

The Sinner's Experience with God!

By Peter Nortier

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Bible Text: Acts 9:1; 1 Timothy 1:15-16

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1553 Knapp Street NE.
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/merciesofgod

It is always a privilege for me to come down to this place, because I feel like I am coming home. And I want you to keep praying for the work up there in Hilldale and we are praying for you that the Lord will just continue to work out his purpose in the hearts and lives of individuals. And the Lord is beginning to work and we just praise the Lord for it. Not only that, but we are to find out that we are with the radio broadcast up there and you dear folks that help support the broadcast so generously. I just can't thank you enough. And I want you, those of you that are praying people, I want you to do this. We have begun to ask the Lord, if he will, to double the amount of money that comes in every month. We don't ask for a dime on the radio, you know that. We don't ask for a penny when we write you letters. You know that. We trust the Lord for it and we are asking the Lord to do this because we want to get on more radio stations, because I am going to tell you, beloved. This message has got to be heard around the world.

We are living in the last days and I will tell you right now. My Lord is coming and when he comes, I hope all of you will be ready.

Now I want you to take your Bibles, if you will, and stand with me and turn to Acts chapter nine beginning with verse one down through verse 11. I want you to stand in respect for the Word of God. If you didn't bring your Bible, well, you missed out. If you have brought your Bible, then I want you to follow along in the Word of God as we are going to bring you a message this morning on what we have entitled "The Sinner's Experience with God!"

Every individual who ever gets saved has an experience with the Lord. It is a personal experience. It is a profound experience. And then also I will tell you something else. It is a prevailing experience, because when that individual gets converted they are never again the same. And so in Acts chapter nine beginning with verse one we read:

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 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. 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. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 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. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

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. 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.¹

Shall we pray?

Our Lord, today we thank you of the evidence that has already been manifest that thou art in charge of this service. We thank you, Lord, for the songs that were directed by thee, oh Spirit of God, to be sung in our hearing this morning. We pray now thy blessing upon the spoken Word. Thou dost know the hearts of everyone that is here today and thou dost know also the febleness of the individual vessel. So cleanse our minds and our hearts at this hour. Fasten our attention upon that which you have for us to hear and then, oh blessed God, we pray send it forth in might and power. Thank you for everyone that thou has brought this way. Work out thy purpose in each soul and, Lord, save these in midst today that need to know thee. Awaken others who have never been awakened. And then, oh God, bring them unto thy Son. But most of all we pray in this service, give glory to thy blessed name. We pray now for Christ's sake. Amen.

Thank you. You may be seated.

Our subject this morning, "The Sinner's Experience with God!"

And as we look at this portion of the Word of God we are going to find out and our lesson will fall into two simple categories. First of all, we are going to look at the reality that every individual has to face. Now what is that? Not every individual that is religious is converted. We need to understand that. Salvation today has been changed, minimized and so misunderstood that the vast majority at this present hour do not know what salvation is. Now salvation is not speaking in tongues. It is not turning over a new leaf. It is not baptism. It is not joining the church. It is not making a commitment. Salvation is a sinner having an experience with the Lord Jesus Christ and I will tell you right now. That individual is never again the same person.

¹ Acts 9:1-11.

As I said before, salvation is a personal experience with the Lord Jesus. It is a profound experience. It only happens one time, but the individual can never get over what has happened. We don't live on experience. Then it is a prevailing experience because the prevailing aspect of it is that when we die, we go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever and ever.

Now the sad commentary of this present hour is this, that the vast majority do not know what salvation is all about. Now the Lord God of heaven gave us a clear indication in his blessed Word that when he saved the apostle Paul he set forth a pattern for our redemption. Now let me prove that.

Take your Bibles, if you will, and turn to 1 Timothy chapter one and you look with me at verses 15 and 16. The vast majority of our religious world today, they will quote 1 Timothy chapter one and verse 15, but they always stop there. But we need to look very clearly at verse 16 also. In 1 Timothy chapter one and verses 15 and 16 we read these words:

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”²

But now don't stop there. Look at the next part.

“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.”³

Now what do you have here? The apostle Paul is not only a pattern of God's longsuffering, but the apostle Paul's conversion experience with the Lord Jesus Christ is a pattern set forth for every individual to have the same thing.

When I first went to Michigan some 40 years ago I was preaching there one Sunday morning and my subject was a disturbance in the temple with regard to the second chapter of Acts. The former pastor came to visit and no sooner did I open my mouth than he walked down to the front of the auditorium and he turned around and he said, “Now don't you listen to this man. He is not telling you the truth.” I had only been there a couple of months.

