

Acts 9:6-35

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. 10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, *I am here* Lord. 11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold he prayeth, 12 and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 and hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake. 17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. 23 And after that many days were fulfilled,

the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 but their laying await was known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket. 26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. 32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”

Introduction: Saul’s Miraculous Conversion

[Audio version: <http://resources.ccphilly.org/SPM604>]

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” that’s where we picked up chapter 9, verse 1, and that slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He goes to the high priest, Caiaphas at that time, for about seven more years, **“and desired of him letters to Damascus”** about 200 miles from Jerusalem, a six or seven day journey, one of the oldest cities, some feel the oldest city on earth, **“to the synagogues,”** that are there in Damascus **“that if he found any of this way,”** your translation may say **“of The Way,”** the early designation for Christianity, The Way, **“whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”** He

showed no preference to women. So, Saul, mad [crazy] at this time, Luke describing him as wreaking havoc on the Church over in verse 21, it says he destroyed the Church, again words used of a wild boar digging up earth, the attacking of a wild animal, mauling, ah, doctor Luke as he puts the quill to the page, as he had spent time with Saul of Tarsus no doubt in Caesarea, spent years with him. It says to the reader as he records this, by Saul's own testimony, that he was like a wild beast, he was tearing and mauling the Church. He tells us in chapter 22 and 26 that he caused people to blaspheme the name of Jesus, that he gave consent at their death, those that were put to death, we don't know how many were put to death. He said he persecuted the Church to death, to the death, many. How many? 20, 30, 100, how many Christians had he put to death, how many had he hauled off to prison? We don't know, but probably outside of any personality but the antichrist, this man Saul of Tarsus is the most dangerous threat to the Church of Jesus Christ, because at it's inception it's still small, largely located in this area of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and he has tremendous authority, and is doing his best to bring it down, and like a wild beast. And no doubt doctor Luke had patched up many wounds from wild beasts, and he is thinking of that as he describes this man, tearing into the Church of Jesus Christ, hating this movement, getting permission from Caiaphas to bring both men and women, moms, grandmoms, aunts, sisters, spouses, bound in chains to Jerusalem. **“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:” (verse 3)** Chapter 26 he tells us it outshone the noonday sun, we have an interesting picture. He's going to describe the effects on those that are with him, it says, **verse 7, “And the men which sojourned with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.”** They heard a voice, but they didn't hear any diction, they didn't understand what was said. You remember there were those in John's Gospel that heard a rumbling, didn't know if it was thunder, they heard the voice of God. Those of them heard, it says interestingly, “they saw no man.” In chapter 22 I believe it says “they saw the light,” and Saul says that light so outshone the noonday sun, again in that part of the world if you've seen the noonday sun, closer to the equator in the Middle East, to produce a light that is so much brighter than the noonday sun that it will cause everyone to fall to the ground, is unimaginable, light of this glory. And Paul in chapter 22 or 26 will say that it caused him to, he didn't see after that, it was so brilliant. Did he see Jesus Christ himself? We're not certain, in that glory.

But we know he's left blind from it. [see Revelation 1:13-18.] It says here this light shone from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice, now in chapter 26, verse 14 it says the voice spoke to him in Hebrew, so the Lord stoops down, condescends to that, speaking to him in Hebrew. **"he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (verse 4)** And again, I believe it wasn't 'SAUL!!! SAUL!!!' I don't believe it was terrible and threatening, I believe it was spoken with a pathos and a brokenness, and he's going to say to Ananias **'this is a chosen vessel unto me.'** And I believe it was **'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me.'** And Saul will never forget that, he's the man who develops the Church as the Body of Christ, he's the one who never forgets. He was persecuting believers, but he in that was persecuting Jesus Christ himself, **'Why persecutest thou me?'** And by the way, legislators, antagonists, persecutors in this world, when they *persecute you, or whether they persecute me or the church anywhere, the truth is, they're really persecuting Jesus Christ. What they really don't want is the rule of Christ in their lives.* What they're really fighting is the concept of the one true God and the accountability that produces. He is, he says **"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"** **"And he said,"** Saul then, **"Who art thou, Lord?"** Now notice, the light, the glory, the physical experience he acknowledges immediately is divine, he knows that much. And he says **'Who are you, Lord?'** **"And the Lord said, I am Jesus"** now that's the ultimate rude awakening, **"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."** **(verse 5)** **'I am Jesus,'** Paul's entire life became a house of cards right then, it fell to pieces, the One who he was hating and persecuting was the very Messiah of Israel. And interesting, we don't know if Saul, and I believe he's a member of the Sanhedrin, had actually heard Christ in the Temple precincts, we're not certain. But for him, he was never Jesus of Nazareth, he is the Lord of glory, he is the Son of God, he is the Lord of heaven. Such an impression is made upon him at this point in time, it stays with him his entire life. And the Lord says **'I am Jesus,'** that must have thundered, no matter how tender the voice was, **'whom you're persecuting, it is hard for thee to kick against the goads, the pricks,'** the ox-goads, it's a long pole, most of the time with a metal tip on the front, and it was used to guide animals, most often a larger animal, an ox. And particularly if you're bringing that ox to a pen or a stall, a tight quarter, you wanted to bring him into a destination, somewhere you're guiding him, and the more he kicked against that, the deeper

