

Acts 15 – **Arrested by Christ - Acts 9:1-18**

Have you been **ARRESTED** by Christ - By the Risen Lord ?
Has He **Halted you** in your tracks ?
Has He **Changed the direction** of your life ?

Today - we look at that **History Changing Moment**

When Jesus Christ **ARRESTED SAUL** of Tarsus
& eventually made him **PAUL** the Apostle

Today we see that “**Turning Point**” Event
that made **SAUL** - into - **PAUL**

Saul was Traveling down a Dark Road - BENT on his own Plans
Until he was **ARRESTED**, & Saved, by Jesus Christ

Maybe today - **YOU** are **BENT** on Your Own **PLANS**

Maybe today - **YOU** need to be **ARRESTED** by **CHRIST**

Let's Pray

Something had “**flipped a switch**” in the Pharisee named **SAUL**

He had **known** about **Jesus** - & **known** of his **death**
all from his **synagogue** in **Tarsus** - where he was a **leader**

But then - along comes **Stephen** - who begins **debating** the Jews
in **Saul's synagogue** about **Jesus** being the **Messiah**

& **that** - eventually - led to **Stephen's DEATH**
in **many ways**, at the **hand** of **SAUL**

But **Stephen's WITNESS** to Christ - **in his death** -
had **STUCK** in Saul's mind

Stephen's face shining like an **angel**
his **incredible prayer** as the Jews were **stoning** him to death

Stephen looking up & **seeing Jesus welcoming** him home

All that - **seemed** to have made **Saul crazy**

& so he **tried** to **quiet** the **memories** of **Stephens** witness
with as **much rage** & **hate** as he could muster

There was **something** about these **Believers**
They would **NOT** back down - **NOT** for any reason

How could a **Crucified Carpenter** from Galilee produce
such **RESOLVE** - such **PEACE** - in the midst of **persecution**

So **to drive** those **Gnawing Questions** from his mind
Saul turned up the **RAGE** - until he was **out of control** with it

He **started** in **Jerusalem** - **driving** **Christians** into **outlying** areas

& all of **Ch 8** was about **PHILIP** - & the **Supernatural growth**
of the church - - in **Response** to Saul's persecution

& **then** - we **start Ch 9** - with a BIG **BUT** . . .

Acts 9:1 (esv)

1 But Saul (contrasted with the great work of Philip in Ch 8), ***still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord . . .***

AT Robertson says:

“Threatening and slaughter had come to be the very breath that Saul breathed, “like a warhorse who sniffed the smell of battle”

Saul was out of control - **like** a person who **Brutally** over-reacts to **protect** their **Pride** & their **Position**

Many **years** later - standing before **King Agrippa** as a prisoner

Paul said - in Acts 26:9–11 (esv)

9 “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.

11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Saul was on a **Rampage** - But **God** was **not moved** one bit

Not only did God use Saul **IN** his persecution

But God was about to **ARREST** Saul - & instantly **Convert** him **from** **Greatest Persecutor** - to **Greatest Apostle**

& so our **1st Lesson today** is

NO ONE is **EVER** beyond
the **Life Transforming** work of God - **NO ONE**

God can **ARREST** - ANYONE!

Again - Acts 9:1-2 → →

Acts 9:1-2 (esv)

1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

These "**Letters**" were actually "**Extradition Requests**"

Claiming these **Christians** who fled had **committed crimes**
& must be returned to **Jerusalem** to pay the penalty

This required **EXTREME EFFORT** on the part of Saul
to **try to destroy** this movement

Damascus was a **150 mi WALK** - a **6 day** journey
& **so** - this was not just - "***I'll hate them as I go about my life***"

This was a **determined, focused, consuming, personal WAR**
against "**The WAY**", & against Jesus Christ

Notice that phrase "**The WAY**" in **V.2** - ***I love this phrase***
It was used in the **1970's** - & it was used in the **1st Century**

It refers to "**the whole way of life**" of following Jesus
But it's emphasis is really on **THE Way** - as in **THE ONLY WAY**

Jesus Christ is **THE ONLY WAY**
He Is **The Way, The Truth, The Life**

& **no matter** how **MESSED UP** our world gets
With **Relativism**, & **Humanism**, & **Islamism** . . .

