

The Gospel According to Matthew pt 12

(they straightway)

Our text Matthew 4:18-22 and Acts 9:1-20

Notice the response to the Word of God, “**they straightaway**”, “**they Immediately**”, this is the response to the word of Power, the irresistible Word; (1Th 1:5) **For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.** When God speaks to the heart of one for whom He has loved, He speaks with Irresistible power! (Joh 5:21) **For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.** That word “**quickeneth**” means to be made alive, or given life! (Eph 2:4-5) **But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.**

We are very familiar with the call of Lazarus, The Lord spoke to Lazarus in that tomb, “Quickening him, giving him life, the Lord said “**Lazarus come forth**” and he did what? He came forth! Giving evidence of life where one was once dead, The Word came with power, power to move mountains, and it resulted in Lazarus, still wrapped in his burial clothes, coming to the call, Folks that’s “**Straightaway**”, that’s “**Immediately**”.

This is the word preached, “**Christ**” The Lord Jesus, the God-Man, God in human flesh, the power of God “**and Him Crucified**” for those whom He has loved with an everlasting Love!

There is another place where the Spirit of God has inspired the writer to use these words “**Straightaway**”, and “**Immediately**” in describing the effectual calling of one of God’s Saints. Brother Norm referred to this last Wed.

Act 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Act 9:2 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.

Act 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Act 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.

John Gill wrote regarding the last part of verse 5; "or "to resist me", as the Arabic version renders it; and which is the sense of the phrase; it is a proverbial expression, taken from beasts that are goaded, who kick against the goads or pricks, and hurt themselves the more thereby; and Christ uses it, suggesting hereby, that should Saul go on to persecute him and his people, to oppose his Gospel, and the strong evidence of it, in doctrine and miracles, and notwithstanding the present remonstrances made in such an extraordinary manner; he would find himself in the issue greatly hurt by it, and could not rationally expect to succeed against so powerful a person".

Act 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.

Act 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Act 9:8 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.

Act 9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Act 9:10 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.

Act 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,

Act 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.

Act 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:

Act 9:14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Act 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:

Act 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Act 9:17 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.

Act 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Act 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Act 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

Considering Saul's conversion as our example, we can see five distinct acts of grace by which all who are saved have been brought to repentance and faith in Christ (Psa 65:4) **Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.**

First we see Divine Election; (Act 9:15) - No one has ever been saved, or ever will be, except those who are the objects of God's eternal, electing love; (2Th 2:13-14) **But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ;**

God's operations of grace toward Saul, began long before the Damascus Road. Saul, as all of God's people are, chosen to salvation before the world began (Eph 1:4-6) **According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him; In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.**

When God sent Ananias to preach to this newborn babe in grace, the very first thing he preached to him was election (Act 22:13-14) **Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.**

Faith in Christ is not the cause of election, but it is the fruit and the proof of election (Act 13:48) **And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.** When a sinner bows to Christ, trusting Him as our Savior and Lord, we say with confidence, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee."

We would not and could not choose the Lord, but he chose us; and his choice of us made our choice of him certain (Joh 15:16) **Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.**

Brother Don Fortner wrote; *"Election said, "Saul of Tarsus shall be saved." God's merciful decree said, "Saul will be saved at noon on the Damascus Road at the day appointed." Predestination drew the map by which Saul must travel to the appointed place of mercy. Providence led him along the predestined path to the place and hour when Christ must be revealed to him. "And it came to pass!"*

Next Divine Revelation; (Act 9:3); (Gal 1:15-16) **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;**

Though he was chosen of God, Saul could never be saved until he was made to "see that Just One" (Act 22:14) **And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.**

So when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, **"suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven."** He saw Christ and the glory of God in Christ (2Co 4:6) **For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

He saw the same thing that Moses saw (Exo 33:18-23) **And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen. Then in chapter (34:6-8) And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,**

Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

Paul saw that Just One of whom he had heard Stephen speak of. He was made to see, by divine revelation, the glory of God in His absolute sovereignty, infinite grace and mercy, and inflexible justice, and he saw how that God can be both gracious and just in saving sinners by the substitutionary, blood atonement of that Just One, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24-26) **Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

Salvation comes to sinners when they are given a revelation of Christ and the glory of God in Him by the Spirit's effectual application of the gospel to their hearts. When a person sees Christ as He is and is reconciled to Him in His true character he is saved.

