

Power For Living

**** Power To Change ****

Acts 9:13-16 (NLT) 13 “But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! 14 And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.” 15 But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. 16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

BIG IDEA

The grace God uses to fully save you from spiritual death may not be used to fully save you from physical suffering.

Saul is described as a bitter **opponent** of Jesus & his Church.

Acts 8:1,3 (NLT) Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.
3 But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

Acts 9:1–2 (NLT)

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord’s followers. So he went to the high priest. 2 He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

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Jesus **humbles** him with grace instead of crushing him with condemnation.

Acts 9:3–6 (NLT) 3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ...“Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?” 5 “Who are you, lord?” Saul asked. And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

He who had expected to enter Damascus full of pride & power, as a self-confident opponent of Christ, was actually led into it, humbled & blinded, a captive of the very Christ he had opposed.

~ JOHN STOTT

Submitting to God's saving grace saved Saul from spiritual death but not from physical suffering.

Acts 9:15–18 (NLT) 15 But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. 16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.”

17 So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

18 Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized.

Having Jesus is better than having everything & anything else.

Philippians 3:8 (NLT) Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

What now ?

- Never forget this: if God's grace is enough to save Saul, it can also save the worst person you know.
- If you're expecting your life to change, make sure you're personally experiencing the real Jesus.
- Be careful not to accept the grace of God that leads you toward salvation, but reject the grace of God that leads you toward suffering.

Continuing The Conversation

1. From your viewpoint, what kind of person seems so hostile to God that you sometimes feel God can't or won't ever save them?
2. Saul's life change was the result of meeting & obeying the real Jesus for himself. What have you personally experienced or learned about the real Jesus that helps you to obey him?
3. What do you think about the idea that the same grace of God that leads you toward salvation also leads you toward suffering?