it dug into him. It was used to move that animal. And imagine the Lord condescending, stooping down to Saul of Tarsus and saying **'Saul, you're like a wild ox, like a stubborn ox, and the harder you kick, the deeper this digs into you, you're just like a stubborn ox, that I'm trying to guide you into something, I've been trying to bring you into something. You're seeing Stephen's face every day, shining like an angel, you're hearing his voice and his argument every day, you're kicking against the very things I've put in your life to guide you to myself.'** And sometimes we still do that as Christians, as he would guide us somewhere, as he would ask something of us. We're going to see a little bit of that with Ananias. Sometimes in our stubbornness we kick. There are times when he asks us only to recognize his Lordship, when he may not be giving us the most practical answers, that sometimes we feel like we need to have peace in a difficult circumstance, and yet he would have us trust in him in those times, sometimes. Here he says **'It's hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'** And listen, and he, Saul now, it describes his reaction now to "I am Jesus," **"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (verse 6a)** now I believe, personally, Saul of Tarsus is a convert at this point in time. If Jesus appears to you, on your way to Damascus, in glory so bright it blinds you, knocks you to the ground, you say *'Who are you?'* and he says *'I am Jesus'* and then you say to him, *'Lord, what do you want me to do?'* I'm convinced, personally, you're converted at that point in time. For Saul of Tarsus, this hater, to call Jesus of Nazareth Lord, the transaction has taken place within him. **"Lord, what would thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." (verses 6b-7)** They know there was something being spoken, again I think chapter 22 tells us they saw a light, but they didn't see what Saul saw. **"And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus." (verse 8)** "he saw no man" now that's a different word, in verse 7 it says "they were seeing no man" "theorbo" where we get "theater" from it, "there was no man to gaze upon," here in verse 8 it's talking about physical sight. When he opened his eyes, the word "saw" is different here, "he saw no man," he was blind, ah, he saw Jesus Christ, but he didn't see any man [and the brilliance of seeing Jesus Christ in part of his shining glory blinded Saul]. He was physically

blinded, but was spiritually enlightened at this point in time. He saw no man, notice, **“but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.” (verse 8b)** Now, that was not the entrance to Damascus he had planned. That was not the entrance into Damascus and the synagogues of Damascus he had planned. There was a very large Jewish community in Damascus. And no doubt as the persecution had begun in Jerusalem, there were many that had fled to Damascus that had friends or relatives there, Jews that had come to genuine faith in Jesus Christ, that had fled to Damascus, and word had come there that Saul of Tarsus, the great inquisitor as it were of the Sanhedrin was coming to hail men and women off to prison. And as they saw him now being led in like a child by the hand, blind, this was not at all the entrance that Saul of Tarsus, the representative of Caiaphas, had planned to make into Damascus. They led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. **“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” (verse 9)** Now three days without sight is God’s choice, three days without eating, fasting, that’s Paul’s choice, because whoever he would have requested from would have given him something to eat or drink, but he is churning, he is grinding through all of the Old Testament texts that he knew, raised at the feet of Gamaliel, this man, brilliant, a great scholar. In zeal, he says, outdoing most of his contemporaries, we’re told in Galatians chapter 1, after the traditions of the fathers. Now you can imagine him grinding through Isaiah 53, grinding through Zechariah **‘they will look upon him whom they have pierced,’** grinding through the whole sacrificial system, grinding through the Feasts, dining on the Passover, rising on the Feast of Firstfruits, just the things that had gone through his mind, the Feast of Pentecost, as he’s there in this darkness, cloistered away, sitting, not eating, not drinking, grinding through all of these things, no doubt.

Ananias Is Sent To Saul

“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias

coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.” (verses 10-12) “Ananias,” same as Hannah or Joanna or John, it means “grace.” And notice, this is where you and I drop dead of a cardiac, he just says **“Behold, I am here, Lord.”** Now, I believe that the Lord comes to Ananias in a vision, because if he had just given the impression upon his heart through the Holy Spirit, *‘Go to this house, there’s one Saul of Tarsus,’* Ananias would have said *‘No way, that’s not the Lord, that’s the devil, we were hiding from this man, I’m not gonna go expose myself to this man.’* It took a vision, and we’re not told exactly what that experience was like. We’re going to hear right after this, that Paul, Saul of Tarsus, has had a vision of a man coming to him named Ananias. So we do know this, not every vision seems to be seen with the eyes. In the Old Testament sometimes a prophet was called a Seer, and had the idea that the LORD actually let them see some of their visions with the physical eye. We know Saul of Tarsus in this scene has a vision of Ananias, but he’s blind, so that vision is not something he sees with the human eye, certainly he sees it with the heart, the mind, it’s clear to him [as clear as seeing something in a dream which appears as being totally real]. And Ananias here we’re not told exactly how he sees this vision, but a vision is granted to him of the Lord, and when that happens he says **‘Here I am Lord.’** I’m amazed again at the supernatural dynamics we see in some of the early Church, the Scripture had not been completed. We have great advantages in some way. But you think of the supernatural power of some of the dynamics of the early Church, and how easily and readily they responded. This man who had lived and died in obscurity, you and I would never had heard of him, would never have known of him, this man whose going to play such a crucial role, he is the link between the rest of the world and Saul of Tarsus, he’s the one whose going to go there. One philosopher I read said, *“If you get rid of Saul of Tarsus, give Ephesus back to Dianna, give Rome back to the Pantheon gods that they had, give away the morality and the culture of western civilization, because it’s all in the ashes if there’s no Saul of Tarsus.”* And this man, Ananias, that would have lived obscurely, was a man that God saw, a man that God knew, he was a disciple it says here, a learner, somebody whose heart was open to the Lord, and the Lord says to him **‘I want you to go, Ananias, into the city, to the street which is called Straight,’** by the way, which is still in Damascus today, it runs from the East Gate of Damascus to the West Gate of Damascus, it is a long straight street, thanks to the Grecian culture, which had at that point in time straightened it out,

