

TUESDAY, MARCH 6

CONVERSION OF SAUL (ACTS 9)

What would it look like if we learned to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us? Acts 9 tells us a story of Ananias, a disciple of Jesus Christ who was living in Damascus. During that time period, Christians were going through great persecution under the Roman emperor, Nero. One day, God spoke to Ananias in a vision, asking him to go “to the street called Straight, and look for a man named Saul” (v. 11). Ananias would have to lay his hands on Saul and pray so that he might regain his sight.

Now, Saul was a man who was feared among the early first-century Christians because he was persecuting them under Emperor Nero. In Acts 9, it tells us that there was a bright light from the sky and Saul fell to the ground. Saul encountered Jesus in such a powerful way that he was a changed man. Ananias had heard stories about the horrors that Saul had committed against Christians. So, you can imagine Ananias was afraid. God gave him a mission which may have been seen as impossible. Yet, Ananias obeyed God and went and laid hands on Saul and his sight was restored.

This story gives us hope because God can change the vilest of human beings. What is more interesting is that Ananias was willing to take the risk and obey God rather than give in to the fear of being killed. He knew who Jesus was, and he trusted Jesus. Ananias was called to go and pray for his enemy who had been persecuting his brothers and sisters in Christ.

In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus challenges us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who abuse us. What an incredible challenge for us as followers of Christ in this day and age. God is holy and has unconditional love for each one of us. Theologian R.R. Byrum states, “God is holy in the sense that his inner character is one of perfect goodness.” We are called to be holy as our Father in Heaven is holy. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, because God loves all human beings.

May we pray that God gives us strength as we learn to pray for those who have hurt us, abused us, cursed us, hate us. May we be like Ananias, trusting and obeying God, even when the things that God is telling us to do don't make sense to us. May we be bold to pray for our enemies and be more like Christ.