

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus, Pt 2

Acts 9:1-22

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In Acts 9 we continue to see the conversion of Saul. A man bent on murder who becomes a faithful servant of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A man humbled to the uttermost and then empowered to preach to the nations. We see the sovereign hand of God raising up His vessels for salvation and we see in it the severity of God in calling this man to a life of suffering for the name of Jesus.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 9:1-22
- B. There is a moment in time where Jesus confronts and denounces the religious leaders of Israel for their hypocrisy. He points out that they were busy tithing their various seeds, 1 for God and 9 for us, but never got around to doing what really mattered, like justice, mercy and faithfulness.
- C. Today we pick back up with the moment Saul of Tarsus was confronted by the very person he believed was a fraud.
- D. What we have here is a man whose whole system was so close to being right and yet because it rejected the person and work of Jesus Christ it failed in all things.
- E. And this is something you and I must constantly press upon our own minds as, well as those around us—reject Jesus and everything else, no matter how grand and great, no matter how fulfilling or pleasant, no matter how enriching or comforting—everything else will fail you in the end.
- F. The issue is simply the absolute necessity of Jesus as Lord over all things, including every atom of your being is foundational to true life. And the bible uses terms that are designed to show His centrality to all things.
 - 1. He is called the true Shepherd.
 - 2. He is the Vine and we are branches.
 - 3. He is the Living Water and those who drink from Him shall never thirst.
 - 4. He is the Bread of life and for those you who eat of Him will find yourselves satiated.

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5. He is the Light of the world and so to follow Him is to have a perfect, eternal lamp and light for your path.
6. He is the Living Stone and all who are attached to Him through faith are also made alive and are used by God to form a true priesthood and a true temple and are fellow partakers of His saving work.
7. We have another metaphor the bible uses, that of the Cornerstone.
 - a. The cornerstone was the critical stone in ancient days to get right. It had to be perfect. Once you set it in place the rest of the building would be built off of it. Get it wrong and everything is wrong.
 - b. The prophet Isaiah told of a day when YHWH would lay a choice, costly cornerstone in Jerusalem. The one who believes in this cornerstone would be safe and by this cornerstone justice and righteousness will be established and flow like a river.
 - c. Psalm 118:22-23: King David writes of how the spiritual leaders of Israel will look at a stone and reject it as being insufficient or not to their standards. But the stone rejected by the builder (who should know better) will become the chief corner stone.
 - d. Luke 20:17-19
8. And this is the very situation that this man Saul finds himself to be in.
9. But then the grace of God comes into play in this story in Acts 9.
- G. Last time we saw who the person of Saul was:
 1. A Roman citizen by birth.
 2. Raised in Tarsus.
 3. A Jew but also a Pharisee.
 4. A persecutor of the Church.
 5. And then, while on the way to the city of Damascus to find and jail men and women who were believers, a Christian.
 6. In vss 1-9 we saw that he was confronted by the living, resurrected and glorified Jesus.
 7. This is where we pick back up on this wonderful conversion story. Picture this like a movie and the scene on the road to Damascus fades away and our focus now is upon another man, minding his business, who is now confronted through a vision, of Jesus as well.

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II. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

A. Vss 10-12: Ananias.

B. Vss 13-16: God's ways are different from ours.

1. Though the dirty little secret is that we often think we know His ways.
2. We assume we know what is the best way, or at least the right way.
3. Isaiah records the words and heart of the Lord in 55:7-9, *“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Yahweh, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares Yahweh. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”*
 - a. But how many of you really believe this?
 - b. We see people and often think that they are far from the mercy of God. They are too hardened, to evil, too arrogant.
 - c. But this does not fit the story of Saul of Tarsus does it?
 - d. Ananias is a godly man but he is confused. He has heard of the exploits of Saul. He is an enemy of God and an enemy of the Church. He knows why Saul came to Damascus and it was **not** to find Jesus Christ and forgiveness of sin.
4. But Jesus says again, “Go.” And He gives Ananias two pieces of information that helps him understand:
 - a. First, Saul is a chosen vessel or instrument of God (15).
 - (1) It speaks of the sovereign choice of God rather than the supposed free will of man.