it is still there today, and tradition says it was on the western end where the house of Judas was where Saul of Tarsus was. We don't know that for certain. **“and enquire in the house of Judas for one Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,” ‘think about this, Ananias, he’s praying.’** Now no doubt, that was Paul, Saul, praying (a real prayer) for the very first time in his life. The rabbis, members of the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders, they had prayers for every day of the year, specific prayers, they had “canned” prayers for certain feasts, they had prayers for birthdays, prayers for deaths, prayers for births, they had a whole host of recited, memorized prayers for different things. But this man, God says, is praying, **‘Lord, I persecuted you, forgive me, I didn’t know, I did it angrily, I didn’t see, my heart was broken for Stephen, I heard his argument, it angered me because there were no holes in it, no cracks in it, his face, forgive me for putting him to death,’** imagine what his prayer was like, and the Lord says to Ananias, **‘He’s praying,’ “and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.” (verse 11b-12)** He said **‘I’ve set the stage, Ananias, been working on both ends here, everything is set to go.’** Now isn't this amazing, **“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.” (verses 13-14)** **‘he hath authority, here in Damascus,’** like the Lord's gonna go *‘Oooh, he got authority.’* You know, Ananias is saying to the Lord *‘Maybe I should just give you all of the facts right now, this is a bad guy, and blind is good, we want this guy blind, we don’t want this guy to receive his sight, this guy is better off to everybody blind. This man is evil, he’s done so many things wrong. Haven’t you heard what he’s done at Jerusalem, and here, Lord, he has authority,’* the Lord could have just said *‘I HAVE AUTHORITY! What do you mean he has authority? this is the Lord of glory speaking. Authority, are you kidding?’* But the Lord, notice, he doesn't argue, he just says to Ananias, **‘Go thy way.’** We do that with our children, as we raise our children, and they give us those arguments, *‘Just go, just sit down, just come over here.’*

*Paul Was A Chosen Vessel, An Elect Vessel Of The
Lord*

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” (verse 15) Every other time, I think six times in the New Testament that word “chosen” is used, it’s translated “elect” or “election” in every other place. **“he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”** he is “elect,” he’s “chosen.” Paul himself will write in Romans chapter 9, the two children in Rebekah’s womb, and the older being second that the election might stand of God. Three times in chapter 11 we’re told, the nation of Israel is his own elect nation, that is of election. Peter says **‘Make your calling and election sure,’** here he says **‘he’s a chosen vessel.’** What he’s saying is, **‘I’ve been working his entire life to bring him to this point.’** Peter was not a sufficient vessel to fulfill Paul’s ministry. John was not [besides, and few realize this, but John had another assignment from the Lord which was very close to the Lord’s heart, expressed by Jesus on the cross in John 19:26-27, where Jesus assigned John to adopt and take care of his mother, Mary. But this assignment ended up including something far greater. Paul would spend time and effort establishing the Ephesian church congregation, which just before 70AD John would move to, taking Mary with him. The cellar hole purported to be John’s house where he and Mary dwelt in Ephesus is shown by tour guides in Ephesus Turkey to this day. Wars move people and populations, and I’m sure John took a large contingent of believers, a good portion of the Jerusalem and Judean churches of God north to Ephesus and Asia Minor just before the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.] Saul of Tarsus, Tarsus was the second academic center in the Mediterranean world, second to Athens only, and then Alexandria, the second greatest university in that world, Saul raised there, as a Jew with Jewish parents, he no doubt went to what was called *the school of the Book*, Jewish boys from ages 6 to 12 every day in the afternoon spent time with the local rabbi in what was called *the school of the Book*, preparing them for Bar mitzvah. And imagine the poor rabbi in Nazareth that had little Jesus, Joshua in his class, trying to answer some of his questions. But Saul of Tarsus no doubt there, and at 13 years old, in the process there, Bar mitzvah, as the father and the son go before the Lord, and the father says *‘I’m no longer responsible, he’s a man now,’* and the young boy saying *‘I’m accountable now, I’ve reached the age of reason, I’m accountable before You now, no longer to my father but to You.’* In

that transaction and that time, this man's parents, who no doubt were godly, he says **"I was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the 8th day,"** he tells us about his pedigree. They decide at that point in time, they no longer want him raised in this Hellenistic world, and Saul had grabbed so much of it, we hear in his writings when he talks about the Games, you know, **'Who did hinder you, you were running well?'** when he talks about wrestling and being disqualified, he had sat and no doubt watched those Olympic Games that took place at Tarsus that he couldn't involve himself in because there was idolatry and idols worshipped in the process, but he was so competitive in his nature. And he wrote about so many of those things, and brought them into spiritual symbolism, and it's in lesson for us. Those parents decided at this point he needs to go to Jerusalem, where the bright and the best from ages 13 to 21 were schooled by Gamaliel. And from 13 to 21 Paul tells us later on in the Book of Acts, he was raised at the feet of Gamaliel. Gamaliel in secular history, it says that he couldn't keep Saul of Tarsus in books, a brilliant, brilliant young man. So by birth a Jew, by culture a Hellenist, understood the Greek world, the Greek culture, the Greek philosophy. Rome ruled the world militarily and politically, but Greece still ruled the world in philosophy, in thinking, in culture. And this man was a Jew, was a Hellenist, and he was a Roman citizen, which meant he could travel anywhere in the Empire freely, and it meant that in trouble he could make an appeal to Caesar and had to settle for no lesser court [of course his appeal to Caesar later on in his life would get him killed]. And there was no apostle like him, this was the man to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world, that he understood so well. No other apostle could have done this at Athens or at Corinth or any of these cities, as Saul of Tarsus did, and bring the message so clearly to them. No other apostle could have understood the truths and beauty of Judaism, but that the Gospel was going to the Gentile world, he would be the one who would write clearly about the Church and the breaking down of the partition wall between Jew and Gentile. He was the one, he was a chosen vessel, God had been raising him from the time he was young. And I imagine we're all like that, to some degree, we get saved and we look back and think *'Lord, that was you, back then.'* Now I got saved at 22, but at that point I could look back and say *'Wow, Lord, that was you at this point in time. That was you here, Lord, when the day I almost got killed there, and somehow, you were working, all along you were there drawing.'* And this man, he whole life, had been in the hands of God, he was

