

A new way to see

*The story of Paul, from Acts 6 – 9, 12 – 28;
Colossians 2, Romans 8, Ephesians 2*

OF ALL THE PEOPLE who kept the rules, Saul was the best.

“I’m good at being good!” he’d tell you.

He was very proud. And very good. But he wasn’t very nice.

Saul hated anyone who loved Jesus. He traveled around looking for them. He wanted to catch them and put them in prison. He wanted everyone to forget all about Jesus. He didn’t believe Jesus was the Rescuer. And he didn’t believe Jesus was alive, either.

You see, Saul had never met Jesus.

So one day, Jesus met Saul.





Saul was on his way to Damascus when suddenly a dazzling light flashed like lightning. It was brighter than the sun. It was too bright. Saul shielded his eyes and fell to the ground.

He heard a loud voice. It was too loud. It gave Saul a headache.

"Saul! Saul!" said the loud voice. "Why are you fighting me?"

"Lord?" Saul answered, "Who are you?"

"I am Jesus," said the voice. "When you hurt my friends, you are hurting me, too." Saul's whole body trembled.

"Go to the city," Jesus said. "I'll tell you what to do."

When Saul opened his eyes, he couldn't see. His helpers had to hold his hand and lead him like a little child. Saul was blind for three whole days — and yet it was as if he was seeing for the very first time.

Meanwhile, there was a man called Ananias who loved Jesus. Jesus came to him in a dream: "Go to Saul and pray for him, and I will make him see again."

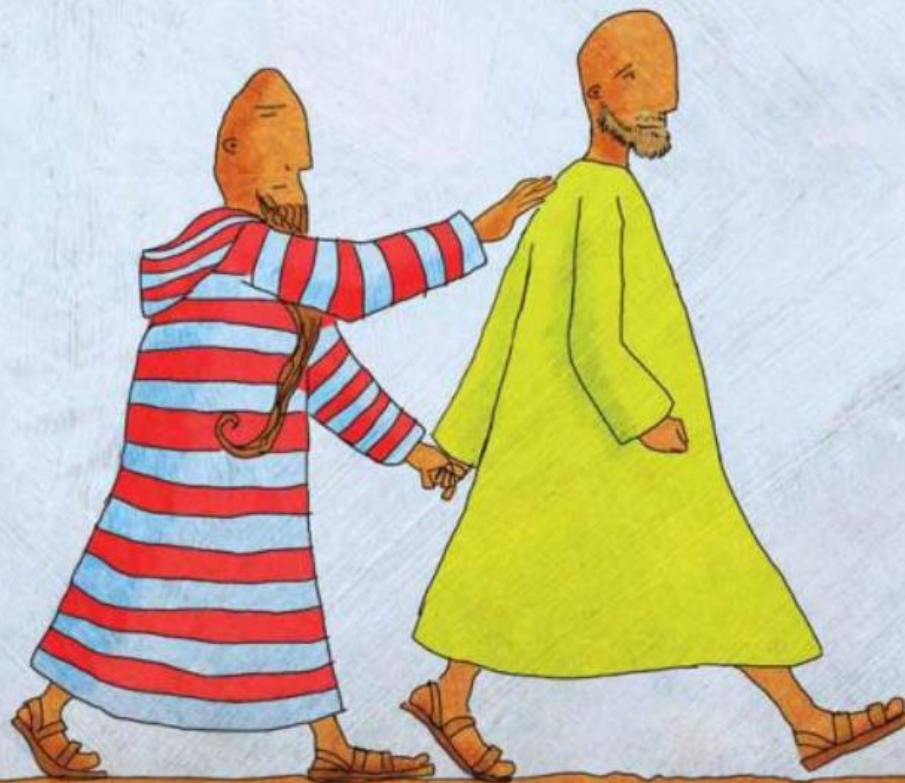
Ananias knew all about Saul and how he hated Jesus' followers. "Lord, he has come to hurt us!"

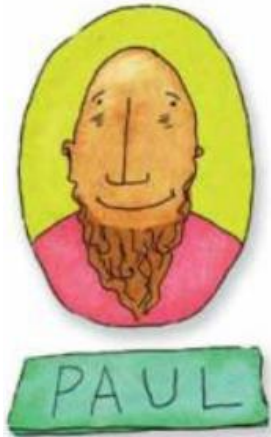
But Jesus told Ananias, "Saul is the one I've chosen to tell the whole world who I am."

So Ananias went to Saul. "Brother Saul," Ananias said, "it was Jesus you met on the road." And Ananias prayed for Saul.

Suddenly Saul could see again, but he saw everything differently. He wasn't mean anymore. He even changed his name from Saul to Paul, which means "small" and "humble" — the very opposite of proud.

And do you know what Ananias' name means? "The Lord is full of Grace." (Grace is just another word for gift — which is funny, because that's just what Paul's message was all about from then on.)





"It's not about keeping rules!" Paul told people. "You don't have to be good at being good for God to love you. You just have to believe what Jesus has done and follow him. Because it's not about trying, it's about trusting. It's not about rules, it's about Grace: God's free gift — that cost him everything."

What had happened to Paul? He met Jesus.

Paul got a new job. He called himself a servant and traveled every where telling everyone about Jesus. He got shipwrecked — three times! He even ended up in prison.

"God loves us!" he wrote from prison. "Nothing can ever — no, not ever! — separate us from the Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love of God he showed us in Jesus!"

And so it was, just as God promised Abraham that dark night all those years before, the family of God's children grew and grew.

Until one day, they would come to number more than even all the stars in the sky.