Jesus Christ will **ALWAYS** be - **THE WAY** - **The ONLY WAY** !!

Acts 9:3 (esv)

3 Now as he (Saul) went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

For at least **5 days** - Paul had been **Marching** in his **HATE**

THE WAY had expanded to **Damascus**
& **Saul** was **determined** to **stop it** there

Damascus was actually a bit of an "**Oasis**" in the desert
fed by **two rivers** - & known for its **ORCHARDS**

& **now** - **Saul** could **see those Orchards** in the distance
reviewing his final **attack & destroy** plans

& then **BAAM !!** - a light from heaven **FLASHED** around him

Paul describes it in **Acts 26** as - "***more brilliant than the sun***"
Like **Lightning** Striking right next to you

Acts 9:4 (esv)

4 And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Ch 26 says **ALL** the men with Saul - **FELL FLAT** to the ground

& so - as **Saul** is lying there
Face down in the **Dirt** - **Afraid** to even move

Instead of **THUNDER** - He hears a **Voice from Heaven**

The Lord **Emphatically** calls his name - **twice**
which is **meant** to express **deep emotion**

& **Then** - Saul **hears the question** that unravels his entire life -
“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

& **Saul manages** the only **response** he can **muster** up
still **face down** in the dirt . . .

Acts 9:5 (esv)

5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” . . .

The word “**Lord**” here is actually **used** just as **term of respect**

But **Saul** is now “**In the Process**” of finding out **just how much**
the term **LORD** really applies - **to the one** speaking to him

But **now** comes the **RESPONSE** Saul was **SO AFRAID** to hear
the **ONLY RESPONSE** he definitely **DID NOT** want to **hear**

The **RESPONSE** that would suddenly turn
all his worse **FEARS** immediately into **REALITIES**

5 . . . And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

Suddenly - **ALL** those **questions** Saul was **carrying**
about the **followers** of “**The Way**” - were **answered** !!

All the **questions** about why **Jesus’ followers** were so willing
to **Suffer & Die** for Him - were Suddenly **ANSWERED**

That **GNAWING** Feeling that **Saul** was fighting something **bigger**
than a mere **human following** . . .

Probably had him **pounding his head**
into the **Dry, Hard Ground**, of the **Damascus road**

Saul's World - Has Been - **ROCKED** !!
to **the extent** that it will **never** be the **same** again

Saul - has **been ARRESTED** - by **Jesus Christ** !!

Stopped in his tracks - **Face down** in the dirt
Everything he thought he **KNEW** suddenly **disintegrates**

With the words from heaven . . .
"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting . . .

Not only did Saul now **realize WHO** Jesus **WAS**

But he **also realized** - it was the **LORD Himself**
Saul was **Persecuting** - - & **not** just His **followers**

& then - in the **NKJV** right here - are **the words**
"it is hard for you to kick against the goads"

A goad was a **sharp stick** you poke an **ox** with
to get him **moving** in the **direction** you **wanted** him to move

& **Sometimes** an ox would **kick up its heels** at the **goad**
in a **Futile Attempt** to **NOT** go - **where** his Master **wanted** him to go

& **Jesus** says to **Saul** - why are you **KICKING** against the **Goads**
that **I've been using** - to **move you** in the **right** direction

The **impact** Stephen left on you

The **believers** who **refuse** to **deny** Me
& **instead** - chose **suffering**, & even **death**

WHY have you **NOT** let these things **MOVE you**
It is **HARD** to **Kick** against the **Goads**, isn't it ?

And **maybe** that's **YOU** - or **someone** you **know**

Has the **Lord** been "**Goading**" you
gently **prodding** you in the **Right Direction**

& **have you** been **KICKING** against Him

Are you **Fighting** against **the direction**
the Lord has **set** for your life . . . ?

Can I just share something with you

The Lord has a way of getting us "**Face-Down in the Dirt**"
where all our **Kicking & Fighting** him suddenly **disintegrates**

& we're **left pounding** our **head** on the **Dry Damascus road**
& **wondering** how it is we got so - **Face-Down** in the Dirt !!