a chosen vessel. And he says to Ananias ***'You go to him, for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.'*** (verses 15-16) Now I'm glad that he only tells us what we can bear. He said to his disciples ***'I have many things to say to you, but you're not ready to bear them.'*** Yet, I think of Saul of Tarsus, in ***2nd Corinthians***, talking about false teachers and how we stood in light of them, he says ***'Are we ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more, in labours more abundant, in stripes, whipped, scourged, above measure, in prisons, more frequent, in death, the fear of death, more often, of the Jews five times received I 40 stripes save one, three times was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep [treading water],'*** I don't even want to hear about that, floating in the ocean for a day and a half, I see a fin, and I am dying of a heart attack, I just don't, ***'in journey's often, in peril of water and peril of robbers, in peril of my own countrymen, in peril by the heathen, in peril in the city, in perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren, in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and in thirst, in fastings, often in cold and nakedness, beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.'*** Just what an amazing resume'. You know, ministry is not a breeze, and here's a man totally given. And you would think sometimes, *'Lord, I'm your apostle, what am I doing in another storm, this is my third storm this summer, what am I doing being beaten, this is the 5th time I've been beaten, or Lord what am I doing floating out in the middle of the ocean.'* You think, the remarkable calling, the remarkable revealing of Jesus Christ to him, the remarkable calling on his life, you'd think he's thinking *'Why am I doing this, why can't I travel first class to Rome, and why do I have to get bit by a snake while I'm warming my hand at the fire, why do I have to go through this, why do I have to go through that?'* And this is a man that would say ***'None of these things moved me.'*** You know, he'd been caught up to the 3rd heaven, I think when he was stoned there out of Corinth [I believe it was Iconium], and they thought he was dead, and he got up and wanted to go back into the city. You know, this is a man who has seen Paradise [want to see what Paul saw? read Revelation 4:2-11]. What's the worst that can happen? He can die? The worst that can happen is he can live. One of the folks that comes here to church occasionally, Cathy and I have become great

friends with, had a heart transplant several years ago. But he's died three times, they had to paddle him once, and he just said 'Joe, I can't tell you the beauty,' and he's the guy who says to me in circumstances, we'll talk, and he says 'Well what's the worst that can happen,' and I'll say 'Well you can die,' and he says 'NO! you can live!' He always says that to me. He said 'Believe me, I'd rather be there! I've been there three times.' And I think for Saul of Tarsus, none of those things moved him, he had seen glory, he had seen the Lord. What was the worst that could happen? He was willing to jeopardize himself in any circumstance that the Lord led him into. I mean, they stoned him and threw him outside the city, he gets up and heads back in again. How do you stop a guy like that? How do you stop a guy like that? The Lord says **'I'm going to show him the great things he must suffer for my name's sake.'**

What Is The Grace Of God?

"And Ananias went his way," well it wasn't his way, it was the Lord's way, but he went the way that was put in front of him, **"and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."** (verse 17) now he's not an apostle, he's just a disciple, a brother. The first word this new convert, Saul of Tarsus hears from another Christian is "Brother, Brother Saul" a man that would have killed him, "Brother Saul." **"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."** (verse 18) Now we have some interesting things here. What did Ananias have to step past to do this? Listen, Saul of Tarsus was a beast who had killed many Christians, had caused many to blaspheme the name of Jesus. Ananias had to step by some things. No doubt he had been involved in prayer-meetings praying against this man. And again, maybe there's someone in your life that needs to hear you say *Brother* or *Sister* to. You know, we think we know about God's grace, but we always think there's someone who needs it more than we do, which means really you don't know about it at all, in some respects. It began about two years ago, I received a letter, it came to the church, a prison up in New York had gotten some Bibles from us, and they said 'We're not sure why you

sent them,' and the person who wrote the letter said 'I don't personally need the Bibles, but I'm working with a chaplain involved with the Bible studies, I serve in different ways, I will make sure they're put to good use, thank you, by the way we listen to Pastor Joe's tapes, thank you, David Berkowitz' it was signed, Son of Sam, the murderer from New York City, that had killed so many women, that he basically brought the whole city to its knees. Women were buying dye so, I think he was killing blonds, there was no dye left on the shelves anywhere, because there was a profile of women he was going after. Troubled as a youth, sitting within a closet with the lights out for hours on end, going over the deep end, murdering, killing, got put into prison, got a shank right through his neck his second week in prison, almost died. Finally they let him out to start walking, and he would walk, and this guy came up and started walking next to him, he didn't want to be bothered by anybody, the guy started talking about Jesus, he didn't want to hear about it. He said one day he finally fell down on his knees in his cell, and cried out, and he said the Lord saved him, and washed him, and cleansed him. And now, he serves with the chaplain, he said *"I'll be in here for the rest of my life,"* I think he has three life sentences to serve, he'll never be out. He said *'But I help some of the autistic prisoners, some of them have mental problems, I work in that ward and I help and I serve and love them, and I'm working in this other ministry, this is where the Lord has me.'* You know, this is a man that says here, when he prayed, Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit was not hesitant to move into Saul of Tarsus, and Saul of Tarsus probably killed more people than David Berkowitz. And there are people, I imagine, still today that are having a tremendous time with the fact that God would forgive David Berkowitz, I imagine there are families, moms and dads, who lost daughters, and forgiveness is still a huge issue for them. Ted Bundy, who had met with James Dobson a number of times, died in peace. Jeffrey Dahmer, unimaginable what he did, even cannibalism, knew that he would be killed when he got in the general population, put him in the mailroom (in the prison) somewhere and his head got bashed, brains all over the floor, but he died in peace, was filled with the Holy Spirit, he found forgiveness in Christ. Tex Marrs, of the Manson Family, you go down the list. On one side of that there's a huge issue of forgiveness, there are no doubt in all of those circumstances people who hope that person rots in hell, who never wants them to be forgiven, who would be angry at me tonight for saying that that person is claiming to have found forgiveness in

