**THE MAGNITUDE OF GOD’S GRACE**

**Acts 9:1-19**

**WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING RELIGIOUS AND BEING \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* *“Now Saul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest 2 and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.”* (Acts 9:1-2)
* **Religious behavior may make you look “good” to others, but the results and consequences are no different than those who outright reject Jesus.**
* *“But know this: Hard times will come in the last days. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, 4 traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people.”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5)
* **The reason so many self-professing Christians continue in patterns of sin is because they have not truly been born again in Christ.**

**LOVING GOD \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ THAT WE LOVE HIS CHURCH, HIS PEOPLE**

* **Persecuting God’s people, His Church, is the same thing as persecuting God directly.**
* *“Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ 5 ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul said. ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting,’ he replied.”* (Acts 9:4-5)
* **“There is no separation between love for Jesus and commitment to His Church.” – JD Greear**
* **Commitment to Jesus and commitment to a local church are inseparable according to the Bible.**

**THE GOSPEL OF GOD’S \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ IS GREATER THAN OUR FAILURES**

* *“‘Lord,’ Ananias answered, ‘I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And he has authority here from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’ 15 But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’*

*17 Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on him and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ 18 At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. 19 And after taking some food, he regained his strength.”* (Acts 9:13-19)

* *“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:20)
* **If Saul, a murderer and persecutor of Christians, can experience the saving grace and transforming power of the gospel, then nothing you have done is too egregious for your redemption in Christ.**
* *“Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. 22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.”* (Colossians 1:21-22)
* **When God is in pursuit of you He will do whatever is necessary to get your attention.**

**CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

**ICE-BREAKER:** Who in the Bible do you relate to the most? Why?

**START THINKING (Observation):**

* What does Acts 9:1-19 teach us about God?
* What does Acts 9:1-19 teach us about God’s Church?
* What made Saul think he loved/served God while actually being far from Go?
* How is God’s grace demonstrated towards Saul?

**DIGGING DEEPER (Understanding and Application):**

* In what ways are we sometimes like Saul?
* Why do so many self-professing Christians “attack” God’s Church, His people? How should people who have issues with other Christians/the Church handle their response to offenses?
* What is your level of commitment to a local Church right now? In what ways might you be more committed to the local Church?
* How does it make you feel knowing that God’s grace is greater than your failures?
* How are you doing at showing grace to others? Explain.
* Who in your life needs to hear the truth of the Gospel? How has this message/text affected and/or inspired you to reach them?
* Who are you inviting to Church next Sunday?