



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Loosen Your Grip
Speaker: Redd Sevilla – Pastor of Neighborhood Engagement
Scriptures: Acts 9:1-19

Saul's Conversion

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 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. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 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. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15 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. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Sermon Summary:

Sometimes we hold so tightly to our own plans that we miss what God wants to do in and through us. As it has been said, "Clenched fists cannot receive what God wants to give." This Sunday, we'll explore how Saul, also known as Paul, learned to release his own agenda and make room for God's mission.

Sermon Questions:

1. Read Acts 9:1-19. What stands out to you in this story? What questions or puzzles emerge for you?
2. Pastor Redd focused his message around the image he called 'gripping,' or 'holding on to something so tightly that you miss the plans of God.' Where do you see evidence of 'gripping' in the passage?
3. Redd sees a pattern in this passage that enables Saul and Ananius to move from 'gripping' to holding their life with an open hand. He described the steps this way:
 - a. There's a tight grip, followed by a
 - b. Light from heaven, followed by a
 - c. Step of obedience, followed by
 - d. Joining in God's plan / mission.

How do you see this pattern in the passage? How do you experience this pattern in your life?

4. Pastor Redd said that we can loosen our tight grip when we know there is someone good holding onto us. How have you experienced Jesus holding onto you in the past?
5. What is something you may be holding onto too tightly? How might Jesus be inviting you to loosen your grip and take a step of obedience?

Spend some time praying for one another.