When I listened to him and I told him. I said, “Now, you either sit down and be quiet or else get out of here. If I have to, I will throw you out.”

He looked at me kind of funny and he just stood there again. And finally one of the members of the congregation stood up and spoke to him and said, “Boily,” because that is what his name was, “Sit down. You have never heard this man.”

² 1 Timothy 1:15.

³ 1 Timothy 1:16.

He sat down. As I got through preaching—and I will tell you right now—it is not easy to preach when you run into that opposition the first time. But as I got through preaching, we find very clearly we stood to sing an invitation hymn and he came down the aisle again and this time he looked at me with almost with a tear in his eye, but he sat very humbly. He said, “Pastor, would you let me say something again to this congregation?”

I said, “Certainly.”

I pulled him up on the platform because the platform was similar to this. I gave him my hand and I turned and is aid, “Boily, has got something to say to this congregation. I want you to listen to it.”

And this is what he said. He said, “I was a fool this morning. I made the absolute mistake of judging this man before ever hearing him, but,” he said, “I want to tell you right now,” he said, “I haven’t had the experience with God that this man has.”

In other words he was telling us he was nothing but an unsaved preacher. And, beloved, you can multiply that by the hundreds and thousands of preachers and congregations across America today. America is supposed to have 50 percent of its population that is supposed to have had a born again experience with the Lord and yet we find we are the wicked and most reckless nation that has ever existed on the face of the earth. Something is wrong. And you know what is wrong? What is wrong is this. That our churches today are filled with unsaved people, unsaved preachers and the gospel is not being preached in the way that it should be preached at this hour.

Now this morning for a few moments I want to share with you just two simple things, first of all the reality that we all face in this life.

Go back to Acts chapter nine, if you will, and we will look at the Word of God. In Acts chapter nine we find very clearly the reality that we all must face and that is this. Being religious is not salvation. Now I am going to repeat that. Being religious is not salvation.

What are you talking about, preacher?

The apostle Paul, or Saul as he was known here, was a very, very religious man. He was praying at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the outstanding Old Testament professors in that time and he [?] very clearly he was known as a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees and the Pharisees were the very great religious group at this hour. But the apostle Paul did not know what salvation was all about. Being religious is not salvation. Paul was steeped in his religion.

Secondly we find he was educated, as I mentioned before, in the Scriptures. Now turn to Acts chapter 22. Keep your finger on Acts nine. We are coming right back to it. But turn to Acts 22 and you will see again what I am talking about. In the book of Acts chapter 22 and we find the apostle Paul gives his testimony and this is what he says.

In Acts chapter 22 beginning with verse one we read these words.

Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.⁴

Now there is his testimony.

Now some of you here today are religious. You would be classified as religious. But I am going to ask you a question. Do you know Christ? Does Christ know you? Not do you know about Christ, but do you know him? Have you met him in the dust and ashes of repentance? If you have not, your religion is going to carry you to a devil's hell and you will burn hotter than anybody because you have sat under the truth, under more truth than the vast majority in America at this hour

Now, preacher, what in the world are you talking about?

Paul was steeped in religion, but being religious is not salvation.

The second thing that Paul was doing was this. We find he was striving to extend and protect his belief. Again, in Acts chapter 22 we find, listen to verse three.

...and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.⁵

Now what do you call here? The apostle Paul was zealous toward God, but at the same time he was steeped in religion. He was striving to extend and protect his belief. He persecuted those that he was convinced were wrong and then he was convinced that he was right. But in reality he was absolutely wrong inside and out. And I will tell you right now. That is the vast majority of religious people at this hour. You begin to preach the doctrines of grace as we preach them here and I preach them in my own church and I will tell you right now. The average individual doesn't understand what you are talking about.

When I came to Arkansas and I tied in with the Southern Baptist Convention, I became one of the chapels of the Southern Baptist Convention and the man who was in charge of

⁴ Acts 22:1-3.

⁵ Acts 22:3-5.

the chaplaincy he came to me one day and he said, "Pete," he said, "I want you to have breakfast with me."

I said, "Fine."

We become real good friends. And as we became we began to talk. He asked me this question. He said, "You know, Emil Turner who happens to be the secretary of the state of Arkansas for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention," he said, "He has been listening to you on the radio. He really likes your preaching and he said he asked me this question." He said, "Are you a Calvinist?"

I said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "How much?"

I said, "All the way."

Now, preacher, what in the world are you talking about?

Most of you here don't know what a Calvinist is. But when the apostle Paul preached the Word of God he set forth in chronological terms the great beliefs of the Word of God. And what are they? Well, we find, first of all, there is the total depravity of man. That is one. The second one is this. Unconditional election, which means that God has elected a people to be saved. We don't know where they are, who they are or in what shape they are in. God does and we preach whosoever will may come and God draws unto those whom he has foreordained from the foundation of the world that they are going to be saved.

Then the third one is this. We have particular redemption. Now if you are saved here today, your redemption is peculiar and particular to you. But as you and I compare notes as to how God saved us, you will find out he will have the same general characteristics. And then you have also not only particular redemption, but you have also what we call irresistible grace. And I will talk to you more about that tonight. Then we find very clearly, last of all, there is the perseverance of the saints which means when once God saves an individual, that individual is saved for all eternity.

Well, the man asked me. He said, "Are you a Calvinist?"

I said, "Well, I guess you would call me that." But I said, "I happen to be an evangelical one."

He said, "Well, what do you mean?"

I said, "I stand in the same field as Charles Spurgeon, John Charles Philpot, John Flavel," and we find some of the great old Southern Baptist preachers like we see very clearly John Broadus and B H Carroll and Basil Manley and some of the others. And I am going

to tell you right now. When he listened to me he says, “You know,” he said, “You are really walking in good company.”

I said, “Absolutely.”

Now why do I tell you all these things? The apostle Paul was religious, but didn't know Christ. There are multitudes today that are religious, but didn't know Christ. And the apostle Paul was convinced that he was right and others were wrong. And a lot of people are that way. You can't talk to an individual that has spoken in tongues and tell him that they have been led astray. They won't believe you. They have had an experience of speaking in tongues. But the sad commendatory of it is this. They have got to have it over and over and over again until it becomes, as you might say, a semi high with them. And they are not satisfied unless they are babbling in some unknown language and they don't know what they are talking about.

Well, God says:

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”⁶

And the apostle Paul was religious and yet we find, very clearly, he was striving to extend his beliefs to others and protect them. And then we find very clearly he had to have a startling revelation given to him that he was in the wrong position.

Now, preacher, what in the world are you talking about?

Look again, Acts chapter nine, if you will, and look with me at verse one.

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?⁷

Now, preacher, what in the world do you have here?

He had to have a startling revelation given him that showed him that with all his religion, he was still against the Lord Jesus Christ. Now some of you here today you know intellectually the doctrines of grace. You have heard that. Some of you have been raised under that. But I am going to say to you very kindly, unless you have had a personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ all your knowledge and all your head knowledge that you have, will only damn you into a hotter place in hell than ever before. You had

⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:40.

⁷ Acts 9:1-4.

been better off not having heard than having heard what you hear and despising it because that is exactly what some of you are doing.

Now, preacher, what in the world are you talking about?

Paul had to be shown and convinced by God that he was wrong and the others were right. And this is exactly what God did. It was a startling revelation that was needed to change his position. It was stated so by Christ to the apostle Paul, because he said in verse four

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”⁸

This is the same condition of every individual. You here today, if you are not saved, I am going to tell you right now. You are arrayed against the Lord God of heaven.

Now, preacher, what are you talking about? Take your Bibles, if you will, and turn to Colossians chapter one.

“... to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.”⁹

Now let's stop right here. Are you saved here today? Do you know Christ? If you do not, you are arrayed against the Lord God of heaven. Now why? Because your mind is carnal or fleshly. You will spend thousands of dollars, as it were, upon yourself and upon material things and you skimp with regard to the serving of the Lord God of heaven and you profess to know Christ. It doesn't work that way. The Lord Jesus is either Lord of all or he is not Lord at all. And he has more respect for an individual that says, “I don't believe in God and I don't intend to serve him,” than he has for the individual that with his mouth professes that he knows the Lord, but with his heart he is still arrayed against the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the apostle Paul was against the Lord God of heaven. Every sinner is. No sinner wants to get saved if that sinner can help. They will hide under this excuse or that excuse or so on and so forth. We have had people give us all kinds of excuses as to why they don't come to church. We have people give all kinds of excuses as to why they don't read their Bible.

I will tell you why they don't.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.¹⁰

⁸ Acts 9:4.

⁹ Colossians 1:20-21.

¹⁰ Romans 8:7-8.

Now some of you might be thinking, well, I didn't come this far to have you step all over my toes.

