

Stained Heroes: Paul

As we have seen in our first three lessons in this series, God often uses men and women with stains in their character to do great things for His Kingdom! This should be of ***incredible encouragement*** to all of us who feel stained in our spiritual journey.

I. A brief summary of Paul's conversion

Teaching Point: the earlier in life you pursue your calling with passion, the more likely you are to find God's true mission!
(Acts 9:1-6)

II. Identifying the stain of religious thinking

Teaching Point: the number one obstacle to people growing in their faith is the fear of leaving their old religious thinking.

III. God uses His people to show us the way.

Teaching point: When you are paralyzed by fear, guilt, failure or doubt, God will always send a man or woman to show you the way! (Acts 9:13-14)

IV. What can we learn from this encounter with Ananias?

Teaching point: Our spiritual journeys are full of surprises!
Surprises require faith.
Obeying in faith brings clarity
Clarity fuels dramatic growth.

V. Paul learns the discipline of waiting.

Teaching Point: Deep spiritual communion establishes a root system that cannot be torn out by trials, temptations or even torture. (Galatians 1:18-2:1)

VI. The primary release from past failures is the discovery of grace.

Teaching Point: Most of us grow up under the law which can never set us free! *"For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law."* (Galatians 3:21)
Rather, we find salvation through grace.
"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Conclusion: What we learn from Paul's time in the wilderness:

1. God's training program produces God's productive person.
2. Humility comes in the shadows when we are not indispensable
3. During the waiting period, God grants the insight into the person and work of Jesus.
4. When God finally moves us into effective ministry, we neither expect it nor feel qualified.

Small Group Questions

1. Describe a past stain in your life that had some sort of religious connection to it.
2. What have you done to try to get free from this religious stain and have you been effective?
3. Why did it take Paul so long to be freed from the stain that he had? (See acts 9:1-6)
4. Instead of being thrust right into the front lines of ministry, God took Paul on a 17 year journey of cleansing him from his past failures and making him intimate with Jesus. Does this discourage you or give you hope?
5. If you're in a season where you feel somewhat dormant, what should you do to stay "on fire" in your love for Christ?