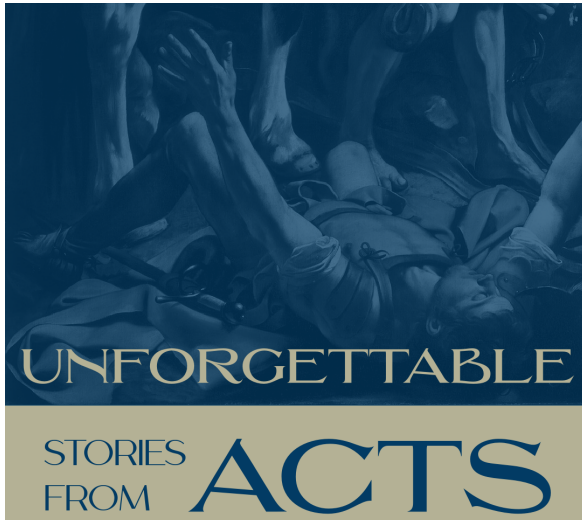


UNFORGETTABLE: PAUL

May 7, 2023

Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister



Acts 9:1-19

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

³Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him

into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

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REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. Have you ever experienced a profound or dramatic change of heart or change of mind? Have you ever experienced someone else go through a profound or extraordinary transformation? Reflect on what happened. How did that change come about?
3. Saul (who will later be called Paul—and write letters found in the New Testament) was led by his traveling companions to Damascus. He was blind, and now had to trust people to lead him and care for him. What do you think that was like for him? How well do you accept help from others, even when it is necessary?
4. What do you think it was like for Ananias? His acceptance of Saul may be as miraculous as Saul's spiritual encounter with Christ. How might Ananias help you and the woofers church understand our role in partnering with God for healing, reconciliation, and transformation?
5. Transformation is more than a sudden change: it often comes with loss, great uncertainty, and the needed presence of supportive people. Reflect on transformation in your own life: in what ways did you

experience loss, uncertainty, and the presence of supportive people?

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