit of God enable and strengthen you to share the good news with boldness and conviction as Paul did, yet have grace for those who are receiving it?