Acts 9:20-31

Saul to Paul: A New Creation Phase 3

10/22/23

An Opening Word:

Hebrews 10:24-25 as a response to what is happening in Israel...

“...let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **25**not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Encourage the people by pointing out the change/transformation in their own lives...

Review:

First two phases of Paul’s transformation in Acts 9

SLIDE 1

1. Conviction of Sin (9:1-9)

2. Understanding of who Christ is and why it matters (9:10-19)

Acts 9:1-19

“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**As he was traveling, it happened that 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 are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, **6**but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” **7**The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. **8**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 disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” **11**And the Lord *said* to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for 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 Your saints at Jerusalem; **14**and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your 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; **16**for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” **17**So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” **18**And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; **19**and he took food and was strengthened.”

SLIDE 2 – Past Application Points/Questions

1. “Have I been convicted of my sin?” (Truly? As a function of full belief in who Jesus is and what He has done for me?)

2. Am I a disciple? (Have I identified with the crucified and resurrected Christ? Am I listening to and obeying the Holy Spirit?)

Now back to SLIDE 1

Today we are looking at Saul’s:

3. Confession and proclamation of Christ’s supremacy and Paul’s personal faith (9:20-31) In other words, his ministry

Acts 9:20-31

“Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, **20**and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” **21**All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, “Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” **22**But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

**23**When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, **24**but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; **25**but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

**26**When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **27**But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. **28**And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. **29**And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. **30**But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

**31**So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

\* Timeline preceding Paul’s Early Ministry (his discipleship):

There is a grammatical break between verse 19 and 20. What happened there? Paul tells us in...

Galatians 1:15-17

*“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.****12****For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* ***13****For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;****14****and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.*

*But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased****16****to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,****17****nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.* ***18****Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.”*

This means that Paul took a sabbatical for 2-3 years immediately after his conversion. He says, “*I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,****17****nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.”*

This could be read, “*I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, but I (immediately) went away to Arabia, and (then) returned once more to Damascus.”*

Why didn’t Luke mention this schooling interlude for Paul in his account of Paul’s conversion to ministry continuum? Luke is cutting to the chase. He is not giving all the details. It is not for him to tell of Paul’s mysterious tutoring from the Lord Jesus Himself, since there were no witnesses to this. It is Paul’s story or experience to tell of, and he does so in Galatians. In other words, like any credible historian, Luke is giving only the facts that were observed by multiple witnesses. That Paul was taught by Jesus Himself through the Holy Spirit is obvious as we read through the epistles and witness the incredible doctrinal insight that Paul gives. This is insight that could not be merely reasoned. It is divinely inspired. It is scripture.

- When Paul Immediately began preaching, it was immediately following what? Paul says it followed his training in Arabia. Also, the preaching that Jesus is the Son of God (or God), is advanced beyond anything thought at the time. Also, this would have become known immediately in Jerusalem, but it wasn’t known for three years.

\* Notes on Paul’s Early Ministry:

- After being equipped by Jesus, Paul returns to Damascus and proclaims Jesus as GOD!

- This is amazing, and the people react in kind.

- Paul’s knowledge, confidence, and persuasiveness is increasing. He is *“working out his salvation with fear and trembling.”* Are we?

- He is compelling the Jews to belief. He is not throwing up his hands and quitting.

- They want to kill Paul because he is destroying their entire framework or their worldview.

- this is the same Barnabas in verse 27 that gave the gift in Acts 4. He was influential and trusted within the Jerusalem Church.

- The Brethren accepted Paul and protected him. He was sent to Cilicia, where he was from.

- The church prospered and grew.

SLIDE 3

\* What Paul was proclaiming (4 Core Doctrinal Truths revealed at the time of his conversion)

1. We are saved by Grace (Acts 9:1-4)

“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**As he was traveling, it happened that 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?”

Scriptural Corroboration:

Ephesians 2:1-10

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2**in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3**Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **4**But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5**even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6**and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, **7**so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; **9**not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

2. Jesus is the Son of God (see Acts 9:20 – “...and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”)

Scriptural Corroboration:

Colossians 1:13-17

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14**in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

**15**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16**For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. **17**He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

3. Only those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are His people. (Acts 9:5) – “And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting ...”

Corroborative Scripture:

Philippians 3:7-9 – “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8**More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, **9**and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith...”

4. We (His people) are the Body of Christ (Acts 9:4-5) “...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 are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting...”

Corroborative Scripture:

1 Corinthians 12:12-14:

“For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. **13**For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

These are 4 Core Doctrines that we as Christians must hold to...

We are saved by Grace, Jesus as the “Son of God” IS God, We are His Body (His representatives on earth), and as such, we are His people.

This being the case, Paul says we should have a singular focus.

SLIDE 4 (Application/Encouragement for Today)

As a disciple of Jesus, be conformed to His image.

This focal point or purpose is stated in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Romans 8:29 tells that, “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son...”

In Ephesians 4:23-24, Paul exhorts us to “...lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, **23**and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **24**and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

We began today by asking if you can see the change in yourselves from then, which is to say before, to now. Can you?

Let us all be transformed into the image of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Note as we wrap it up...

**–In asking people to give financially, remember the principle: *People give to vision, not to needs.*** So, rather than urging them to give “to support the budget” or “to pay off the mortgage,” keep before them the vision of a thriving, healthy church making an eternal difference in the lives of hundreds.