

Putting Feet to Your Faith

Acts 9:1-20

- Up to this point the most prominent thing to happen to the church was the coming of the Spirit upon the believers at Pentecost, for it empowered them to display boldness and courage in order to spill out into the streets preaching and teaching the gospel along with performing miracles among the masses. This caused an explosion of numerical growth as the number of people joining the church swelled into the thousands within a matter of months.
- Now another event is about to occur that is going to forever shape the direction of church history and that is the inclusion and conversion of the Gentiles into the church. There has always been proselytes from other nations converting to Judaism over the centuries, but those conversions were seen as the exception but not the norm, well this chapter is going to set the stage for all that to change as people of all races, color, culture, and background to be accepted without designation or special identification like the court of the gentiles in the temple.

V1-20

- **V1-2** we were introduced to Saul during the murder of Stephen back in **Ch 7** when he was consenting to the stoning by being the lookout for the perpetrators of the crime. Now we see he's become the leading persecutor of the faith going as far as to ask for traveling papers to pursue followers of the Jesus even into foreign territory and bring them back for trial, sentencing or execution, and it didn't matter if they were man, woman, or child > **Acts 8:3**.
- Notice the picture that is painted of this man "Saul" **Acts 8:3** says he was wreaking havoc upon the church, and now he's still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. This meant he was an angry, violent, who was driven by his belief that he was absolutely right in what he was doing being convinced of his own righteousness. But as we'll see even if we're not looking for the Lord the Lord is certainly seeking us and He knows exactly where to find us.
- **V3-5** he is looking for those who are called "**the Way**" which meant that Christianity is more than a belief or a set of opinions and rules of doctrines or teachings, it is your life > **Col 3:1-4**. Saul thinks he is pursuing them but all the while God is pursuing him and catches him on the road to Damascus, and it starts with a light that shined all around him that came from heaven. Just to show how determined Saul was to catch Christians Damascus was approximately **200** miles from Jerusalem which was about a **6-7** day journey and the only thing that could stop him from accomplishing his mission was a bolt of light that came from heaven knocking him down.
- For some all it takes is a burning bush like Moses, others may need to be knocked off their feet before they hear the voice of God, and that's exactly what happened to Saul of Tarsus. In **Acts 26:13-14** were told that the other men with him also saw the light, heard the voice and went to the ground but later on Saul said only he actually saw the Lord, as only he had eyes to see.

- What's interesting is Jesus didn't complicate things, he just asks him a simple question " **Saul why do you persecute Me**" this shows that all attacks against the Lord's people is seen as an attack against Him, and He takes all attacks personally. So remember that when you're fighting against your brother or sister lest you find yourself attacking the Lord not the person. Also it shows how the Lord will reason with us if we were willing to listen > **Is 1:18-20**. Saul doesn't know who it is that is speaking to him, until the Lord tells him, this is when Saul discovers that he is a lost sinner that is in danger of God's judgment and spending an eternity in the lake of fire.
- All this time he thought he was serving God when in reality he was attacking the Messiah, being a Rabbi Saul was taught that in order for the Messiah to come back then all the Jews had to obey the Law of Moses so he was radical in his commitment and belief that he was doing the fight thing > **1Tim 1:12-13**- what he did he did in ignorance, but now his spiritual blindness is removed. **V6-9** the two most important questions a person can and must ask, we see in this chapter, 1st "**Who are you Lord**" 2nd "**What would you have me to do**".
- Saul is afraid, shook up, and blind, it's ironic that when Saul could physically see he still was spiritually blind, now that he is on the path to spiritually seeing he's now physically blind. Despite all the uncertainty Saul listens and for three days doesn't speak, eat or drink anything. For him to become humble like this think about what the Lord said about him, go back to **V5** where it said "**it's hard for him to kick against the goads**" a goad was a sharp stick used to get an ox to obey and go in the right direction, and the only way he would is to experience this pain, but sometimes instead of obeying the ox would kick against the goad causing it more pain.
- In this Saul is the ox and Jesus the farmer, Saul is stubborn and determined to do things his way, and although he's extremely head strong he's still seen as valuable and potentially useful. So Jesus takes something sharp and painful to use in order to get him to go in the right direction, and if we continue to be stubborn it causes us more pain until we submit and stop trying to pull the Lord in the direction we want to go in and start plowing the fields He wants us in. **V10-14** God is working in both directions as He's spoken to a man named Ananias who only knows Saul as a threat and not a disciple, so he asks does the Lord really know who this man is?
- **V15-16** But the lord tells Ananias that Saul is a chosen vessel and that he will be His messenger to the gentiles, royalty, and the Jews. This again proves **Is 55:8-9** God ways are not are ways for they are higher than us and we won't always understand them. Also He tells Ananias that Saul will suffer much for the call that he has, many love to claim the glory but try to avoid the cost. **V17-20** Ananias to his credit goes on his way and lays hands on Saul, he gets saved, receives the filling of the Holy Spirit, the scales fall from his eyes, he arises, was baptized, ate, fellowshipped, became strengthened, and immediately preached that Jesus is the Son of God wow!