Well, then you should have stayed home. You know me well enough that when I preach, I am going to step on people's toes. And I am battling today for the souls of many of you because many of you last night raised your hand and said, "Yes, preacher, I am a lost sinner. I need to be prayed for."

All right. Then you, if you are a lost sinner here today, you need to listen like ever before because of the fact that the way God saved the apostle Paul is the way he is going to save you if you ever get converted.

Now let's find that out for just a moment. Take your Bibles and go back to Acts chapter nine as we see in our lesson this morning not only the reality that we all must face in this life that religion is not salvation, but we find also that the road to redemption is set forth. Remember, I read you 1 Timothy chapter 16. The apostle Paul is a pattern, not only for long suffering, but also for how God saves a sinner.

Now how in the world does the Lord God save a sinner? The same way that he saved the apostle Paul. The general characteristics would be the same. The peculiarities will be applied particularly to the individual and we need to understand that.

Now let's look at the apostle Paul for just a moment. We find in Acts chapter nine beginning with verse four or verse three and four we read:

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?¹¹

Now here is the first step that takes place when God sets out to save a sinner.

What is it, preacher?

It is the revelation of God speaking personally to the individual. Now hold your seat. People have told me, "Well, when I got saved, it felt like I was walking on clouds. When I got saved, everything in the room was brighter than the sun. When I got saved I had all cold chills running up and down my spine."

And all that is is an emotional trick on the part of the devil. When you get saved, if you ever do, this is what is going to happen to you. There is going to come to you the personal revelation that God is speaking to you personally.

Now, preacher, what do you mean?

¹¹ Acts 9:3-4.

All right, take your Bibles now. Keep your finger on Acts nine. Go back with me to John chapter 10. The Lord Jesus preached this and the sad commentary of today is this, that it is not preached at this present hour.

In John chapter 10 beginning with verse 14 we read:

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.¹²

All right. Now go back to John chapter five, if you will, and look with me at verse 25. Listen again to the Word of God. In John chapter five and verse 25 we read:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”¹³

Now, what in the world are you talking about?

Here is a clear teaching of the Word of God that an individual, if they ever get converted, they are going to hear the Lord God of heaven’s voice speaking to them.

Now, preacher, what do you mean?

It is not going to be an audible voice. It is not going to come out of the wall. It is not going to come out of the air. The voice of God will come to you in the deepest recesses of your soul and you will know and you know that you know it that to the Lord God of heaven is speaking to you personally. That is what is meant by calling you by name.

The apostle Paul was on his road to Damascus and all of a sudden we find a brighter light than the sun itself shined around the apostle Paul and Paul fell to the earth and he heard a voice saying unto him:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”¹⁴

When God sets out to save you, he is going to speak to you and he will call you by name. You will know that he is talking to you.

When he spoke to me, he said to me very clearly, “Peter Nortier, you are a lost sinner.” And, beloved, I knew it.

Has he ever spoken to you? He will speak to you in the deepest recesses of your inner

¹² John 10:14-16.

¹³ John 5:25.

¹⁴ Acts 9:4.

most souls. You won't know if he is speaking to anybody else or not, but you will know that he is speaking to you because the hour is come and I love this passage.

“The hour is coming, and now is,”¹⁵

Which means it is still in force.

“...when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”¹⁶

Because every sinner is a dead sinner and God has to speak to them by his voice in order to awaken them to their need of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever been there?

The apostle Paul heard the voice of God.

Now hold your seat and pay close attention.

There are seven voices that are mentioned in the Word of God. The believer is going to hear six of them. Now what are they?

We find, first of all, there is the voice of awakening, Acts chapter nine verses four through six. That is the voice of awakening.

Secondly, there is the voice of redemption. The apostle Paul heard that in Acts chapter 26 verses 12 through 18.

Thirdly, there is the voice of assurance, Acts chapter 18 verses nine and 10.

Fourth, there is the voice of comfort, Acts chapter 27 verses 21 through 25.

Fifth, there is the voice of rebuke. Every believer hears that, Deuteronomy chapter three verse 26.

Sixth, there is the voice of the rapture. I am waiting for that.

There is one voice I am not going to hear. And do you know what it is? Turn to Matthew 25. I will show you. In Matthew 25 I am not going to hear it. I hope you are not, but some of you are, unless you repent and get converted. And my advice to you is to repent and be converted today.

In Matthew chapter 25 and verse 41 we read:

¹⁵ John 5:25.

¹⁶ Ibid.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”¹⁷

Now every unsaved individual is going to hear that voice of damnation as it thundered in their ears and then the angels of God will take them and hurl them into the lake of fire. I am not going to hear that voice. Are you? I hope for your sake, you are not.

Now when God saves us, what does he do? We find, first of all, there is the voice of awakening.

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”¹⁸

And then we find when an individual hears the voice as the apostle Paul did, there is a response that is forthcoming. Turn back to Acts chapter nine and you will see the response that is forthcoming. In Acts chapter nine beginning with verse four:

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 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. 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.¹⁹

Now here is the response that is forthcoming. People today walk down the aisles of our churches. They take the preacher by the hand and they said, “I am coming to accept Jesus.”

Now that sounds good, but there is a great deal wrong with it.

What are you talking about?

There is no Holy Spirit conviction. There is no repentance. When they come, many of them come down with a smile on their face. Sometimes you will turn around and they will look at somebody behind them and they will wave at them. Others will come down hand in hand and if it is a boy and a girl they will come down holding hands or have their arms around with each other and they are coming and they are saying, “Yes, I am coming to accept Jesus.”

And I will tell you right now. That is not the way God saved the apostle Paul. That isn't the way God saved me. That isn't the way God saved you, if you are converted.

What happened if God saved you was this. And it will happen and it must happen because this is God's method of redemption. You will hear the voice of the Son of God.

¹⁷ Mathew 25:41.

¹⁸ Acts 9:4.

¹⁹ Acts 9:4-6.

He will call you by name. The response that will be forthcoming on your part will be this. The apostle Paul, when he heard that voice, we find very clearly. He fell to the earth.

Now what does that mean? He was unhorsed from his horse of rebellion. He was unhorsed from his horse of sufficiency. He was unhorsed from his horse of persecution. He was unhorsed from his horse of religion. He fell down into the dust and ashes of the earth at that time and we find very clearly he was unhorsed in the dust of repentance. And I will tell you right now. His arrogance was translated into a submission. His anxiety and prayer became the conduct of the individual. And I will tell you this. That takes place when God sets out and saves a sinner. He will put you down in the dust and ashes of repentance and you will wonder if the Lord God of heaven will save you. He will show you that you are a hell bent, hell bound and hell deserving sinner. And I will tell you right now. Your anxiety will come upon because you don't know if God saved you or not. You will wonder how long you will live and, as it were, you will begin to walk, as it were, on egg shells because you recognize that somewhere down the pathway of your life is a trap door that will lead you into hell and you are afraid you will step on it knowing that if you step on that trap door you will plunge into hell and you will burn forever.

And I will tell you this. Your arrogance is gone. Your sufficiency is gone. That is what happened to the apostle Paul. And we don't see that in our churches today for the most part because there is no Holy Spirit conviction.

The third thing about Paul was this. He was unhorsed in the dust of repentance. His arrogance was changed into submission. Anxiety and prayer became his conduct. It isn't walking down the aisle, taking the preaching by the hand or listening to some preacher on the radio or TV and they will tell you this.

Now, if you will just utter this little prayer with me...

And they began to pray it. And then when they get all done they say, "Now, if you uttered this little prayer and if you have meant it from your heart, well, then, you are saved and don't let anybody tell you that you are not."

That is a big farce.

God didn't deal with Paul in that manner and the apostle Paul is a pattern as how God saves a sinner. When God unhorsed the apostle Paul we find anxiety and prayer became his conduct.

Now, preacher, what are you talking about?

Acts chapter nine. Skip down with me, if you will, to verse 11 and listen to what it says.

"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."²⁰

²⁰ Acts 9:11.

Are you listening? Let me give you this truth. You don't have to teach an awakened sinner how to pray. You don't teach him how to pray. God does. When God opens the heart of that awakened sinner, as he opened the heart of the apostle Paul, anxiety and prayer became his conduct.

Notice carefully, if you will, we find in verse nine:

“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”²¹

Now how come? Well, God made him blind temporarily, setting forth the blind condition of his soul. But God also did this. He caused him to have anxiety and we find prayer became his conduct and for three days and three nights, I will tell you what he did. He probably paced the room where he was in even though he was blind. He may have felt himself along the wall or he may have been on his face in the dust before God, but he was crying and praying and begging and pleading and at the same time he was comparing all the religion that he had in the past and he sums it all up and he said, “Yea, though I was a righteous man, I count all things but loss that I might win the excellency and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Have you ever been there?

Now some of you here today, you are cocky. Oh, you are just as cocky as you can be. You have a head knowledge of the truth and it never touched your heart. God has never made you anxious. And my hope is that he will, because I am going to tell you this. Until God reaches down and unhorses you in the dust and ashes of repentance, you are not ready to be saved, because salvation consists of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, now let's stop there. What happened to the apostle Paul? He was not only his arrogance was changed into submission, anxiety and prayer became his conduct, but redemption and fellowship with God became the result.

Now, preacher, how long does it take to be saved?

Salvation is instantaneous. It is the breaking of the sinner that makes it so hard. And, you see, the apostle Paul was three days, three nights. He didn't eat. He didn't drink. He didn't sleep. But he begged and he pleaded and he implored and I will tell you right now. He would not quit. He was beseeching the Lord God of heaven. And when you find out how he felt on those three says you go back and read the third chapter of the book of Philippians and it will tell you.

Then notice what happened. God listened to the cry of a sinner.

²¹ Acts 9:9.

I have had people up north tell me point blank. “You know, preacher, God doesn’t hear the prayer of an unsaved individual.”

I said, “He doesn’t.” I said, “He heard mine. Did he ever hear yours?”

Every individual before they get saved are unsaved. And I will tell you right now. Every individual before they get converted when the Holy Spirit of God deals with them, I will tell you right now. They are going to pray unto God and God is going to hear that prayer.

In verse 11 of we read of Acts chapter nine:

“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.”²²

And so Ananias went and we find in verse 17 we read:

“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.”²³

And that is where the apostle Paul got converted.

Now you say, “Wait a minute.”

No. God does not give the Holy Ghost until he converts people. And the apostle Paul did not have the Holy Ghost until, first of all, God converted him. And he was converted right there in verse 17. And notice what happened.

“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”²⁴

All right. Anybody here that is saved, you haven’t been baptized, you need to be. When you get converted you need to find... and I will tell you this. When you get converted, you need to find you a good church that is preaching the Word of God like this one. Then you need to present yourself as a candidate for baptism.

Now how come, preacher?

Because baptism tells the world what has happened. It has no saving merit, but it tells the world what has happened to you. And if you go along and you say, “Well, I got saved and I don’t want to be baptized,” I question if you have ever gotten saved because you are still in rebellion. And it is an honor and a privilege for the church to baptize you and

²² Acts 9:11.

²³ Acts 9:17.

²⁴ Acts 9:18.

receive you into the membership of the local church. And that is one of God's commands. And anybody that fights against it—and a lot of them do—I tell you right now. I begin to put a big question mark as to whether or not they have ever really gotten to the Lord, because I will tell you this. They are still in rebellion.

Now the apostle Paul arose and was baptized. Now, you put it down. He was a doctor of theology. If he had been alive today he would have been like Mr. Kennedy that has a program on TV and I don't know if you have ever looked at it. That man has got more degrees behind his name than any person I have ever known. And the apostle Paul was just as educated as he could be and we find very clearly by what happened. He submitted himself to the individual who was to baptize him, because God had commanded him and the reason he did it is because the Lord Jesus Christ was revealed inside his heart.

Now I am going to prove that to you. Turn to Galatians chapter one and look with me at verses 15 and 16 and listen to what it says. And this is the testimony of the apostle Paul. In Galatians chapter one verses 15 and 16 the Word of God tells us this marvelous reality. Listen to it, if you will. The book of Galatians chapter one verse 15 and 16. Notice:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.²⁵

And how true that is.

Now, preacher, what in the world are you talking about?

Well, we find very clearly that Paul got converted and we see that anxiety and prayer was his conduct. Then redemption and fellowship with God became the result. And I will tell you right now. Like it was with the apostle Paul, it is to every individual that ever gets saved, it becomes a decided mystery to the unsaved.

Now wait a minute. If you are saved here today, you are a mystery to the unsaved around about you. They don't understand you. They can't understand you coming to church. They can't understand you reading your Bible. They can't understand you praying. They can't understand you giving at least 10 percent of your gross income to the cause of God. They can't understand that. Many times they call you a fool.

But I will tell you right now. I would rather be a fool for Christ than be on the devil's side. How about you?

And you say, "Now preacher, what in the world are you talking about?"

²⁵ Galatians 1:15-16.

Well, the reason the apostle Paul did this, there was a complete change in his life. Now look at the amazement if you will in Acts chapter nine and we find very clearly in verse 18:

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:²⁶

Now let's stop right here.