Christ, and that the Holy Spirit of God without hesitancy moved into that vessel that had been used in such a dark and malevolent way. Forgiveness, they say, is a difficult issue to forgive the one who has sinned greatly. But forgiveness on the other side of it, what was it like for those men or Saul of Tarsus to receive forgiveness, to have to step out of the boat onto the water, to believe. Look, Paul will tell us this in **1st Timothy 1:12-18**, and I'm going to turn there, you don't have to turn, I want to read this to you. He says **"I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, that he counted me faithful putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, and an injurious,"** violently arrogant the idea is, **"but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, this is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world"** the reason he came, **"to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering"** why? **"for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."** Paul says *'He took my life, the most injurious, violent, I was a wild beast, I was tearing the Church to shreds, I stood there consenting and persecuted many to their death, made some of them blaspheme the name of Jesus at the point of a sword.'* No one in this room tonight has out-sinned this man, and he said ***'God took me and held me up as a trophy, to hold before the rest of the world and say 'Any sinner, no matter how much sin they had, no matter how bad they think they are, they have no excuse to turn away from me, because the blood of Christ is more powerful to forgive than we are to sin.'*** And even for some Christians, that spend years and years and years struggling with the forgiveness of the Lord. And what they're really saying is *'Lord Jesus, your work on the cross was not powerful enough to deal with the sin in my life.'* That's what we're really saying. You know, there's two sides of an issue like this, whether it's Ted Bundy or it's David Berkowitz, I think Saul of Tarsus probably killed more than they did. I think it was difficult for Ananias to step across that line, and I think the forgiveness of Christ humbles us on two sides. Those of us are called sometimes to forgive, and it is so hard. Listen, boil it down to simple things, arguments between husbands and wives is nothing compared to this. If you're mad at your brother because when your mom died he got the grandfather's clock and you didn't, you need to get over it.

Those are small issues, Christian forgiveness needs to live there and flourish there, there probably aren't many of us that are going to have to deal with forgiveness at the level that some of these folks have to deal with forgiveness relative to Paul or others might relative to some of the names that we mentioned. [i.e. Corey ten Boom having to forgive the Nazi guard who had killed her sister and parents, who now stood before her as a believer, hesitantly holding his hand out to her. It was extremely hard for her to reach out and take his hand, but the minute, the very second she did, the love of Christ flooded through her, enabling her forgiveness to be complete in Christ, by the power of Christ, amazing story.] But the point is, even there, God's forgiveness so pure and so powerful, it's stumbling the person who was sinned against. On the other side of that, it's so powerful and so pure, it's hard for the sinner to receive, because it's without strings, it's a love unlike any other love, and a forgiveness unlike any other forgiveness any of us have ever known. And Saul of Tarsus here is held up in front of us as one, look, **'Brother Saul, I've been sent that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost,'** the Holy Ghost is not hesitant to move into this blaspheming, church persecuting, Christian murdering man, the Holy Ghost, not hesitant to move in. And as he was praying before, now he received the Holy Ghost. Another issue, is Saul a convert by this time? Yes, well when he was saved on the Road to Damascus, and called Jesus Lord, it is evidently at that time he is baptized by the Spirit into the mystical Body of Christ. We're all baptized by one Spirit into the Body of Christ, he at that time, he becomes a member of the Body of Christ. But it is at this point in time where he is filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit comes upon him to empower him for the ministry he's called to. There is one act, where the Spirit is the baptizer, baptizing us into the Body of Christ, the work of the Spirit, baptized by one Spirit. There is another baptism, if you will, in regards to power, when John the Baptist said **'The one who comes after me, the latchet of his sandal I'm not worthy to unloose, he will baptize,'** there is baptism where Jesus baptizes the believer with power. It can be called the filling, it can be called the baptism, it can be called the Spirit coming upon, different words are used, but there is a fulness there. Look, again, in the Old Testament, you think of those who had the Spirit come upon their lives to do great things. That's not denied in the New Testament. What the Old Testament believer never had was the option to lift his head to God and say "Father," he was never made part of the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, he was never put into

a mystical Body of Christ, that happens when you're saved. [Comment: now that is a Calvary Chapel interpretation in a very gray area of Biblical understanding. We'll find out what's true here at Jesus' Wedding Feast, in Revelation 19:7-9. I personally believe a believer is a believer, Old Testament, New Testament, doesn't matter, no distinction, just my personal take, we'll find out later.] And when you're saved, and when you're saved you're not asking for the Spirit, you're saying *'Lord, forgive, wash me, I turn to you, I need forgiveness,'* you're not saying *'Fill me with your Spirit, baptize me into the mystical Body of Christ,'* people don't know that, it takes awhile for them to learn what happened to them. But there is another time, we're told, in Luke, where we ask the Father for the Spirit, and how much more will he give the Spirit to those who ask, we're told. And Saul, a man who was a believer three days later, receives a filling, a fullness of the Spirit.