But guys Listen - **when** we're **there** . . .
Licking Road Dirt, & **Afraid** to even **Look Up**

God is so Merciful - He is So **Gracious**
He does NOT **REMIND** US of our **sins**
He does NOT **RUB** our **face** in it

He simply tells us to **RISE UP**
& **FOLLOW HIM**

THAT'S what it means to **REPENT**
& **that's exactly** what happens here to **Saul**

in V.6 - the NKJV starts with the sentence
6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

This line from the **NKJV** gives us a good idea
of **How WE** should **respond** - when Jesus **ARRESTS US**

FIRST - We should be **trembling and astonished**
That God would **SEEK** us - & that He would **ARREST** us

NEXT - We must simply say **Lord, what do You want me to do?**

& **then** - **Just** as Paul does - for the **rest of his life**
When the Lord **tells us** what to do - - - we **simply DO IT**

Vs.6 in the **ESV** starts with the **Lord's Command** to Saul

Acts 9:6 (esv)

6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.

It's **interesting** - there's **no salvation prayer** here
not even a **verbal confession** of faith from Saul

So - **HOW** do we **know** that Saul was **REALLY SAVED**
that **day** on the **Damascus** Road ??

We **know** - because his **life CHANGED** from that day forward

Saul was **NEVER** the **SAME** Again
he started **Thinking** different & **Acting** different

& guys - **THAT** is **Exactly** how we **KNOW**
IF a person is **Truly Saved** today

The **ONLY way** you can know - if **the Life** of **Jesus Christ**
has **taken over** your **SIN** Life - - **Is if** you are a **CHANGED** Person

Are you **thinking different** ?

Are you **acting different** ?

Are you **feeling different** about the sinful things you used to do?

Are you **desiring** to truly **Change the Direction** of your life
& **Follow God's** plan - **instead** of your **own**?

Then Praise the Lord

The **Life of Jesus** Christ is **taking over** your Old **Sin Life**

& you **can be sure** of this

as Phil 1:6 says

6 . . . he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

What the Lord **STARTS** - He **FINISHES**

All we do is make **sure** - We've been **ARRESTED by Christ**

Have we **surrender our will** to Him

Has He truly **taken over** - as **LORD of our Lives**

& **IF SO** - The He **WILL complete the work** He started

Continuing on . . . **Vs.7** is actually a "**Parenthetical Vs**"

to let us **know** what's **happening** with Saul's men

Acts 9:7 (esv)

7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

At this moment Jesus is calling Saul - alone

But I gotta think SOME of these men had to get SAVED
especially after seeing Saul's life change

but HERE, TODAY - Jesus is ARRESTING SAUL
for a very specific purpose

Sometimes God calls the Masses - Sometimes God calls ONE
& we've seen that right here in our own church

& so - in the next vs
Saul begins to BLINDLY "Follow Jesus" - - LITERALLY

Acts 9:8 (esv)

8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

Saul had said in his RAGE
"*I will Go to Damascus - & I Will FIND those Christians*"

& God said - "*Yes you will Saul
but Not LIKE you think - & Not for the PURPOSE you think*"

How about instead - I break your Stubborn Pride on the way
& have you humbly led into Damascus - - BLIND !!

& instead of you PERSECUTING those Christians
how about if I have them MINISTER to you instead ??

Who says God doesn't have a sense of humor ?

& so God **Blinded Saul** - to get his **complete attention**
& to **give him** a few days with **NO distractions**

Acts 9:9 (esv)

9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Three days - **Alone** with God - with **No Distractions**
as **Saul** is prepared to be **Transformed** into **Paul the Apostle**

But **even though** **God Himself** will **instruct** Paul
Paul still **needed** the **Disciples** to ***“Come Along Side of Him”***

& **that’s what happens** starting in **Vs.10**

Acts 9:10-12 (esv)

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”

11 And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight (coincidental name), and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,

12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.”

We **don’t know much** about **Ananias**

but Acts 22:12 says

12 . . . [he was], a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,

Some say he may have been the leader
of the new Church in Damascus

Church tradition says Ananias became the Bishop of Damascus,
and eventually died a martyrs death

But we know THIS about Ananias . . .

