

# Zeal for Grace

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Grace becomes the lens of Saul's life

"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect." - 1 Cor 15:9-10

χάρις (charis) - "grace" is used 233 times in the Bible

- ♥ Old Testament (854 pages, 77%) - used 78 times
- ♥ Gospels & Acts (140 pages, 12.5%) - used 29 times
- ♥ NT Letters, not by Paul (45 pages, 4.5%) - used 26 times
- ♥ Paul's letters (66 pages, 6%) - 100 times

"in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless."

Philippians 4:5-6

"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."

Acts 9:1-2

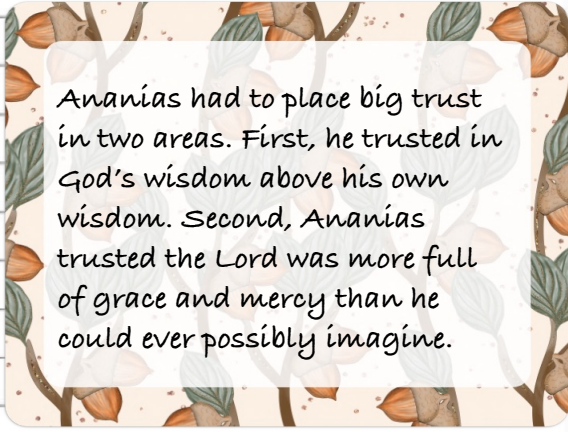


He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"  
 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.  
 "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.  
 Acts 9:4-6

"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people 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 proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. Acts 9:13-15



Ananias had to place big trust in two areas. First, he trusted in God's wisdom above his own wisdom. Second, Ananias trusted the Lord was more full of grace and mercy than he could ever possibly imagine.



When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. Acts 9:26-27

Saul's testimony exposes 2 lies we could fall into.

- **Lie:** I am too bad for God to do anything with my life
- **Truth:** Your badness is not more powerful than God's transformative grace
- **Lie:** That person is too far from God to be redeemed
- **Truth:** God's love transforms how we look at all people into seeing them as children that God longs to welcome home into the family.

Saul was transformed from persecuting Jesus to being persecuted for Jesus, from zeal for Jewish purity to a zeal for grace.



But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8)

