

The Glory of Risen Jesus (Encountering Paul)

Acts 9:1-9

Key verse 4, He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

This morning from S. Philip Brown’s message, we learned that God revealed His glory through Jesus on the cross.

Furthermore, God raised Jesus from the dead and revealed His glory through the resurrection of Jesus.

Today’s message describes Saul’s personal encounter with the Risen Jesus. Saul’s encounter leads to his dramatic change. One man Saul’s change can be the greatest event in Christian history, and it is the beginning of world salvation work.

We are going to see how the Risen Jesus visited Saul. Jesus visited him personally and transformed him from a chief enemy of God into a humble and faithful servant of God.

This encounter also reveals Jesus’ amazing grace toward Saul. (Knock, knock) “Mark, Mark, why do you persecute me?”

May Jesus visit you and call each of your names. May you meet the Risen Jesus personally through this conference.

Who was Saul? Saul described himself in Philippians 3:5 as, “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee.”

Saul was a very proud intellectual Pharisee. In order to serve God with great zeal, Saul worked harder than any of us.

But he was heading in the wrong direction. Verse 1a says, “Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.”

Saul decided to wipe out the rising new Christianity, because his country fellows were deceived by the teaching of the crucified Jesus.

Saul arrested Christians, not knowing that he was destroying the work of God.

After Stephen’s martyrdom, Saul became more murderous and determined to root out all Christians on earth.

Outwardly, Saul was an intellectual and righteous Pharisee. In reality, he was a blind man.

One day Saul visited the high priest and received the credential letters to the synagogues in Damascus.

Saul proceeded to Damascus and was determined to arrest believers and take them to Jerusalem as prisoners.

What happened on the way?

Look at verse 3, “As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.”

Here a light from heaven is extraordinarily bright, brighter than the sun (Acts 22:13). This heavenly light represents the Risen Jesus.

When the light from heaven flashed around Saul, God’s glory appeared to him.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he visited Peter and the Twelve. He appeared to more than five hundred people at the same time.

Risen Jesus spent forty days before his ascension, visiting many sheep to restore them from the power of death.

Moreover, the Risen Jesus also visited Saul personally.

We call this Saul’s encounter.

This was an immensely significant event in Christian history, which changed the course of world history.

After seeing the light from heaven, Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me (4)?"

Then Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord (5a)?" To his great astonishment, the Lord replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting (5b)."

Although Saul was an enemy of God, the Risen Jesus visited him and embraced him.

It is a general tendency of fallen men to avoid those who hurt our pride.

Humanly speaking, Saul should have been crushed like a bug.

However, Jesus did not remember his sins.

When someone hurts my pride, I remember his sin for a long time and don't want to associate with him.

Even King David, a man after God's own heart, did not accept his own son Absalom who harmed him once.

However, Jesus did not remember Saul's sins but forgave all his sins freely.

This is God's one-sided grace and unconditional love toward Saul.

All power, authority and dominion belong to Jesus.

Here it sounded like Jesus was begging and pleading with this murderous Saul.

At the same time Jesus exposed Saul's sin of murder and persecution.

Then Saul's spiritual eyes were opened to see that the Risen Jesus is the Lord. And Saul discovered that he was the most wretched sinner before God.

Later, Saul confessed, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst (1Tim1:15b).

He also said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect (1Co15:10a)."

What did the Risen Jesus further tell Saul? "Now, get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do (6)."

The Risen Jesus not only embraced and forgave Saul's sin, but also called Saul for His glorious mission, to proclaim Jesus' grace to the Gentiles (15).

Look at verses 7-9. "The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless, they heard the sound but did not see anyone.

Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."

When Saul met the Risen Jesus, all his human pride, hatred and self-righteousness were melted away. He became Paul, the small one.

As the Risen Jesus visited Saul, He also visited me through His word.

I was born and brought up in Hong Kong.

Although I studied the bible in Christian schools, I rejected Jesus, believing that science can explain everything.

I thought I did not need God. My pride made my spiritual eyes blind.

When I struggled for my PhD in physics, I tried to improve my IQ through practicing Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Meditating Mantra (which means magic words) did not improve my IQ, but led me to worship Indian idols.

My heart was full of darkness and lust, so I joined many social events to meet new girlfriends.

However, God humbled me through my academic failure. Since I did not concentrate on my PhD study, I could not publish any paper and meet my graduation requirement near the end of my study.

At that time Jesus visited me through 1:1 Bible study with a shepherdess.

When I wrote a testimony, His glorious light shone on me and all my darkness went out. I received John 14:6 as my life key verse, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

I find that Jesus is the Lord, who defeated the power of death and brought us into His Kingdom. He is the only way, the truth and the life.

I realized that my sins made my life miserable, but Risen Jesus forgave me and embraced me. I find joy, life and hope in Christ.

Soon I learned to pray together with church members in the early morning, instead of meaningless meditation.

By faith I overcame my lust and I could concentrate on my research and finish my PhD in 2003.

God also gave me a vision to be a professor shepherd to serve campus wandering students through one-to-one bible study.

He led me to be a lay missionary to Taiwan at National Taiwan University (NTU).

Jesus brought Missionary Gloria from Hong Kong to be my wife. We have a great vision to be a blessing to all students in Taiwan.

We rented a small apartment near the campus and had Sunday worship service. Since then, I have delivered the Sunday message every week.

When our family was threatened by a sudden unemployment crisis, I was worried about my future security.

One Saturday, as I prepared the Sunday message, God spoke to me through Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"

Through this key verse I believed that He would supply His beloved children all things for His mission. I decided to stay in the mission land to serve His sheep.

God blessed my decision of faith and opened the way to work as a postdoctoral researcher in Academia Sinica until now.

God also blessed our small church to participate in the Risen Jesus' glorious world mission work.

God brought a humble Indian family Guru and Beula to our ministry. Last year God sent Guru to New York UBF and he serves as a GBS leader in this conference.

God also blessed Sister Jenny from Kaohsiung UBF and Marcos to establish a family in 2018. God also raises Zenida from Belize and Rachel from India to be Jesus' disciples.

God has used my encounter with Risen Christ for His glorious world mission, Amen!

Thank God for saving me from an idol-worshiper full of worry into a missionary of faith and vision.

May we all catch a glimpse of the glory of the Risen Jesus and be witnesses of His glory to campus students in Taiwan, all the countries of Asia and the whole world. Amen.