

Without A Doubt

This is the third and last part of our study on “Believe”. We have looked at encounters that people have had with the risen Jesus. We’ve seen Thomas, the followers encountering Jesus on the road to Emmaus and our last will be the most dramatic.

During a moment or season of uncertainty, what will you do? Perspective plays a crucial part in this process and as we surrender and take a step toward God in faith...things unseen become seen.

We see this with the Patriarchs in Hebrews 11, “by faith we understand...”
 “These were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised”

On his death bed Joseph saw something that no one else could see. He made his people promise to take his bones out of Egypt when God delivered them, for him it was a done deal.

Faith was letting these see something others couldn’t see and with their dying breath they believed and trusted God.

Saul of Tarsus

Saul hated Christians and he hated Jesus, he was certain he was right so he persecuted and murdered them. But as we will see he also met the risen Jesus, here is the reflection of his life:

“Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. 9 For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I’m not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God’s church.” (1 Corinthians 15:8-9)

“But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3)

Saul encountered the risen Jesus and in a moment his life was changed.

Text: Acts 9:1-19

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“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.”

“³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

5 “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. 6 “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” 7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.”

“10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. 11 The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.” 13 “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.” (Acts 9:1-19)

(See Also: Acts 26:8-18; Galatians 1:13-24)

Damascus is very close to the northern border of Israel, one of the oldest cities in the world, founded before Abraham’s time.

Saul was given authority to go to this city to continue his persecution. Before the followers of Jesus were called “Christians”, they were known as “followers of the way”.

‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.’ (:14b)

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Notice how personal Jesus takes this persecuting. He is joined with his church (with all of her faults and shortcomings) it will be his bride. You can't love Jesus and hate the church.

Saul, who was named after the first King of Israel, was a strong name. But he would be renamed "Paul", which literally means "small". This would be how Paul would see himself in contrast to his savior.

*"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would **believe** in him and receive eternal life." (1 Timothy 1:15-16)*

But Paul in his "smallness" would clearly see God's great mercy of which he would write about many times. For he understood that through God's mercy many would come to believe. It was a new lens he was seeing through and in a moment his heart changed.

Three Facts Regarding Conversion:

1. God pursued you

'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' (Acts 26:14b)

"Goad" was a term used for an instrument to prod cattle. The more Saul fought the more painful it became.

'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.' (:14b NLT)

God will create intersections to introduce people to his grace, love and salvation.

"God is not trying to pay you back but to bring you back."

1. Your eyes have been opened and you're amazed at His grace.

Conversion is a dual realization: *I'm worse than I ever dreamed and He is more gracious than I'd ever hoped.*

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

2. Your Past does not disqualify you from future usefulness.

You are also God's chosen instrument, called from your mother's womb. God didn't see you as "Saul" but he saw "Paul" He looks for a humble

You are also God's chosen instrument, called from your mother's womb. God didn't see you as "Saul", but he saw "Paul". He looks for a humble heart in those he calls, just ordinary people, he pursued you. Through the good the bad and the ugly, he was preparing you for his purpose.

"But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being." (Galatians 1:15-16)

"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him."
(1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Four Questions to consider:

- **Who do you think is beyond the reach of Jesus?** (Pray)
- **Where are you fighting against Jesus in your life?** (Surrender)
- **What is it that He has told you to do?** (Step out in faith)
- **Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit and water?** (Do the simple things, be obedient)