

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

People: Lord Jesus, it must have been hard for Paul to hear that his most pious efforts were in fact hurting you. But we are like him, too. We find ourselves being critical of others, judging others, building ourselves up and tearing others down. Sometimes we don't even think about what we're doing. In all those actions we're not only hurting others, we're hurting you. We are sorry for our sinfulness and we long to be made new by your grace. Please forgive us and renew us by your grace. Drown that old person in us all who so easily sins and create a new and right spirit within us. We ask according to your promise to save and forgive. Amen.

Scripture Readings

May 24, 2009

Acts 9:1-22

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 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. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 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. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

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. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

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." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God!

Galatians 1:11-24

I want you to know brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother.

I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Matthew 13:24-30

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'"

"'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'"

"'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

Leader: This is the Gospel of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God!

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Sermon Outline ~ May 24, 2009
"Transformed by the Resurrection: Paul"
Galatians 1:11-24

Introduction: from persecutor to persecuted...

Paul's "Damascus Road."

1. Jesus as Lord and Son of God.

*"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.
"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. Acts 9:4-5*

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2. What is righteousness?

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Romans 3:21-24

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3. What role does God's law play?

*"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." Romans 3:20
Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." Galatians 3:11*

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4. How do we live as God's children when we may disagree?

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved." 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

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Answers to Sermon Outline:

Who's really being persecuted?

I'm God's child, not His employee.

a Curb, a Mirror, and a Guide, not a checklist

by the Spirit and in grateful response

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

THE BENEDICTION

Leader: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

People: And the people took the blessing and held it in their hearts.

Leader: Go in peace, serve the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!