Here you find what takes place. A complete change in the life of the individual. Now as I mentioned here before, those of you that are not saved, you are on then devil's side. You may disagree with me all you want to. But you are on the devil's side and you are arrayed against God. And you will stay that way until God does what? He will speak to you. He will put you down in the dust and ashes of repentance. He will fill your heart with anxiety and concern, because you will know what it means to be a lost and hell deserving sinner. And I will tell you right now. You won't want to be that way. And when God does that he will cause you to begin to pray and sue for mercy on the basis that Christ died for sinners and then to your amazement suddenly, mysteriously, sovereignly, absolutely, perfectly and indelibly and eternally the Son of God will reveal himself to your heart and you will be occupied by God the Holy Spirit. He will bear witness with your Spirit that you are a child of God and nobody can take away from it. And I will tell you right now. Your whole decorum of life will go 180 degree revelation. It will be an absolute about face. And I will tell you this. It won't be easy. For a while people are going to put up with you like they did with the apostle Paul. They were amazed. But then what happened was this. They took counsel to kill him, because, you see, the unsaved are amazed at what takes place. And then when they don't get saved themselves, anger and antagonism comes in place of repentance. And that is what happened to the Jews. And wherever Paul went they followed him.

And I will tell you right now. You and I are living in days when that is going to come to pass more than ever before, because Christians are being persecuted all over the world and that persecution is going to hit the United States of America. It is already coming. And when it does come you are going to find out all those who are pseudo Christians and we find what happens. They will knuckle under. But the minority will stand true for God like the apostle Paul did.

²⁶ Acts 9:18-23.

Now let me ask you a question. I have described to you how God saves. Did the Lord ever stop you in your tracks? Did he ever open your heart and show you that you are a lost sinner? And if he did, or is he doing it now, is there anxiety in your heart? The apostle Paul knew he was going to hell. Nobody had to tell him. And when God deals with a sinner, I will tell you right now. The Lord God of heaven shows that sinner that that sinner is hell bent and hell bound and hell deserving. And he puts the fear in that sinner's heart.

And when he does, that sinner begins to pray and he will wonder. He will pray and he will wonder. Will the Lord God have mercy on me? Will he listen to my cry?

You ought to read the 88th and 78th Psalms and Psalm 38 and you will see there the cry of a sinner under conviction.

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious?”²⁷

That is what the apostle Paul was asking. And then we find what happened. God answered that prayer in God's good time and with the apostle Paul it was only three days. With Charles Spurgeon it was five years. With others it was several months. With still others it was several years. It depends on the sovereignty of God because God is sovereign in his salvation. But I am going to tell you this. When God puts an individual down in the dust and ashes of repentance and under Holy Spirit conviction, he does it for the purpose of saving them, not damning them.

Now let me close. My time is gone.

You say, “Pastor, what are you talking about?”

Well, God hasn't changed. Now you answer me this question. Did you ever stand before God as a lost sinner? Are you standing before him now as a lost sinner? Are you standing intellectually or are you standing before God as a lost sinner experientially? When it is experiential it is down in the deepest recesses of your soul. And you are afraid to get on the highway lest you have a wreck. You are afraid, as it were, to do much of anything except sue for mercy because you are afraid that something could happen to you and you are afraid that if it does, you will wind up in hell. And I will tell you right now. You don't want to go there.

And then coupled with that, the Lord God of heaven puts a longing in your heart that you might know the Lord Jesus. Like the story in the Song of Solomon, we find the bride does this. She walked the streets of Jerusalem and she said, “Have you seen my bride groom? Where is he?”

And they said, “Well, why are you looking for him?”

²⁷ Psalm 77:9.

“He is fairer than anybody else.”

And when God deals with a sinner like he did with the apostle Paul, he put such a desire in the heart of that individual and I am going to tell you this. Many of them, they won't eat and they won't sleep and I will tell you right now. They won't stop suing and begging and crying and pleading and beseeching and imploring God to listen to them. And they will wonder if he ever does and then mysteriously God will speak to their hearts and save them like he did the apostle Paul. And the apostle Paul said:

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace...”²⁸

He knew what it meant to be called. He called me by his grace to do what?

“To reveal his Son in me.”²⁹

And every individual in this room that is saved, you have got the Lord Jesus Christ living in you. Every individual that is not saved, you are under the influence and power and dominion of the devil, because ye are of your father the devil and the lust of your father ye will do.

But when an individual is converted, I will tell you right now. God's method of salvation is first conviction. Secondly, it is convincing. Thirdly, it is conversion. And then what happens? The individual begins to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as the apostle Paul did. He increased in the things of God. And I will tell you right now. He praised God from the time that God saved him until the day that he was beheaded in the dungeon in Rome. And I will tell you this. Every true believer strives in the same thing.

