

Title: **If You Can't Beat Them . . . Kill Them?!**

Text: **Acts 9:19-23**

Date: **September 29, 2024**

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Big Idea

Though Paul makes a clear and compelling case for Jesus, his listeners do not thereafter repent and believe. Instead, they plot to kill him. The roots of our rebellion run deeper than we realize. We cannot reason people into the kingdom. The proofs for Jesus are significant, but they are not sufficient to save. God has to do it!

Christianity is rational, but it isn't *merely* rational. Conversion isn't fundamentally a matter of information transfer. We are not playing a game of intellectual chess where, with our logic and arguments, we attempt to get the other person into checkmate—until finally the king falls, they surrender, repent, and believe. That's not how it works. Our resistance to Jesus runs deeper than our intellect. Our unbelief is not just a problem of the mind, it's fundamentally a problem of the heart. It's not just that I don't know about Jesus and when I finally do know I'll believe. It's that I don't *want* to know. I don't *want* to believe.

1. Our Nature

"The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification, are 'words and names' which convey no meaning to the mind." "He must dig down very low if he would build high." (J.C. Ryle)

You're not coming to faith in Jesus by sheer logic or reasoning alone. I'm not going to be able to make a case for Christ so watertight that you're finally forced to conclude: "Well then, I guess I better believe." The natural man doesn't accept it, won't accept it, can't accept it (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7).

2. Our Need

At the deepest level, we don't need more arguments (though, of course, they have their place). We need a move of the Holy Spirit, an intervention of grace. We need a new heart—one that's not rock hard, but soft towards God and his love. You can no more free yourself from Satan and sin than the Israelites could free themselves from Pharaoh and Egypt. They were enslaved. They could not break free. We can't do this ourselves. We need God. He has to come. He has to break the chains, part the sea, lead us out.

Salvation is not *inside-out*—meaning: I figure this out on my own and come to him. It's *outside-in*—meaning: he comes down after me, pours out his Holy Spirit, I'm born again, I see and believe (cf. Titus 3:3-7; Eph. 2:1-9; 1 Cor. 1:30-31).

3. Implications for Our Evangelism

Implication #1: Be Humble - Are we going to struggle with pride sometimes, of course. I know I do. But you kill it when you see it. You don't nurture it. You preach the gospel—the full gospel—not just to them, but to yourself. You remember how you got saved, and you get back down in the dirt, amazed at his grace, not at your own wisdom.

Implication #2: Be Prayerful - Open your mouth to God before you open your mouth to others. Speak up before you speak out. You are not the decisive factor here, he is! I'd rather speak a simple word accompanied by the Spirit's power than a thousand lofty propositions without it. For, with the former, you can move mountains. But, with the latter, you will move only lips.

Implication #3: Be Free! - If we do or don't "succeed" in evangelism isn't up to us. Our job is to be faithful to share the good news and to do it as best as we can. But how people respond, that's not my purview, that's God's!



Reflection Questions

- Which of the many Bible texts read today impacted you the most and why?
- Which of the three implications listed above seemed most significant to you? What other implications for our evangelism come to mind in light of what we looked at this morning?

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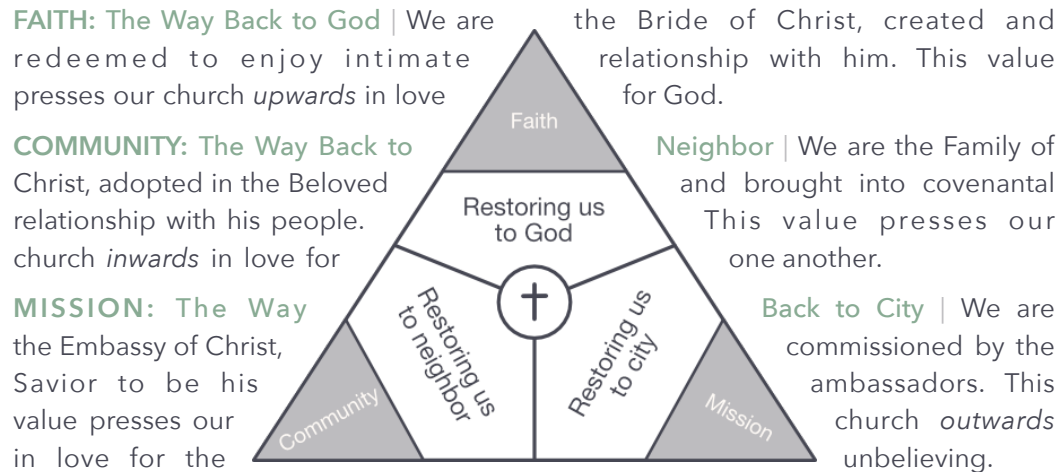


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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Nicaragua Team Sharing Event!

You're invited to come hear from our Nicaragua team (Linda Sanders, Gary Craig, Becky & Bob Durstenfeld, and Joey Wang) after service today from 12:00-12:45pm as they share about their recent summer trip in partnership with Arms of Love.

You will not only learn more about the different ministries of Arms of Love (an organization which our church has been supporting for many years) but also hear first-hand experiences and reflections from each team member—and see plenty of photos . . . and perhaps even a video or two of our team members dancing (or at least attempting to)!

Feel free to contact Joey at joey@mercyhillchurch.org with any questions.

Beautiful Day Sign-Ups!

Mercy Hill Kids - Volunteers Needed!

CityTeam's Grace Village Apartment Renovation!

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Or find it online at mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub.