

“A God Encounter”

Part 4

Get Your Hopes Up

Acts 9

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” ⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” ⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.” ¹³ “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” ¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

Ephesians 3

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that **through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs** together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

A God Encounter Reveals Christ

Galatians 1

11 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me

- Paul says I was thinking wrong... I was saying wrong... I was doing wrong...
- This Gospel that I now preach was not given to me by man, or organization... This Gospel was given to me from God...
- Paul's encounter with God revealed the thing he was fighting against he was suppose to be fighting for...

Acts 9

3 As Saul neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,"...

- Notice the Lord says "Saul, why do you persecute me?"
- Saul was actively persecuting the church...
- Jesus says you are persecuting me...
- Notice Jesus takes personal the way Saul was treating the Church...
- This includes not only his actions against them...
- But also the way he spoke of them...
- The way he plotted against them...
- Jesus says when you treat my church that way, you treat me that way...

Saul's encounter with God Revealed that he was fighting against God because he was fighting against God's people... God's Property... Christ's own Body...

A God Encounter Redirects

Galatians 1

22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.
23 They only heard the report: **“The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”** 24 And they praised God because of me.

Ephesians 3

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery...

- Paul’s zeal has be redirected...
- Notice God uses Paul’s Zeal...
- The Lord Jesus himself chooses Paul...
- Paul is tooled with education...
- He is tooled with Dedication
- He is tooled with Zeal...
- How many of us before Christ were Zealous for other things?
- That Zeal & Dedication that was in Saul used against the Lord is now used for the Lord...
- Don’t turn off your zeal my friend...
- Your Zeal is useful for the Kingdom of God...
- Allow Him to Redirect that Zeal for God...

A God Encounter is for the Redeemed

In Ephesians 3

Paul speaks of a Mystery

Vs 3-6 Paul says:

Vs. 3 “the Mystery was made known to me by **revelation.**” Vs. 4 “By reading this you will be able to understand my insight in to the **mystery of Christ.**” Vs. 5 “It has ben revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.” Vs. 6 “The Mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and **sharers together in the promise** of Christ Jesus.”

Vs. 7 “I became a **servant (minister)** of the gospel by the **gift** of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.”

Vs. 8 “Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this **grace** given me: **to preach** to the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches of Christ,**”

- "**preach**" literally means "to announce good news."

- **The unsearchable riches of Christ:** The mystery is like great **riches** for the Gentiles. They can now come before God in a standing they could only dream of before.

Unsearchable Riches meaning: Beyond comprehension

Vs. 10 “His intent was that now, **through the Church,** the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers (principalities) and authorities (powers) in the heavenly realms”

- This explains *how* God will reveal His wisdom, and to *whom* He reveals it. He will reveal it *by* His work in **the church,** to angelic beings who look on waiting to see what God is doing.

This means that angelic beings are *interested* and *instructed* by the lives of Christians.

This is why the conduct of the church is so important: because angelic and demonic beings are looking on, and God's intent is to teach them through us.

1 Peter 1:10-12 says, Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you *searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing... Even angels long to look into these things.*