

From Enemy to Family—Acts 9:10-19—12/7/25
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Open your Bibles to Acts 9 as we return to our study in this history of Jesus' unstoppable supremacy to spread His name to the nations.

Acts 9 advances that theme as He transformed His chief enemy Saul into His chief witness to the Gentiles as the Apostle Paul.

Let's read that whole account in Acts 9:1-31. [READ]

We noted last time how this unique conversion story illustrates vital truths related to the Gospel that have innumerable applications for us.

The appearances of the Risen Christ & divine messages in that transitional phase of history were unique & yet the same power that changed Saul is alive today saving souls around the world.

We said the wonder of Saul's story is that it gives hope for anyone.

We were reminded of that in verses 1-9 as we learned from what Saul was, from who Jesus is, & from what salvation does.

Then as we pick up in verse 10 today, we meet the man Jesus used to lead Saul out of his former life into a new family & path.

As we ponder how Jesus worked, we can be amazed by His supremacy & purposes in both the majestic & the mundane.

And though Jesus uniquely appeared to Saul to call him as an Apostle, Jesus' character & attributes remain the same.

So although the confirming role of Apostleship has ceased, we know that Jesus' promise to build His church has not ceased.

Jesus is still the One name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved, as Acts 4:12 says.

Jesus is still the Name that we will never stop speaking even if authorities threaten or punish us for doing so.

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins in His name must be proclaimed among the nations & He will not be stopped.

Even if we doubt that He can save some people, we can keep preaching Jesus & praying & watch Him work.

We can have hope for the lost in Jesus & we can even forgive those who turn from sin to faith in Him.

Those are some of the truths I pray we are amazed by in Acts 9:10-19 as we note 3 reasons to marvel at Jesus this morning.

Jesus is the main initiator & actor in the narrative & we want to marvel at His supremacy as we see His work with Saul.

Jesus completely changed Saul's plans for time in Damascus.

Jesus humbled Saul & yet He did not give Saul what he deserved.

Rather, Jesus showed Saul grace & gave commands to follow.

And Saul obeyed & spent 3 days fasting as he prayed & surrendered himself to Jesus as the Risen Lord & Christ.

Then read verses 10-12 to see what happened next. [READ]

As a 1st reason to marvel at Jesus to note this morning—point #1—be amazed by Jesus' specific preparations.

We can be amazed at Jesus' specific preparations to walk Saul from former enemy to be welcomed as family.

Jesus prepared the way for Saul in many details that included this disciple in Damascus named Ananias, (not the same one as Acts 5).

Since verse 13 says he had heard from those in Jerusalem, Ananias was likely not from Jerusalem.

He was likely from Damascus, possibly as a church leader there.

Luke refers to him as a disciple, which is another name for a Christian as a learner & follower of Jesus.

Acts 22:12 adds that he was *a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived there.*

So Ananias was known as faithful, but was not an Apostle or anyone that we hear more about in the rest of the NT.

Yet Jesus chose him for the risky privilege of serving Saul.

He's like many other Christians God uses to lead others to Jesus & you never know their name or much about them.

But Jesus knows it all & He's the Lord who appeared here to Ananias.

Jesus knew Ananias before & had prepared Ananias for this.

Ananias would show what his name meant, that *Yahweh is gracious*.

The Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision as He had Abraham & Samuel who responded similarly (Genesis 22; 1 Samuel 3).

When Ananias heard his name in this vision, he recognized the Lord & presented himself as ready to listen.

We know Jesus was the Lord here because Ananias referred to this Lord's saints & name in verses 13-14 & Jesus spoke of Saul's ministry for His name in verses 15-16.

So it was the Lord Jesus who issued a command to get up & go to this specific street in this specific house to minister to a specific man.

Ananias knew this main east-west street in Damascus that was called Straight as distinct from smaller more circuitous streets.

He must have known of this man Judas to whose house he was to go.

And he certainly knew of this man named Saul from Tarsus.