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- (2) The word, “instrument” or “vessel,” is used by Paul on several occasions in his own letters to churches and people. But the one I want you to see is in 2 Corinthians 4:7.
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- b. Second piece of information given to Ananias, Saul is destined to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ (16).
 - (1) The good news of Jesus Christ involves suffering.
 - (2) This man was not being plucked out of the midst of his own rebellion and hatred so that he might have a life of comfort, rather, it was to be suffering—just like he described to the Corinthian Church
 - (3) But it is worth noting that little word “must” in vs 16.
 - (a) *dei* is a very important little word that is easy to pass over. Luke uses this in both his gospel and here of divine necessity.
 - (b) This suffering is not by accident, it is of divine appointment.
 - (c) And what is the basis for this suffering that he must do? For the sake of Jesus Christ. For Jesus’ reputation. For the gospel.
 - (d) Because the gospel goes forth not in power as man determines power to be; but in the weakness that is, in fact, the power of God. The clay pot.
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- C. The healing of Saul and his baptism and commissioning (17-22).
 1. So Ananias goes to him. Heals him and the next thing that happens is baptism.
 2. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. It refers to a divine empowerment by the Spirit for a task.
 3. And for the next several days he simply recovered and had fellowship with the other believers there in Damascus.

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4. But it did not last long. For soon he began to preach.
 - a. The subject was Jesus.
 - b. The place was in the synagogues to his fellow Jews.
 - c. The message was that He truly was the Son of God.
 5. Notice how very clear he was in his new message he preached (21-22).
 - a. The people were stunned. Why?
 - b. Because he was not being subtle. We like to be subtle. We like to be clever with our words.
 - c. But for Saul, the message was straight-forward and powerful. It confronted and confounded the people who were rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. They would raise an argument and he would destroy it.
 - d. It says he proved Jesus was the Christ? How? Through the Old Testament.
 - e. And he did this so well that every time the people were left with nothing to say.
 6. How? And why?
 - a. First, because he knew the Scripture. His days as a Pharisee had not been wasted. He knew the Old Testament, likely by heart.
 - b. But the second reason he was able to confound them was because he was being strengthened by God (22).Conclusion.
- D. Three applications to what we saw today:
1. First, we see here that a person can be passionate and sincere and thoroughly committed to his life and choices before coming to faith in Jesus Christ.
 - a. Saul was not embarrassed by his hatred of the Church.
 - b. He had no regrets for doing what he was doing by way of persecution.
 - c. This was not a man who was shamed by his thoughts and there was nothing in him that was praiseworthy. Certainly there was nothing that commended him to God to be saved.

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- d. All Saul brought to the table was his sin. And all the gifts of intellect and skill he was born with by God's grace had been used for evil.
- e. And the same is with each of us here.
- 2. Second, you see the sovereignty of God in salvation.
 - a. Saul is literally knocked off his feet and blinded by God.
 - b. No pleading by God so that Saul would let Him save his soul.
 - c. This is a man confronted by his Creator and is overcome by His power and grace.
 - d. It was God who ordained the method, the place, the time and the result of this confrontation.
 - e. And beloved, it is true of you as well.
- 3. Third, the grace of God is both radical and amazing.
 - a. As the hymn goes, He saved a wretch like Saul and like you.
 - b. You may think you are far from God and on your own, you are. Infinitely far. And you may think that through your efforts for self-improvement that you can draw near to Him. But you cannot.
 - c. What saves you is not your efforts but the sheer, undeserved grace of God toward a wretched sinner. Come to Him through Jesus Christ His Son as a sinner with nothing but your sin in your hands and heart, and you will find grace and life. Come to Him on your terms and you will find nothing but His wrath.
 - d. God does not clean you up a bit and brush you off to go back into your life. God's grace radically transitions you from a sinner to a saint. He changes you from one who belongs to this fallen age to one fit for the Kingdom of God.
 - e. The Saul preaching in the synagogues was not the same Saul breathing threats to the Church. You cannot encounter God's grace and remain the same. And if you do, then you have not encountered the saving grace of God.
- E. Next time we will reflect on vss 23-31 and the nature of suffering for the name of Jesus.

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Benediction

May our God cause you to rejoice in the Lord, to be made complete in all aspects, and to be comforted by the Spirit. May He move in and among us to be like-minded in the Word and to live in peace with one another. Amen