Ananias KNEW of Saul's Reputation
& he KNEW WHY Saul had come to Damascus

& so - I Guess we can understand - when Ananias here
somehow thinks it's a good idea - to Question God's Judgment

Acts 9:13-14 (esv)

*13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.
14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."*

How'd you like to be the guy
who argued with God about Paul the Apostle

Ananias is LUCKY - That he LIVED - to DIE a Martyr's death !!

God is SO Gracious to us - *Isn't He ?*

God doesn't owe Ananias an explanation - but He gives him one

Acts 9:15-16 (esv)

*15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.
16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."*

This just shows **God's IMMEASURABLE GRACE** to us
Even while **He's using us** - in His service

But **the real point** is

God reveals to **Ananias** - His **PLAN** for "***The Greatest Apostle***"

"He is a Chosen Instrument to carry My Name before Gentiles, & Kings, & the Children of Israel"

Notice **God's Plan** for Paul in **Vs.15** - is to:

Carry My Name to **GENTILES, KINGS,** & The Children of **ISRAEL**

& **there's something** very **cool** we can see **here**

ALL that God had **PLANNED** for Paul

He had **already PREPARED** Paul for - **LONG before** He saved him

Paul was raised in a **Wealthy Family,**

So Witnessing to **Kings** ***did not intimidate*** him

Paul had the **best education** in **BOTH GREEK & JEWISH** Culture

His education in **Greek Philosophy**

allowed him to **understand the Gentiles**

& His **Thorough Education** in **Jewish Law**

allowed him to **Completely Understand** the **Children of Israel**

God had been **preparing Paul** his entire life - for **THIS** plan

& **Guys** - **God does** the exact **same thing** with US !!

God has been **preparing YOU** - **for** the Plan He has **for YOU** -

All your life !!

BELIEVE it - **LOOK** for it
& then Actively **JOIN God** in His Plan for your Life

THAT'S what the **Apostle Paul** is about to do
& **THAT - is the Secret to True Fulfillment in this life**

BELIEVE God has a Plan for your Life
LOOK for it
ACTIVELY JOIN Him in His Plan for you !!

But **there's one thing** you have to know . . .

Vs.16 is just as **TRUE** - as **V.15**

16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

IT'S **NOT FAIR** leaving that part out . . .

Romans 8:17 (NLT)

17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

& **Paul** will **CERTAINLY Learn** - How **TRUE** that Vs is !!

In the **mean time** - in **V.17**

Ananias DOES what God has **Called him** to do

Acts 9:17 → →

Acts 9:17 (esv)

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

This had to be an **incredibly MOVING** scene

The Enemy, Saul - had been **Arrested by the Lord**
& **now** he was sitting, **alone**, & **blind**

Ananias knew **people** who had **suffered** under the **hand of Saul**
Women who were now **Widows**, or **Children** now **Orphans**

But now - In **Obedience** to the Lord
all **the ANGER** Ananias had for Saul - just **MELTED AWAY**

& **he entered** the house & **LOVINGLY LAID** his Hands
on **Enemy #1** of the **New Christian Church**

& **Ananias** - whose name means “**God is Gracious**”
spoke words of **Acceptance** & **Restoration** to Saul

“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

He **called** Saul **BROTHER** - & then he **prayed for him** -
for **Return of his sight** - & for the **Filling of the Holy Spirit**

& then in Acts 9:18 we read (esv)

18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

What a picture that must've been

For the **Pharisee of Pharisee's** to be **BAPTIZED**
in the Name of the **Father**, the **SON**, AND the **Holy Spirit**

After the **SCALES** falling from his **eyes** . . .

I once was Lost . . . But Now I'm Found
I was Blind . . . But now I See

THIS - was **AMAZING GRACE** Poured Out on **Saul the Persecutor**

& that **SAME Amazing Grace** is available **TO US** - **TODAY**

No matter who you **ARE**
No matter what you've **DONE** or where you've **BEEN**

Jesus Christ wants to **ARREST** you - **TODAY**

He wants to **STOP you** in your tracks - **TURN** your Life Around
& **PUT YOU** on **HIS Path**

I don't know **WHERE** you're headed
I don't know **WHAT'S** Driving you

But **I know** that **JESUS** - wants to **ARREST** YOU
& **Transform** you life - **FOREVER**

Let's Pray