But Jesus had updated information that Saul was humbled & praying.

It's possible Jesus shared more than Luke reported here.

He must have mentioned Saul becoming blind because verse 12 mentions regaining his sight.

The important part that Luke recorded is that Saul had seen a man named Ananias come in & lay his hands on him.

Jesus gave Ananias those specifics of what He had revealed to Saul.

Since Saul was blind, he had seen all that in a vision during those three days when he was fasting & praying.

So stop—don't pass over how detailed the information Jesus gave was.

It's not surprising because we know He is God—but think of it.

Jesus prepared Saul for precisely where to go & who would come & what would happen & how that would answer his prayers.

And Jesus also prepared Ananias with exactly where to go & who would be there & what he would do & what would result.

Look—this was not some crazy *Mission Impossible* movie script that requires you to suspend all reason to enjoy the story.

This was the Lord of history who knows all & is working in every detail of every life with exact precision.

That's who Jesus was then & that's still who Jesus is now.

Listen—Jesus may not give divine updates on what He's doing on the city's main east-west street, but He's the same God.

He's still the same Ruler in His Providence even though we are not aware of the billions of details He's orchestrating in our lives daily.

Asa Proverbs 21:1 says: *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Yahweh; He turns it where He wishes.*

We don't need Him to reveal specifics of His plans to trust that He is supreme over all existence & wisely leading our paths for His glory.

We can walk by faith, which means not by sight, not by having all our questions answered about what God is doing & why.

We can walk by faith in His character & promises.

And that's an engaged faith, not an apathetic fatalism.

For example, as 2nd Corinthians 1 says, we can trust He gives comfort in our afflictions to prepare us to comfort others in their afflictions.

So we can trust such general promises even when we don't know the specifics of what He's doing.

Beyond that, 2nd Corinthians 4:17 says *momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.*

So we can trust Him for gracious heavenly rewards in glory.

Just as Ananias was to trust & obey Jesus' specific preparations for him, so we must trust & obey His general commands in Scripture.

And we can have hope even when we don't understand what He's doing or we don't like what obedience may look like.

Ananias certainly had questions as we read in verses 13-14. [READ]

Ananias was not refusing to obey or running from obedience.

He merely had questions because this sounded unsafe if this was the same Saul of Tarsus that he had heard was coming to Damascus.

He addressed Jesus as Lord & shared his concern for Jesus' own people, His separated ones, set apart as holy to God.

That term *saints* refers to all believers & is used for the first time in Acts here & later became a frequent description in Paul's writings.

Ananias had heard from many about Saul's voluminous evil that was targeted at Jesus' saints in Jerusalem.

And Ananias had heard that he was now a target because Saul had authority from the chief priests to persecute Christians in Damascus.

Ananias also referred to Christians as all who call on Jesus' name, a phrase Peter quoted from Joel 2:32 in his first sermon.

All who call on the name of Jesus as Lord will be saved.

Since Ananias was united with Jesus, he was concerned of walking straight into the enemy's dangerous trap.

He had to wonder if Jesus was asking him to be a martyr like Stephen.

Read verses 15-16 to see Jesus repeat His command but also explain His plan. [READ]

As we make applications of this narrative, we said 1st to be amazed by Jesus' specific preparations.

2ndly note that we can be amazed by Jesus' sovereign plans.

Response #2 is that we can be amazed by Jesus' sovereign plans.

And kids—sovereign means supreme rule with no one higher.

It means Jesus freely does whatever He planned & nothing stops Him.

Verses 13-16 show the marvelous transformation of Saul from a violent aggressor to a peaceful preacher.

Verses 13-14 record Ananias's fears of Saul's great evil, but verses 15-16 predict Jesus' plans for Saul's great good.

To answer Ananias's concern, Jesus shared His plans for Saul.

Saul was His chosen instrument, His elect vessel, a tool selected to carry His name, to bear the weight of testifying to Jesus.

