

"The Conversion of Saul"

Part 4

Acts 9

Introduction: The last time we were together we left Saul in Damascus and he was blind from his encounter with Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road. Tonight as we continue, he will have another encounter with a man by the name of Ananias in Damascus.

Receiving His Sight and God's Direction

Notice Acts 9:9

This is where we stopped the last time, and we considered here the significance of "three days". Jesus was in the earth three days and then by the mighty power of God He was resurrected. Because we are told that Saul was three days blind and now, he will be healed, this is a picture of how he is to walk in the "Third Day Power." This is the very same power that has been made available to each of us and it is accessible at all times when we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. This power works in our service to the Lord as we share the Truth of His Word, and this power also works in our own individual lives to give us victory over sin.

Ephesians 3:20

²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Notice Acts 9:10

Here we are introduced to Ananias. This man was very well known in Damascus and may possibly have been one of the people whom Saul was sent on arresting.

Acts 22:11-12

¹¹ And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

¹² And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Notice Acts 9:11

I want you to notice here that we are told that Saul is praying. Why do we need to know this? He had prayed many times before. As a Pharisee he would have had many prayers that he was required to recite in a day. So why is it stated here that he is praying?

The reason is because NOW he is really praying. Before his conversion here on the Damascus Road his prayers were not reaching the throne of God.

Application:

Before a person is saved, they cannot come into the presence of God with their requests because sin is not permitted in God's presence.

Isaiah 59:2

² *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

John 9:31

³¹ *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.*

In Hebrews we get some insight as to where we must go to reach God with our prayers.

Hebrews 4:15-16

¹⁵ *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

¹⁶ *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

We come to God's throne when we pray and therefore, we must understand that if we are not washed in the blood, we can have no access to His throne. Saul was now washed in the blood and now he was able to reach God's throne, so we are told he was praying. What a change in his life to go from persecuting to praying.

Notice Acts 9:10-12

Looking over these verses I want to raise a question, "Why did God call on Ananias to go to Saul when He could have just touched him and restored his sight?"

This was a lesson for Saul and for all of us that God delights in using human instruments to minister to man's needs and to carry out His will. He has gifted us who are believers and our gifts are given to glorify our Savior and to minister to one another.

Acts 12:4-7, 25

⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Notice Acts 9:13-14

Ananias was hesitant to approach Saul because Saul's reputation preceded him.

Application:

Let us never forget that no matter what someone is involved in they are loved by God and He desires to see them saved. We must also remember that the Gospel is powerful enough to pierce even the hardest of hearts.

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Let us remember that when the Gospel is preached it will penetrate the heart even if it is for a moment.

Matthew 13:3-4, 18-19

³ And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

⁴ And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Getting back to Ananias, we can certainly not criticize him for his reluctance to go to Saul because Saul was a terrorist and most likely Ananias was on his hit list. It would be similar to God sending us into the inner city to meet with the leader of a specific gang.

Notice Acts 9:15-16

There are two points that I want us to see concerning Saul that also apply to us.

- 1. He was saved to bear the name of Jesus Christ before the Gentiles, kings, and the Jews.**

We too are called to bear the name of Jesus Christ in this world that we live in. With that said, we are called to live in such a way that we glorify His name with our lives.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21

¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The most important thing we have to do in this life is to glorify the name of Jesus Christ. We are left here on this earth to glorify His name.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶ *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

2. Paul was called to suffer.

Notice Acts 9:16 again.

Saul was called to suffer GREAT things for the name of Jesus Christ.

Application:

Every member of the body of Christ is called to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. Let us notice a verse that Paul wrote to the believers at Colossae.

Colossians 1:24

²⁴ *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

When we first look at this verse someone might be lead to think that the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross is lacking. But that is not the meaning and we know that Jesus work upon the cross was a finished work.

John 9:30

³⁰ *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

Reading John 9:30 then we can be sure that Paul is not talking about Jesus sufferings upon the cross. So what is he referring to?

Colossians 1:24

²⁴ *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

The word "afflictions" here never refers to what Jesus went through upon the cross. It is a word that applies to what He experienced while He walked on this earth. These are afflictions that He endured in His earthly ministry and His earthly ministry is not complete. It is still moving forward in the church today.

Acts 1:1-2

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

² *Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:*

The work of Jesus Christ continues today through the body of Jesus Christ and just as He suffered the afflictions so do we as we walk with Him and continue the work.

Notice the words of Ryrie on Colossians 1:24.

"Because of the union of believers with Christ, Paul's sufferings for the sake of the church can be called Christ's afflictions as well."

You see we are ONE with Jesus so when we suffer, He suffers. We are His body.

Notice Acts 9:4-5

Conclusion:

The apostles understood this very Truth, that when they suffered in the ministry they were "filling up" or continuing the afflictions of Jesus here on this earth as He continued to build His church.

Acts 5:40-42

⁴⁰ *And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.*

⁴¹ *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*

⁴² *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

Paul and the other apostles understood something that many in the church miss today.

It is more fulfilling and more honorable to suffer for the name of Jesus than it is to live for the world and bask in the comforts of this life.