I don't have much... I will put it this way. I don't have much patience with those that claim they are backslidden. And I will tell you why, because when an individual is truly converted, they can't stay in a backslidden condition very long.

You say, “What are you talking about?”

Well, if you love your wife or your husband, I am going to tell you right now. Can you go for weeks at a time without speaking to him? Can you do that to your children? If you do, you don't love them. If the Holy Spirit of God when it is grieved, I will tell you right now, works in the heart of an individual and that individual is going to have to get right with God in the very near future because they can't live that way. They are so miserable without Christ. But as we live for the Lord Jesus Christ and we praise him, I will tell you right now. This becomes, as it were, our testimony. This is true with every believer.

²⁸ Galatians 1:15.

²⁹ Galatians 1:16.

Oh, sometimes I just want to praise you. Sometimes just to speak your name. Sometimes I just want to thank you without asking you for a thing. Sometimes I lift my hands to you. Sometimes all I can do is cry. But then it sums up this way. Everything that I have I owe to you. Lord, and Calvary is the reason why.

Shall we pray?

Bow your heads and close your eyes, if you will. I want to ask you a couple of questions this morning. I am not going to put any pressure on you whatever. That is not my job. God the Holy Spirit does that. But I am going to ask you a question this morning. How many of you here today know that you are saved? Put your hands up. You know that you are. Put your hands up high. Let me see you. Oh, thank God. Put them down.

I ask several of you last night. Several of you raised your hand. Last night if you were not saved. Those of you that are here this morning and were not here last night. If the Lord is dealing with you and you recognize that maybe for the first time in your life that you are not a saved person, you would like to have God's people pray for you. Would you put your hand up? By that you will say, "Pastor, I don't know Christ and I want God's people to pray for me." Put your hand up high. Let me see. Yes, there is several.

Oh, thank God. We are going to pray for you. Those of you that have raised your hand, are you really lost? If you are, then I give you one advice. You go to the Lord. Tell him so clearly, "Lord, I am nothing but a lost sinner. Don't pass me by, but save me." And you sue for mercy on the basis that Christ died for sinners and you are the sinner and you don't stop until he answers.

Now his answer will come to you personally. His answer will come to you indelibly. And his answer will come you by the means of his Word through the power of God the Holy Spirit and so if you are under conviction today and you are a lost sinner, then you need to spend time in his Word. And the wonderful thing of it is this, that God is still in the business of saving sinners.

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."³⁰

Is God speaking to you? Then turn to him with all your soul and, oh, just beg the Lord to have mercy on you and save you. He will do it and you come and tell your pastor. And if it happens here today and I praying it will, you come and tell me, because I am waiting to hear.

I have had telephone calls at three o'clock in the morning. They have called me and said, "Brother Nortier, I just want to tell you something. The Lord saved me just 10 minutes ago."

I said, "Wonderful."

³⁰ John 5:25.

All my sleep was gone. I tell you right now. I was rejoicing, because the greatest thing that can happen to you when it does is for the Lord Jesus to reach down and save you.

Oh, our Father, today how glad we are that thy Word is as plain as it can be, that, oh Lord, you show very clearly by the example of the apostle Paul that the way of salvation is the same and that, Lord, you have made him a pattern, a pattern of salvation that ours will also be. And we ask, thee, Lord, speak to everyone here today that needs to know thee. Lord, there are several and, oh, our God, we can't save them. They have been honest enough to admit that they are lost and they need thee and they want to be remembered in prayer. And so, Lord, we lift every one of them to thee at this hour. Most of them we know by name, oh God, but some we don't. We lift them all to thee and pray thee. Lord, continue to move on their hearts. Open their understanding. Speak to them individually. Then, Lord, do the same thing to them that you did to the apostle Paul. Cause them to seek thy face. Fill them, Lord, with anxiety so they can't eat or sleep until they come to know thee. And then, Lord, we wait of the time to hear that you have redeemed them so that we can rejoice here on earth like the angels and the saints in heaven when they hear of an individual that has been converted. Oh, our God, thou art so great and so good and we thank you for being so faithful and so kind to us in allowing us to live. And, Lord, don't let us take it for granted, but fill our hearts with praise today as never before. And, Lord, may we hear that glad cry of someone that has been converted here this morning. We lift it to thee and praise thee for what shall transpire. And, Lord, all the glory belongs to thee. We ask it all for Christ's sake. Amen.