That centered on preaching Jesus from OT Scripture in the time when the NT was being written.

And Jesus named three audiences before whom Saul would testify.

First, he mentioned the Gentiles & grouped kings with that.

That makes sense because Saul became the Apostle to the Gentiles as he said in Romans 1:5 & 11:13 & 15:16 & 1st Timothy 2:7.

That calling was by Jesus Christ & not from any man as he said in Galatians 1:1; 2:7-9.

Acts 22:14–15 says Ananias told him that *'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.'*

So the man who traveled to oppose the spread of Jesus' name would become the lead witness to spread Jesus' name because Jesus is unstoppable.

And Saul would later appear before leaders like King Agrippa in Acts 25-26 & possibly Caesar as 2nd Timothy 4:15-17 may imply.

So NT history records how Jesus' words here were fulfilled.

Yet Saul generally began his outreach in synagogues as God had sent Jesus first to the Jews, as he noted in Romans 1:16.

So Jesus mentioned the sons of Israel as a third audience because Saul would be instrumental in bringing Jews & Gentiles together in the church.

Then verse 16 adds suffering as expected for all who follow Jesus.

Ananias could take heart because this man who had persecuted Jesus' people had become one who would suffer for Jesus.

Jesus would show Saul that necessity that was later recounted in passages like 1st Corinthians 4:9-13 & 2nd Corinthians 11:23-29.

Saul would become like all Christians who know the world will hate us like Jesus warned in John 15:18-21.

As Philippians 1:29 says: *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*

Now stop here & let's consider why Acts 9 is in the Bible.

When we see these specific preparations & sovereign plans for Saul, we must recall that the Holy Spirit included this in Acts so that we would know about him as this pivotal figure in the NT era.

Saul became the Apostle Paul and Luke took pains to point out the marvelous divine intervention & direction in his life.

That's important because of the New Testament Scriptures written by Paul and the ministry God did through Paul.

The preaching & writing of Paul are partly confirmed by God's supernatural calling of him that is recorded in Acts 9.

So being amazed by Jesus' specific preparations & sovereign plans for Saul is supremely significant in this section.

Yet we can also make applications in our lives of the ways Jesus has prepared us & how He plans & works to use us.

Saul's story reminds us that we do not know the future, that we are not in control of how each story unfolds.

But Jesus knows what He's doing & our role is to trust Him & obey the sufficient revelation He's given.

Part of that is carrying the name of Jesus to others as Saul did.

We bear Jesus' name as His church representing Him now.

And if we knew all God was doing, we would appreciate His wisdom.

But if we did know, we wouldn't be required to walk by faith & we'd foolishly think we can trust ourselves.

So instead, He designed for us to trust Him & His sovereign plans.

Then as we look back, we can be amazed at what He's done.

And we'll have eternity to grow in amazement & praise of Him.

Yet it's helpful on Thanksgiving & at a year's end & each day & week, to stop & marvel at Jesus' sovereign plans for you.

Then we can realize that we always have reason to be thankful.

We can be thankful our God really is in control & has prepared us for what we face & uses it for what He has planned for us.

We can rest & rejoice even though we can't read Providence in the present nor predict the details of our future.

He doesn't reveal that, but we can trust Him in the unknown.

And then later we can look back at the past and see the hand of God as He has orchestrated His good preparations & plans.

As we do so, we can be encouraged to trust Him further.

We can be assured that nothing is without purpose in His goodness.

We can be amazed (1) by Jesus' specific preparations & (2) by Jesus' sovereign plans, & then 3rdly, by Jesus' spiritual provisions—#3, be amazed by Jesus' spiritual provisions.

What I find amazing in verses 17-19 is that after all the unique ways Jesus worked in Saul's life, what He gave him next was simple.

What Jesus gave Saul next was simply a new family & fellowship in the local church at Damascus.

After all that, the spiritual provision Saul needed was the local church, the simple fellowship and encouragement of fellow saints.

