

ACTS 9:3-19

A. God's Intervention -

Acts 9:3-7 - And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Acts 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. Acts 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

1. Saul, with the **official** papers from Jerusalem's religious leaders in hand, is on his journey to Damascus to find and **imprison** the Little Flock believers.
2. Saul's trip will revolutionize not only his life, but the **world** itself. Saul has an entourage with him to help in the many arrests he is planning to make happen. Also, because of the **revival** happening in Samaria, Saul is the more infuriated and determined to put as many as he can in prison.
3. But God had other **unexpected** plans for Saul. As Saul approaches Damascus (which probably was in sight), a blinding light, bright as the **sun**, shines and causes Saul to fall to the ground.
*A Hebrew voice from heaven speaks to Saul. It is the voice of Jesus Himself! Jesus, the One Saul **hated** - thought was dead - and was so embittered against, was speaking to him.
4. Isn't it amazing that Jesus did not **smite** Saul? Instead, Jesus speaks and reasons with Saul. It is a conversion that **begins in shock**, but **ends** in conversion with life-changing faith.
 - a. [Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **me**?]
 - b. [And he said, **Who** art thou, Lord?]
 - c. [And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the **pricks**.]
 - d. [And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt **thou** have me to do?]
 - e. [Arise, and go into the city, and **it shall be** told thee what thou must do.]
5. In one moment of **grace** time, Saul's beliefs crumbled to the ground. All that he thought was right (a false Messiah, Law, Temple, Jesus' believers, Israel's favor, his own purpose for Judaism) was now all **wrong**!
*The only truth he knew now, or was sure of at that moment, was that Jesus Christ was **true** and **alive**. Personally, I believe Saul **was converted at that very moment**.
6. Paul later describes this conversion and commission to Agrippa:

Acts 26:12-18 - Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, Acts 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. Acts 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Acts 26:15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Acts 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

- me
- a. *Later Paul shares that He had **seen** Jesus: I Corinthians 15:8 - And last of all he was seen of also, as of one born out of due time.
 - b. Saul's co-persecutors saw only the light and heard a voice. Evidently they could not make out what was being said, nor **Who** was speaking (Acts 22:9, 9:7).
7. As we can see, God did not raise up Paul to be under or a part of the 12's ministry. Paul was raised up as a new apostle to proclaim the message for today.

Ephesians 2:12-13, 15-16 - That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Eph. 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *con-tained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; Eph. 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

- a. Dr. Wm. R. Newell: "The failure or refusal to recognize the Pauline gospel as a separate, new revelation, and not a development from Judaism, accounts for most of the confusion in many people's minds today as regarding just what the gospel is!"

"Unto none of the 12 apostles did God reveal the great body of doctrine for this age. It pleased God to choose Paul to be the great proclaimer and revealer of just what the Gospel is for this dispensation. Paul's constant testimony to the fact that he had a special message from God cannot be overlooked. No other apostle speaks of 'my gospel'. And it is according to the revelation given to Paul that believers are established."

Romans 2:16 - In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Romans 16:25 - Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

II Timothy 2:8 - Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

- b. *With Paul's conversion, we have the beginning - the dawn - the start of the Dispensation of Grace. We will gradually see this truth unfolding from Acts 9 on.
8. Remember: Matthew 12:31-32 - Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. Matt. 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

*The nation Israel **did** this in early Acts, culminating with the stoning of Stephen. Israel committed the unpardonable sin and even Paul was guilty of blaspheming. Paul could not have been forgiven under the previous old economy - the Prophetic Program to Israel. But God created a new dispensation of grace, making Paul the **first** one to be saved under it.

1 Timothy 1:13, 16 - Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. 1 Tim. 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

B. Saul's Continued Journey To Damascus -

Acts 9:8-9 - And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. Acts 9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

1. Saul enters Damascus very differently than he had planned. Instead of riding in as Jerusalem's persecuting hero, Saul enters **help**lessly blinded and led by the hand.

*God has seemingly crushed Saul, but he will **rise** in total dedication to Christ.

2. As Jonah was in the whale's belly 3 days and 3 nights and as Jesus was buried 3 days and 3 nights, Saul has 3 days to **reflect** on his startling conversion experience. Saul needed to reconstruct his past beliefs and how they fit with his **new** spiritual life.
3. It is also important to notice that since God is going to send Saul to the nations-Gentiles, God saves and calls Saul-Paul on Gentile **ground** - away from the 12 and away from Jerusalem.

Galatians 1:11-12, 15-19 - But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, Gal. 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Gal. 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Gal. 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. Gal. 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

4. Paul is to be the apostle mainly to the Gentiles.

Acts 9:15 - But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Romans 10:13 - For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

*But remember: Matthew 10:5-7 - These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: Matt. 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt. 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

5. At this moment in time, God has set aside Israel's Prophetic Program while He is **beginning** to **fill** up His Body Church. Now today, God offers grace to the world where there is no difference between Jew or Gentile, male or female.

*Today, one need not go through **Israel** to be saved as in Time Past. Today, God offers salvation by grace through faith in the gospel (D.B.R.).

C. God's Reluctant Servant Ananias -

Acts 9:10-16 - And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, *I am here*, Lord. Acts 9:11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, Acts 9:12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Acts 9:13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: Acts 9:14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: Acts 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

1. The Lord appears to a Jewish believer in a **vision**. Ananias was a well-respected man among the Jews, a religious man (Acts 22:11-12).
2. Ananias is told to go to the house of Judas, where Saul was **praying**. He is told that Saul was given a vision of him (Ananias) coming and laying hands on him (Saul) that he might receive his **sight**.
 - a. At first, Ananias was reluctant and afraid because he had heard of all the evil that Saul had done toward the Messianic Church. Saul was like a **Hitler!**
 - b. God assured Ananias that he would be **safe**. As a matter of fact, God shares how He had called, saved, and chosen Saul to be the **one** used to proclaim His new message of grace to the Gentiles. And it would not be **easy** for Saul.

II Timothy 2:8-9- Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: 2Tim. 2:9 Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

*Saul to the Gentiles - I **wonder** what Ananias thought? Israel had **not** come close to **believing**. His Little Flock had no information that God was temporarily setting the nation of Israel aside.

D. Saul's Eyesight Is Restored -

Acts 9:17-19 - And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

1. Saul is the first one saved, **not** by the message of the 12, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Saul becomes the **pattern** of grace salvation.
2. Ananias calls him "Brother Saul", his comrade in **faith**. God had changed **both** of these men's hearts. Saul's 3-day ordeal had ended. His sight restored, he had a meal and then fellowshiped with believing Jews.

Note: Paul was already saved and I believe had the Spirit. For him to be "filled with the Spirit" was like when the 12 were filled with the Spirit. The filling was a **special** anointment of enduement with **power**. Remember, Paul needed this since he is an Apostle.

*Don't forget that this was the earliest stage of the Transition. A lot of Jewish things happened until the **completion** of Scriptures - then they **stopped**.

3. Note: Acts 22:16 - And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.
 - a. Even though a new dispensation had begun with Paul, that did **not** mean all the old Jewish ways had ended **yet**. They would **diminish gradually**. But at this moment in time, Paul did several Jewish things **until** further revelational truth would be given to him by Christ. This was done because of the Jews and for Paul to be more accepted by them.

Acts 16:3 - Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

*So baptism was **still** required with faith for their **Jew**ish salvation.
(Matt. 16:15-16; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38)

- b. Since Paul was water baptized, that showed the **old** dispensation still prevailed as the **main** program. It would take more revelation from Christ to Paul for the new dispensation of grace to go **forward**.