Chronology Of Where Saul, Paul Went After His Baptism

And it says **“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.” (verse 18)** Now the scales, they seem to be physical scales, it's the only time the word's used in the New Testament here. We find it used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament in Leviticus chapter 11 where the dietary laws talk about the fish with scales that swim that are Levitically clean, and it uses the word “scales” there. It seems something physical fell from his eyes, I believe maybe the Lord allowed that to happen for him, it was Judaism in some ways, the scales had fallen from his eyes, his eyes were open to the grace of God, this becomes the apostle of grace. You'd think it would be John, but John only uses the word “grace” seven times in the Gospel, three epistles and the Book of Revelation, you go through all of that territory, you find the word “grace” seven times. Paul here you're going to find the word “grace” over 120 times, this is the man, the great apostle of grace, because a vessel prepared, chosen and the recipient of a measure of grace, unimaginable, the scales fall from his eyes, he arises, he's baptized. Look at **verse 19, “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples**

which were at Damascus.” Imagine the first Sunday, what that was like. What was it like the first Sunday when Ananias brought Saul to church? [Comment: Now this sermon is being given from a Gentile Christian perspective, where they believe the early Church went immediately over to being Sunday observing very shortly after Acts 2, and this belief is totally historically inaccurate. These were Jewish believers, even in Damascus. These believers had been scattered north from Saul’s persecution. They were Messianic Jewish believers, the very first. For historic and Biblical evidence of this, log onto and read this research article: <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>] You know everybody froze, everybody looked at Ananias, *‘Oh he’s a believer, he’s a believer alright, you fool! He’s a spy, he’s got all our names, he’s got his camera out, we’ll all die.’* I’m sure he wasn’t gladly received. It took awhile for him to find this fellowship with the disciples in Damascus, for them to believe. It says in **verse 20, “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”** Now imagine that, and notice the he is the Son of God Paul is preaching about, only time in the Book of Acts we have the phrase “the Son of God.” Saul of Tarsus, the great messenger of Caiaphas, from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, it was the joy of every synagogue to open the door and let him in, they would have their meeting, they would then pass the Scroll to the rabbi that was there, and Paul then would stand there, and they’d expect to hear from him everything that was wrong with this Movement, that they were apostate, the Jews, there were believing in this Nazarene Sect. And instead Saul of Tarsus in this synagogue begins to prove from the Scripture that Jesus is in fact the Son of God. They must have all been scratching their heads, saying *‘Wait a minute, isn’t this the guy who was sent here to destroy the church, and here he’s in the synagogue proving to us that Jesus is what the Christians say he is, that he’s the Son of God?’* **“But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed”** it means to maul like an animal **“them which called on his name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.” (verses 21-22)** And by the way, we should be growing in spiritual strength, we should never be static, there’s no neutral in Christianity, there’s only reverse and forward. This man is growing, in preaching, and so should we be. And he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very

Messiah, the very Christ. [Comment: Notice Saul was proving, and this would be from the Old Testament prophecies, that Yeshua of Nazareth was indeed the promised Messiah. To see some of those prophecies which prove that, see <https://unityinchrist.com/prophecies/1stcoming.htm>] Now **“And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:” (verse 23)** so we have an interesting intermission here, we don’t get the sense of it all from the Book of Acts, but in ***Galatians chapter 1*** we are told this, ***“I certify to you brethren that the gospel which was preached unto me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, and neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my conversation, lifestyle, in time past in the Jews religion, how beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it,*** [Comment: that is the early Biblical name for the apostolic Church, “the church of God.”] ***And profited in the Jews religion above many of my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly jealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, chosen vessel, and called my by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, the Gentiles. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and returned again then to Damascus.” (verses 11-18)*** So in this scene in Damascus, where he preaches in the synagogues, he’s growing, and then after many days they’re taking counsel to kill him, evidently there is a period of time there where he leaves, he goes into Arabia, then he will return to Damascus, and he so confounds them at that point in time, then they take counsel to kill him, and the believers let him down the wall in a basket, and then he goes to Jerusalem. And here (in Galatians) he said he didn’t go to Jerusalem at first, but he went to Arabia [to Mount Sinai, which is in Saudi Arabia], and then he back to Damascus, ***‘then after three years I went to Jerusalem to see Peter and I abode with him for about 15 days,’*** he says. Now that’s interesting, why would he go to Arabia? Well in ***chapter 4*** of ***Galatians*** he says, he’s talking about the son of the bondwoman born of the flesh and the free woman who is by promise, that which is born of the freewoman, ***“Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar [Hagar]. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem***