Read verses 17-19 that walk him toward that. [READ]

Ananias obeyed—he went out of his own house to Judas's house on Straight Street & entered & must have laid his hands on Saul first.

Since Saul could not see him, laying hands on him was a way to reach out & identify with him.

Ananias called him *Brother Saul* because the enemy was now family.

Those words pointed to Saul's faith in Jesus as Lord that he had expressed in obedience & fasting & prayer.

Though Jesus' followers should have hated & wanted revenge on Saul, Ananias gave a welcome of forgiveness.

Ananias had trusted Jesus' words & obeyed in faith.

Saul may have been asking Jesus in prayer how any of Jesus' followers could ever welcome him & Ananias was the answer.

Forgiveness was real, both with Jesus & with His people.

Ananias explained that the Lord had sent him.

And then he clarified that the Lord was Jesus who appeared to Saul on the road by which he arrived there.

Jesus had done this for the purpose of restoring Saul's sight, signaling His answer to Saul's prayers.

The other purpose was for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Since Saul had already been humbled to obey Jesus & seek Him in prayer, it's likely that he had already received the Holy Spirit.

So this was not the indwelling presence of the Spirit, but the control or filling for what Jesus had planned for him.

Jesus provided the Holy Spirit to empower Saul for the ministry ahead.

Then Saul's blindness was healed immediately as thin, flaky pieces of skin like fish scales fell from his eyes.

Then Acts 22:16 says Ananias said to Saul, *Now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized & wash your sins away, calling on his name.*

So Saul's obedience to identify with Jesus in baptism was also immediate before he ended his fast & was strengthened.

Then he joined in fellowship with the disciples in Damascus.

So that's how Jesus provided for Saul's spiritual needs by welcoming him into the local family of God in Christ.

He gave Saul the Spirit & He gave partnership with Jesus' followers.

Those *several* days are indefinite, meaning some number that was likely not a few days.

Saul was nourished spiritually with fellowship & prayer & study of the OT Scriptures & their fulfillments in Jesus.

And the fruit of Saul's new life was evident as he now loved other Christians as Jesus said in John 13:34-35.

Saul loved followers of Jesus & they accepted & loved him.

Though Jesus Himself had personally appeared to Saul to save & call him to apostolic ministry, Saul still needed the church.

Jesus had not saved Saul for solo testimony—he was not alone.

Saul had been brought from being an enemy to being family.

Stop & let that drastic change of relationship amaze you this morning.

Let Jesus' design to build His church amaze you as He adds one enemy outsider after another into His new community.

If you are His enemy, then surrender to this Sovereign Lord today & trust Him to save you from your sins & welcome you into His family.

And be amazed by Jesus' spiritual provisions for Saul & for us.

Jesus gives us new life & empowers us to serve by His Spirit.

Jesus saves us to bring us into His family, into the fellowship of disciples studying under the same Lord & His Word.

Jesus provided that for Saul even though it would have been unnatural & undesirable for Christians to welcome this former persecutor.

But when Jesus saves someone, He makes them new inside & adopts them into His family as a new brother or sister.

That's one reason we observe the Lord's Table together & not alone.

We join in common confession that we are all sinners who need salvation in Him alone.

We remember Him because He is what really matters forever.

We have no other hope—He is our song, our pleasure, & our proclamation & we draw near to Him together.

We want our relationships to model His love for us because we know He gave Himself for us.

He was fully God & fully man who became the Mediator between God & men & the Substitute sacrificed in our place.

We honor Him as we take the bread representing His body & the cup representing His blood as He poured out His life to atone for our sins.

We praise Him for death & resurrection victory & we proclaim that He is coming again.

If you know Jesus as Lord & Savior, we welcome you to join us in remembering Him now in the Lord's Supper.

And if you do not know Him, we urge you to seek Him & watch this ceremony & pray for a heart to know Him.

Now let's all pray & seek Him on our own quietly & then I'll lead us in prayer as we come to the ceremony of communion.