

## Acts 9 – The Power of God in Saving a Sinful Soul 使徒行传 9 章 — “神拯救罪恶灵魂的大能”

### \*\*INTRO

#### *Introductory Illustration*

- Think of *ONE PERSON* whom you perceive to be a notorious sinner; *could God save them?*
- It was the early 1800's, he was a habitual and a notorious sinner. He was the Scottish Robert Flockhart. He sinned much. In satan's service he often exposed himself to disgrace, danger and even death itself.
  - He was one given much to cursing and drinking alcohol. They would drink so much thinking it would cure their “aching heads”. *They would get so much alcohol and forget anything that happened that day.*
  - I repaid all God's goodness to me with ingratitude, and went on in my trespasses adding sin to sin; drunkenness unto thirst. One unclean and base action to another and I polluted both soul and body. *he wrote of himself: I was blind, stupid and ignorant.*
- **But get this: while a soldier, enlisted in the army in India**, he was hospitalized. While on the bed, he finished one book & by the remarkable providence of God another was sitting nearby which he began to read: *Alleine's Alarm!* God used that to break him of his sin and consider the worth of his immortal soul!
  - *IS God powerful to save a really sinful soul? A wicked wretch? A profane monster? A blasphemous aggressor? A callous worldling? Can God really save?*
- Reminds me of some well-known poetic lines:
  - “**Man of Sorrows** what a name, for the Son of God who came RUINED sinners to reclaim HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOR!
  - **Alas and did** my Savior bleed and did my Sovereign Die, would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?
  - **Upon a life I did not live**, upon a death I did not die, Another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity.
  - **What wondrous love** is this O my soul, O my soul, what wondrous love is this that caused the LORD of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

#### *Background to Acts 9*

- **In Acts, Luke** gives this account of the birth, growth, expansion, and maturity of the Christian church.
- In chapters 8-12—where we currently are—he is showing how the Gospel is spreading **beyond** the bounds of Jerusalem—to cities far and wide and to people groups far and wide.
  - Luke is going to throw open the door to missionary endeavors with the conversions of two people: Saul of Tarsus & Cornelius the Gentile Centurion. **Here, we see Saul!**

**THESIS — from this text I want to show you the POWER OF GOD in saving a sinful soul.**

❖ as if you saw God wipe the **oceans dry**; or part a **Red-Sea**, or **create light** out of darkness by his spoken Word. *Behold the **glorious & sovereign & unstoppable** power of God!*

### **POWER OF GOD SEEN ...**

1. in **saving** a man (1-9)
2. in **changing** a man (10-16)
3. in empowering/**filling** a man (17-18)
4. in **using** a man (19-31)

## **I. IN SAVING A MAN (1-9)**

- A. This account puts in bright yellow highlighting: **the complete & utter work of GOD!**
- B. Note his v.1 - Saul's...
  1. **passion** - breathing threats [ “WILD and FEROCIOUS BEAST”]
  2. precision - against the disciples of the Lord
  3. mission - to go to Damascus [150 miles away; a week journey; “mission!”]
  4. intention - to bring them bound, imprison/kill them; > He's like an wild animal ravaging a farm!
- C. v.1 -2 - if he found ANY belonging to the “way” — both men and women - he might bring them bound to Jerusalem
- D. the way = John 14:6 (Acts 18:25; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)
- E. v.3 - he was approaching Damascus — suddenly a LIGHT FROM HEAVEN FLASHED AROUND HIM  
Jesus appeared to Paul - 1 Cor 15.8
- F.v.4 - first impulse was to FALL TO THE GROUND >> he heard a voice  
**This is What God does when he grabs a man (v4)**
  1. Summons Him by Name
  2. Shows Him His great Sin
  3. Reveals the Ultimate One sinned against (“Me”)
  4. Shows His own identity - Jesus (22:8 - Jesus the Nazarene)
  5. Tells Him What He Must Do
- G. **V.8- he could NOT see; how amazingly ironic!**  
he was LED by the hand  
he was brought into Damascus.  
> the proud man was now a HUMBLED man.  
> the persecuting man was now a seized man.  
> the angry blasphemer was now a humbled servant.
- H. “The story of Saul’s spiritual transformation ought to remind us never to write anyone off as being beyond the saving love of Christ” (Hughes, 127).
  1. It reminds me of 1 Cor 1:30 - ‘but by His doing...’