which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” He says that Mount Sinai, it was in Arabia, he tells us in a different argument. That’s why he went to Arabia. Mount Sinai, we’ve had the presentation here several times [Ron Wyatt’s presentation], is not in the Sinai Peninsula, that’s nothing but tourism. Mount Sinai is in Midian, God said to Moses ***‘You will come back to this Mountain where I spoke to you,’*** Midian in every map for the last 2,000 years is in Saudi Arabia, across the Gulf of Aqaba. And it’s there that the remnant (in the Gulf waters) of the Egyptian army is laying on the floor of the sea [about midway up from the southern neck of the Gulf of Aqaba]. It’s there where there was a pillar that Solomon put on one side and on the other. And this man goes to this place where Elijah had gone, he goes to sort out his theology, he was out on that desert for a number of years in Arabia where Mount Sinai is. And then he comes back to Damascus. **“And after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying in wait was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.” (verses 23-24)** they were going to get him when he tried to get out of the city. **“Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.” (verse 25)** Now, Saul neither came to Damascus or left Damascus the way he thought he would. He was looking to come in as the great representative of Caiaphas, you know, marching down the center street, and it was said he was led in like a child by the hand blind, and he thought he would leave Damascus a different way, he’s not, he’s let down over the wall in a basket so that he can get out of there, at the cost of his life. And it says then, **“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.” (verse 26)** So here’s the apostles in Jerusalem, what’s their message? They’re preaching the cross of Christ, the blood of Christ, the grace of Christ, except when it comes to Saul of Tarsus, it can’t apply there. They’re terrified of this guy. And it’s going to be Barnabas who brings Saul, he is of the same province of Cilicia, he’s of Cyprus, Paul’s of Tarsus, and he’s going to end up sitting and talking with Saul, and believing his story and listening to him, and hearing reports, and looking at his face. Barnabas is the son of consolation, we’ve seen him in the past in his ministry. They didn’t believe that he (Saul) was a believer. **“But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of**

Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.” (verses 27-28) Now he told us in Galatians, he was there with the apostles for about fifteen days. Imagine what that was like. Wouldn't you have loved to have heard Peter and Saul of Tarsus talking? You know, some of you just got back from the tour of Israel, imagine what it was like for Peter to take Saul to Gethsemane and say *'It was here Saul, you know the disciples stayed back, James, John and myself moved on with him, he was a stone's throw from here, we could hear him sobbing, saying Abba, Father, ya, that's where I fell asleep and he woke me up, yes, yes, that's where this happened.'* Did they take Saul to the upper room and say *'This is where,'* and Saul said *'when he talked to me about the supper [last Passover] in Arabia,'* so that Saul could say ***“That which I received of the Lord I delivered unto you,” [1st Corinthians 11:23-24] “For that which I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.”*** [This was Jesus' last Passover meal on earth, which Jesus related to Saul in Arabia first-hand, relating to Paul the details of the New Testament Passover service Paul was giving instructions for to the Corinthian church.] What were those days like, I think how amazing, the questions, the dialogue, the things that take place. He was with them coming in and going out, it tells us in Galatians he saw James there. ***“And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.” (verse 29)*** Now he's picking up Stephen's ministry, and he's speaking against the Hellenists in the Cilician synagogues, and no doubt with great authority by this time, and they're going about to slay him, ***“Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.” (verse 30)*** Caesarea, which is actually north of Jerusalem, but every way is down from Jerusalem. Now, by the way, he's there (back in Tarsus) at least 8 years. You would think that if Jesus appeared to you, that's what your calling was like, knocked everybody down, spoke out loud to you, did a miracle, that immediately you're going to have a pulpit somewhere. No, this Saul of Tarsus ends up in Damascus (and Arabia) for 3 years alone, he comes back, they try to kill him in Damascus, he goes to Jerusalem, nobody wants to fellowship with him, they're afraid of him, and he finally ends up spending some days with them there, and as he argues in the Hellenistic synagogue,

then they want to kill him, and the disciples finally have to take him to Caesarea and sent him off on a ship back to Tarsus, *'Get out of town, will ya!'* And he's there for at least 8 years in Tarsus. So this is a man, between this call on the Road to Damascus, and when he finally comes to Antioch with Barnabas to begin public ministry, you're looking at a period of 12 to 15 years. But God was still working in this man's life, and seasoning him, and maturing him, for the great calling that he had set aside for him. It says they sent him off to Tarsus.

*Continuing To Connect The Dots As Peter Goes North,
Visiting The Churches of God*

“Then had the churches of God” churches plural **“rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” (verse 31)** walls were coming down. So we have a brief picture of the Church here, for a season at least, at rest, being edified, growing in numbers, and in comfort of the Holy Ghost. It's in that context now it tells us in verse 32, that Peter then went to Lydda. He's not going there because he's driven by persecution out of Jerusalem, he had been at Samaria, had seen the believers there, Peter's realizing more of his responsibility. It's over three years before, that he was in the area of Samaria, there were fledgling churches in some of these areas now. No doubt there had been those who were converted on Pentecost, and went back to some of these areas. [Comment: Jews from the entire Roman Empire had come to Jerusalem for that Passover-Pentecost season, and as we've seen in Acts 2, 3,000 Jews, some of them from all over the Roman world, went back to their homelands in the Diaspora, bringing with them their new faith, just as the eunuch from Ethiopia did. They would be witnessing to the Jews in these areas outside of Judea, and Paul would later raise up churches in these same areas.] No doubt there were those who had been driven out of Jerusalem in persecution who had gone to some of these areas. And then when we find ourselves looking at Lydda and Joppa we're told that Philip, after he is called away from the Ethiopian eunuch preached in the cities along the coast all the way up to Caesarea, so there had been strong Christian [Messianic Jewish] influence, Peter realizing his responsibility as an overseer, led by the Spirit, and we're going to

