

C 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest² 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?"

AC 9:5 "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."

AC 9:7 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.

AC 9:10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

AC 9:11 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."

AC 9:13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

AC 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

AC 9:17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

A Three point sermon

Introduction.

Paul had a dramatic event, a dramatic conversion. We look at this story and think wow, I wish that happened to me. Well, one thing that was impressed on me during the week was that **it did happen to me.**

No not the voice from the sky and the going blind but the inside stuff. What happen to Saul who became Paul actually happened to me.

Same thing.

Sins dealt with, me forgiven, a place in eternity, a relationship with the Almighty God, and the list goes on.

It happened to me. I am forgiven, set free, part of God's family, on my way to heaven, along with Saul who became Paul, although he has beaten me to the heaven bit.

We must be careful not to place one relationship to God above another. Your relationship to God is as important as mine, there is no distinction, but there are lots of ways that God has communicated to lots of people, so that they can know God.

There are some things in Saul who became Paul's story for us though.

1. Do as God says.

I noticed an interesting thing here. **It doesn't say Saul who became Paul repented,** or anything like that does it. We assume he did. But it doesn't say it. What he did do was exactly as Jesus said.

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He went. Now you could say he had very little choice, after all he was blinded. But that was a sought of confirmation that Jesus was serious about all this. Obedience is something that we don't talk about much anymore. I looked at the Koorong catalogue while was down there the other day and put a search on for obedience and found nothing. Lots of stuff about finding our spiritual gifts, or being a successful christian, some tings on how to lead worship or how to preach better, but nothing on obedience. Well there probably is but it isn't in that category under the subject heading of obedience.

Is obedience unpopular? Probably. It probably isn't really very marketable. But obedience is one of the most talked about things in the bible and Saul who became Paul is a great example.

If it happened to you, how would you react? Probably the same way – if something that spectacular happened. Now, the obedience factor is the same for us as it was for Saul who became Paul, when God says we are expected to do what He says. Sometimes I think we assume God's forgiveness – so we don't obey, or we twist it a bit so in our minds it is a kind of nearly obeying. Or we explain it away. Let's be serious. Obedience is doing what God says. We need to take Saul who became Paul's example.

⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

He didn't do anything else but exactly what God said. He didn't eat, or drink, or anything but be in the city. Call it exact obedience, maybe he was too scared in case he did something wrong. He did exactly what Jesus says. That is our example, exactly what Jesus says.

2. He needed help.

AC 9:10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

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Paul did what he was told, and God used Ananias to help. We are not solo christians, we are part of a community. It's called church. Ananias didn't want this job, again – He obeyed God. We need assistance in our christian lives. That's why we have church gatherings, like this, youth group, bible studies because we need help. Part of help is how we react to it.

My grandfather, my mum's dad, he was a train driver. He said this to me one day "Advice is no good unless it is useable. Listen to it, if it is useable take it, if not put it on a shelf, it may be useful later."

Help in our christian life is like that, some of the stuff I say from up here may not be useful at the moment, but it might be later on, so listen up, stuff in bible study or your daily bible readings may not seem to hit the spot now but you might need it later. But one thing is that when you need help – you know where to go. To God – He will provide. He provided Ananias for Paul. Who is he going to provide when you need it?

3. He did what was next.

18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. What was next for Saul who became Paul? Well he thought Baptism was next . Why? In his perception that was the next step of obedience. Jesus did it, It is expressed as the outward sign of accepting Jesus earlier in Acts. Paul did it.

IS that next for you? Some haven't been baptised, is that what God is asking of you next? If you have been Baptised, what is next? Maybe what is next is proclaiming Jesus. Like the following step after baptism for Saul who became Paul.

20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. 21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" 22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul went to where he had an audience. Remember he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the christians. He was a Pharisee, a teacher in the Jewish religion, so he was respected at the synagogue. He had an audience.

The danger is that we try and jump ahead and skip the steps. If we jump too many steps we trip over. Would Saul who became Paul have had the same impact if he hadn't been baptised? I don't know, but I do know that was the next step for him, he didn't jump the steps.

Some people would say that after baptism God gives you your ministry. Yeh, sometimes, if that is the next step, but remember who built the steps. God. Why? For our benefit. He knows what we can handle and what is too much.

Sometimes we view things like baptism as a young person or a young Christian thing but in reality it is most often just an obedience thing. I don't believe it is about denominations. Previous Christian rituals, it doesn't demean what has happened in the past, it is a symbol of where we are at with God now. One of the tragedies is that for some of us it happened years ago and we may need another "right of passage" or symbol of connectedness to God. If you feel that talk to me. You know how some people renew their wedding vows, maybe we need to have a commitment renewal day. It's just a thought.

Paul went where he had an audience.

Where is your audience? The people around you. Your next step with Jesus maybe telling the people around you about Jesus. Look, there are a bucket load of options as to the next step and mostly, we know. If we don't God will show us. We need to obey and do it. A wise man once said to me if you don't know what God's will is for you, do what you know is God's will for everyone. In other words, do what is in the bible, live the christian life.

The other thing here is what he spoke about didn't always make sense to people. He baffled them, not to make himself look good but to prove Jesus. We will not always be successful in our next steps. Well, if we do the step, it is successful in God's eyes but sometimes others don't like it or understand it. Remember it is your step, your obedience to Jesus.

Paul baffled people but it wasn't about baffling people, it was about proving Jesus. In Saul who became Paul's life it was all about Jesus.

In concluding, and all good sermons need a conclusion, it is all about Jesus

Do as He says – obey

Get help and be a help

And seek out the next step.

Following Jesus that's what Paul is about. Following Jesus that's what we are to be about.