



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Triumph over Tyranny: Christ Commissions the Cruel!

MAY 13-15, 2015

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Acts 9:1-15 *“Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2) and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3) And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4) and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ 5) and he said, ‘Who art Thou, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 6) But rise and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.’ 7) And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. 8) And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9) And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10) Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Behold, here am I, Lord.’ 11) And the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12) and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.’ 13) But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; 14) and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name.’ 15) But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.” (NASB)*

“THREATENING AND SLAUGHTER HAD COME TO BE THE VERY BREATH THAT SAUL BREATHED, LIKE A WARHORSE WHO SNIFFED THE SMELL OF BATTLE . . . JACOB HAD SAID THAT ‘BENJAMIN SHALL RAVIN LIKE A WOLF’ (GEN. 49:27). THIS GREATEST SON OF BENJAMIN WAS FULFILLING THIS PROPHECY.” A.T. ROBERTSON

How was it possible that Saul was given such power to arrest citizens of a foreign country, and drag them back into his own country for trial and execution? Why were Christians described as “*belonging to the Way*?” What was the significance of including the women? How did Jesus answer the question Saul refused to ask? In what way did Saul fall to the ground? Is salvation possible without recognizing Jesus as Lord? What was the only thing Saul did for the next three days? Was Ananias a leader in the Damascus church? Is election proven here again? How was Saul’s commission by Christ so strategic?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- MAY 20-22: ACTS 9:15-31 **TRIUMPH OVER TYRANNY: PERSECUTOR TO PREACHER OF PEACE!**
- MAY 27-29: ACTS 9:32-43 **PETER WINS A ROMAN LEADER IN HIS OWN REGIONAL CAPITAL**

According to Josephus, a Roman treaty had privileged the high priest in Israel with jurisdiction over the Jews throughout the empire in 138 BC, and it was renewed by Julius Caesar in 47 BC (F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 193-94). Thus, the murderous Saul, following his evil namesake—the first king in Israel, sought letters of authority from the President of the Sanhedrin to arrest the Christians in the capital of Syria, about 150 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Because there were probably over 20,000 Jews in Damascus, there would have been many synagogues and by this time, likely hundreds of believers who belonged to “*the Way*,” their name apparently derived from Jesus describing Himself as “*the way, the truth, and the life*” in John 14:6. Then, suddenly, the arrestor was arrested!

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS – RT. 3 & 11:30AM – WOODBRIDGE – BOB EVANS, 13900 NOBLEWOOD PLAZA

THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)

FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

Virginia

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“WHEREAS SUCH A CRUEL WOLF WAS NOT ONLY TURNED INTO A SHEEP, BUT DID ALSO PUT ON THE NATURE OF A SHEPHERD, THE WONDERFUL HAND OF GOD DID SHOW ITSELF THEREIN MANIFESTLY.”

JOHN CALVIN

I. FAITH IN THE SAVIOR

ACTS 9:1-5

At noon, as Saul with his entourage of Temple police neared probably the oldest capital, there “*flashed around him,*” a beam light from heaven “*brighter than the sun*” (26:13), causing all to prostrate themselves before the Shekinah Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Ironically, the last person who had seen the Risen Lord was Stephen, the last time Saul had seen him. How dramatically was Stephen’s prayer answered, that the next to see Christ in His blazing grace was the leader who initiated Stephen’s execution! Jesus initiated light into Saul’s dark heart with His Word, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*” Suddenly Saul’s conviction over his cruel violence filled his heart as he was violently brought face to face with the immensity of his crimes before God, as will one day happen to every sinner (Rom. 14:11, Phil. 2:9-11, Rev. 21:8). In horror of his sin he responded, “*Who art Thou, Lord?*” As Christ illuminated his soul, he realized unmistakably all that Stephen had proclaimed to him was absolutely true. He had done what his teacher, Gamaliel, had warned him and all the leaders of Israel not to do, “*or else you may even be found fighting against God?*” (Acts 5:39). Saul submissively recognized Him as “*Lord,*” and Jesus identified with His own, “*I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*” At this meeting, Saul placed his faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior (Phil. 3:4-11, 1 Tim. 1:13-17).

“YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, BUT I CHOSE YOU, AND APPOINTED YOU, THAT YOU SHOULD GO AND BEAR FRUIT ... THAT WHATEVER YOU ASK ... IN MY NAME ...” JOHN 15:16

II. FERVENCY IN SUPPLICATION ACTS 9:6-12

Paul’s first prayer is immediate, “*What shall I do, Lord?*” (Acts 22:10) With the same words that begin Jacob’s, Elijah’s, and Jonah’s commissions (Gen. 31:13, 1 Kings 17:9, Jon. 1:2), Saul is commanded by Christ to “*rise and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.*” Though the men with him are shocked “*speechless,*” and temporarily disabled in tongue, Saul is completely dependent other than his tongue, “*being raised up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him in by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.*” His helpless condition turns his focus to complete dependence upon God in fasting and prayer for three days, similar to the first 120 who “*all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer*” (Acts 1:14-15). All they did initially in one accord was prayer and it was their continued focus, found in every chapter (Acts 2:1, 42, 46; 3:1; 4:24-31; 5:12; 6:4; 7:59-60; 8:15). As Saul prays, the Lord graciously answers by sending Ananias to him, with a singular reason, “*behold, he is praying.*” Prayer is to be our first priority (1 Sam. 12:23-24, Mt. 6:33, 1 Tim. 2:1-4).

“PRAYER IS THE SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE OF THE BELIEVING HEART TO GOD. THOSE TRULY TRANSFORMED BY JESUS WILL FIND THEMSELVES IN THE WONDER AND JOY OF COMMUNION WITH HIM. PRAYER IS AS NATURAL FOR THE CHRISTIAN AS BREATHING. PAUL BECAME A MAN OF UNCEASING PRAYER.” JOHN MACARTHUR

III. FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE ACTS 9:13-15

Ananias, initially alarmed, faithfully obeys, risking his life to give Saul his strategic commission. The persecutor is tenderly comforted by his Savior with a vision of Ananias coming to restore his sight. Election and his commission to “*bear My name before both the nations, kings, and the sons of Israel*” is told to continue the emphasis on leaders in every commission of Christ, to the greatest missionary.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Have you cried out to God for His mercy and salvation, recognizing it is God who illumines the heart in His electing grace?
- 2) Has God done a transforming work in your heart that reveals itself through priority in prayer and obedience to His Word?
- 3) Do you obey all His commissions of by praying for and witnessing to even cruel leaders to disciple at least our nation?