## **II. IN CHANGING A MAN (10-16)**

- A. Like the movie camera zooms out -- not only Saul, but also *Ananias* [Jewish name: Grace]
  1. V.11 - go to the street (note the specific, unmistakable, clear, lucid directions!) (11-12)

2. V.12 - you'll know him: **he is praying** (no doubt: fasting, praying, seeking God!)
    - a) Maybe Paul could relate to another Pharisee who went to the Temple to pray -- and he acknowledge that he fasted 2x a week (Luke 18). But here Saul is changed in that he prays, he fasts, he understands the **fatherhood of God**. (Gal 1:15 & Phil 3:7-10!) -- O God works to change this Saul. From dead sinner to devoted saint!
  3. V.13 - an honest hesitation -- **no doubt!**
  4. V.15 - God's response -- Go! God is clearly working!
    - a) V.17 - \*note simple obedience (small > with big results!) -- **small obedience!** Mark it: even when it seems contrary to reason, foolish in the eyes of others, opposite of innate feelings/sensibilities -- always follow God's Word. **Obey Scripture & truth!**
    - b) Has God saved you? & you have access to God (Heb 10:19-22); pray! Heb 4.14-16.
- B. Charles Wesley** wrote these words in 1738 in his hymn—*And Can it Be?*— which **characterize** every single one of us who have experienced this **new birth**, this **regeneration**, this **saving work** of the Holy Spirit:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
Amazing love, how can it be? That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

### III. IN FILLING/EQUIPPING A MAN (17-18)

- A. Said: “Brother Saul” -- imagine the emotion & tenderness & affection. First words to Saul!
  1. You will see (physical sight!)
  2. You will be filled with the Spirit
    - a) We understand that God's people are baptized into Christ into one body by the sovereign working of the Spirit of God who effectually draws us at the instant of salvation.
    - b) But we also know that we must *continually be filled* with the Spirit -- walk in the Spirit. We must be filled/controlled by/walking in the Spirit (Acts 13.52; Eph 5.18)
    - c) O how foolish to attempt any Christian service *apart from the Spirit's help!*
- B. v.18 - he regained his sight, he got up & he was baptized —> took food and was strengthened.
  1. God is doing a work in filling, equipping, strengthening His man for ministry!
  2. Reminds me of when Knox came to Geneva and met John Calvin. Calvin described Knox as a "brother ... laboring energetically for the faith." **that's what happened to Saul**. He was now a brother -- *laboring energetically for THE faith*.

### IV. IN USING A MAN (19-31)

- A. v.19 - amazing! He went to persecute but now he's staying with believers.
  1. He went to accuse, but now he's staying with them.
  2. He went to chain & imprison — but now he's fellowshipping with them.
- B. v.20 - note the following...

1. the **MOMENT** - immediately -- the work of grace immediately wants to obey/serve Christ!
  2. the **PROCLAMATION** - he proclaimed Jesus [ἐκήρυσσεν]
  3. the **PLACE** - in the synagogues
  4. the **MESSAGE** - Jesus is the Son of God [ἐκήρυσσεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ] - specific
- C. v.22 - Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus
1. **WHY?** Because he kept **PROVING** that this Jesus is the Christ (=Messiah)
- D. v.23-24 - Saul came to put believers to death; but now the citizens there want to put HIM to death
1. he was **BOLD**
  2. he was **STRENGTHENED**
  3. he was **WANTED**
  4. he was **FLEEING** (reminds us of 2 Cor 11:32-33!) wow! What a fugitive on the run!
  5. he was **UNSTOPPABLE**
- E. Reminds me of David Paul -- a hindu priest of 37 villages in India. Persecuted & violently beat Christians. He went on many hindu pilgrimages & told Christians that Jesus is for dogs & lowly people. But God saved him and now he's gone back to those 37 villages and has led many to faith! He buys TV program airtime and puts the gospel on TV. He has started 2 churches in those villages as well! Wow! What a proclaimer of Christ!
- F.V.26 - he tries to join w/ the believers > but they're afraid! -- but speaks boldly (vv27-28)
1. Gal 1.21-24 - he goes to preach (Tarsus is city in Cilicia); all glorifying God!!
- G. V.31 - but the church has 5 features: peace, built up, fearing God, comforted, multiplying!
1. Never underestimate the power of God to take an unholy man & make him holy -- all by sovereign grace & everlasting mercy!

## CONCL-

### *Concluding Illustration*

- We began with Robert Flockhart. Remember he was converted in India, while a soldier in the army. He had an insatiable hunger for souls. This ignited him with a love for testifying of Christ. So he was a fearless force for Christ -- a preacher of the gospel!
  - Compassion to the souls of men drove me to the streets and lanes of my native city, to plead with sinners, and persuade them to come to Jesus
  - In my preaching I dwelt upon death and its consequences, the everlasting punishment that awaited ungodly and impenitent sinners, and the everlasting weight of glory that was laid up for the righteous.
  - Each night after work he would speak the gospel & he longed for the power of God to save souls -- just as it had saved his soul!
  - "The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost."  
Spurgeon said: "Doubt not the statement, for the man, Saul, is the evidence of it. He who saved Paul can save you: yea, he is willing now to display his power upon you.!"