Next is a Divine Call (Act 9:4-9) - There is a general call which men and women can and do resist, (Mat 20:16) and (Mat 22:14) we read “**for many be called, but few chosen**”. The general call goes forth indiscriminately to all who hear every time the gospel is preached. But there is an effectual call as well. No one will ever be saved until he or she receives this effectual, irresistible call of the Holy Spirit by which helpless, totally depraved, spiritually dead sinners are brought to life and faith in Christ by the power of God (Joh 5:25) **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;** and these familiar words (Eph 2:1-5) **And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the**

spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.

Holy Scripture gives us numerous illustrations of this effectual call (Eze 16:6-8; Eze 37:1-14; Joh 11:43-44; 1Co 1:26-31).

Saul was one of Christ's sheep. The time had come for the Good Shepherd to call His wandering sheep. When He calls, His sheep hear His voice and follow Him it say's in (Joh 10:27-30) **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.**

This call of the Spirit is called the effectual call because it gets the job done (Psa 65:4) **Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee;** (Psa 110:3) **Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.**

It is a personal call (Act 9:4-5). Many were present, but only Saul was called. It is a convicting call (Act 9:5).

The Lord convicted Saul of his sin with the words, "Why persecutest thou me?" It is a humbling call (Act 9:6). Saul "fell to the earth," submitting to the claims of Christ, his sovereign Lord. This call of the Spirit is also a distinguishing call (Act 9:7). The men who were with Saul saw a light, heard a voice, and were afraid. They knew something was going on, but not what. This call of grace separated and distinguished Saul from his companions (1Co 4:7) **For who maketh thee to differ from another .**

Again, the call of God is an awakening call (Act 9:6). Once he was called of God, Saul began to call upon God. Blinded now to all earthly concerns, he began to seek the Lord with an earnest heart.

For three days he was in suspense and darkness (Act 9:8-9). Matthew Henry wrote. "*He was all this time in the belly of hell, suffering God's terrors for his sins, which were now set in order before him. He was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and was so wounded in spirit for sin that he could relish neither meat nor drink*"

We also see Divine Illumination (Act 9:17-18) - God sent a preacher to Saul who told him all the truth. Then the scales of darkness and ignorance, superstition and tradition fell off his eyes, and he received his sight. When Ananias instructed saul in the way of faith, the way of comfort for God's people, as Isaiah was instructed to in (Isa 40:1-2), Paul received his sight, what did he see? He saw Christ as his Substitute, God as his Father, and the Holy Spirit as his Comforter. He saw it to be his duty and his privilege to follow Christ in all things, beginning with believer's baptism, and he did it. The will of God became the rule of his life.

And Lastly, Divine Conversion (Act 9:18-22) - Saul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Grace converted him, The Apostle Paul writing to the saints at Plilippi, wrote (Php 3:4-14) **Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

All that Paul once cherished he now renounced. His righteous deeds, his religious works, and his reputation as a Pharisee, he now counted to be but manure. He turned from religion to Christ. Grace turned him from a mere form of godliness to worship and serve the living God; and he was turned forever as Solomon, son of David wrote (Ecc 3:14) **I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.**

Immediately, Paul confessed Christ in believer's baptism (v18) and went on to write about that to the saints at Rome (Rom 6:4-6) **Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.**

He identified himself with the despised people of God and the gospel of His grace, and became a faithful witness of Christ. He laid down his life in the cause of Christ. Grace had made him a new man (2Co 5:17) **Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

This is the way of God with men. This is the way God saves sinners: by election, revelation, calling, illumination, and conversion. He saves in this way so that man's salvation will be to the praise of the glory of his grace.

It is this experience of grace that identifies who God's elect are (1Th 1:4-10) **Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: or from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**

When God speaks His Word to the hearts of those He loves, the power that is His, comes with it! We cannot unhear it! We do not resist it! **“They straightway”** follow Him!

(Joh 10:27-30) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.