find, we're going to connect the dots, from this man named Eneas, there in Lydda, whose crippled, and the miracle that takes place sets the stage then for them to be brought to Joppa, and in Joppa a woman is healed, and he stays there at the house of one Simon the Tanner, who was considered "unclean," and we'll talk about that, that Peter would even stay at this man's house, the walls are coming down, and no doubt Peter would lay there and see new wine skins lined up against the wall, remembering that the Lord said **'You can't put new wine in old skins, it has to be put in new skins.'** Because it would be there that he would be called from the house of Simon the Tanner to the home of Cornelius in Caesarea, a Gentile. And the walls are breaking down. So a series of events are taking place here. It says **"And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda."** (verse 32) he's visiting the churches. They are about 23 miles from Jerusalem, very close to the Ben Gurion Airport these days. Ah, 10 miles more, 11 miles more would take you to Joppa, but he's there on the plains of Sharon, the area of Lydda, **"And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy."** (verse 33) Again, two words used of the palsy in the New Testament, one speaks of a condition where the person is shaking, uncontrollably, can't control himself, because of that he can't walk [Parkinson's disease], and the other word is "paralyticos," which means "paralyzed," that's our word here. This man had been paralyzed for 8 years, laying on a bed, no doubt bed sores, no doubt dependent on everyone around. We're not told he's a believer. Maybe he had heard the news of Christ and responded, but had huge questions, *'Then why, if God loves me, am I lying here like this?'* And Peter in one way or another, at the church in Lydda was introduced to this man. As Peter there is introduced to him, **"Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."** (verse 34) But listen, Peter had a powerful ministry of healing. What he says here **"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole"** "maketh," "eth" on the end tells us a little bit about the tense, it's a present tense here, means **'Jesus Christ, right now, is in the process of healing your physical body, it's happening right now.'** He's calling him to pay attention to what's happening, and he doesn't say he's doing it, he's saying Jesus Christ is doing it. **'Jesus Christ healeth, is right now making you whole again, and healing you Aeneas,'** that's what Jesus says to the man at the Pool of Bethesda, **'Take up thy bed and walk,'** and

it says ***'immediately he arose.'*** Just for a minute, whenever we come to these things, just think, I remember several years ago my son had his ACL repaired, and how quickly your one leg atrophies and loses muscle, and it was over just a period of a few months, immediate therapy and going to rehab. Realize what happens to someone whose paralyzed for 8 years, there is zero muscle tone, all the nerves are atrophied, the bloodflow has atrophied, your ligaments have atrophied. He says ***'Jesus is healing you, rise up and take your bed,'*** without therapy, without rehab, it may have taken years, this guy immediately, he has bloodflow, muscle tone, he has nerves repaired, everything, there's a creative miracle, creation of God that takes place, and this man stands up immediately. The implications I think in the medical field, you know, it's staggering what's taking place. And he takes up his bed, and he moves, immediately, and notice ***"And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron"*** Sharon, the Plains of Sharon area, all that lived in that area ***"saw him, and turned to the Lord."*** (verse 35) So the moving of the Spirit that had already begun there has only increased as Peter comes and his ministry among them and the Lord healing this man, and then it says ***"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."*** (verse 36) which we will have to wait to get to, but I encourage you to get to her on your own, a remarkable woman. And again, this will set the stage, read the rest of chapter 9 into chapter 10 to the house of Cornelius and this Roman Centurion, a remarkable man, undoubtedly. You're going to read, that those that are at Joppa, Jaffa today, heard that Peter was at Lydda. And no doubt heard about the miracle. So they send, because this woman dies. Again, it says they wash her, the *tehora*, and they place her in the upper room, wrapped in the [Hebrew word for a death shroud, can't understand how it's spelled], that Gamaliel has insisted in that day, that this be used. And Peter comes and prays for her, and it's the greatest miracle of Peter's apostolic career in regards to signs and wonders, raising someone from the dead. And it effects the whole community, we'll look at that. And then Peter remains in that area at the house of Simon the Tanner, and from there onto the house of Cornelius. So the dots are connected, and the providence of God working in a wonderful and beautiful way. Because there's a man whose saying *'Why, if God loves me, why am I laying here crippled 8 years?'* When you're laying there crippled for 8 years so you could be healed on the right day, so the woman in the next town

who got sick and died there, who could have died the year before or died the year after, died then, so the people in Joppa would be depressed and hear about what happened in Lydda, so they would come because she died at the right time, so they could come and get you [Peter] to Joppa, so you could pray for her so she could be raised from the dead, and then you could be overwhelmed at what God was doing there, and stay at the house of Simon the Tanner, so then we could have Cornelius have an angel come to him and send to Peter, to get Peter then to the house of Cornelius. So all of these is a tapestry, all of this God's wisdom, we stand seeing in part here [and some don't believe in pre-destination?]. And here we're allowed to see the big picture, when someone's sick, when someone dies, when someone's crippled, when something's going on, so often we say *'Why? Why Lord? Why is this person laid up in the bed? Lord, why of all the people in Joppa, why Tabitha, she was laying down her life for the less fortunate, it should have been me Lord, you should have taken me, she should have lived, she was so important to our community.'* All of those things are in the realm of human reason, but his ways are above our ways, as the heavens are above the earth, they're past finding out. Or else there's no reason for faith. And there are times when we must step out of the boat onto the water, for us to experience what God has for us, in the next day and in the next week and in the next month. And it's seen so clearly when we have the big picture, when we connect the dots and we see what the Lord's doing here. So, read ahead, let's stand, we'll pray, we'll have the musicians come, we'll sing a last song. And look, I would encourage you to do this, too, maybe there's an issue of forgiveness in your life, and you're on the difficult side having to forgive. I'm not saying it's easy, and I'm not saying it has to happen tonight, I'm saying remain in that struggle. Don't surrender to bitterness and to hatred, be honest with the Lord and say *'I know you're speaking to me, I just, I don't have the strength in myself, I'm willing Lord if you do it through me, but I can't do it,'* and keep your heart before him in that. And in his time, we will do what only he can do in your heart [or other's hearts that won't forgive or those who are misjudging you, goes both ways]. If you're on the other side, you think *'Ya, I'm part of the church, but man, the sins I committed, the things I did, the things, I have one thing that remains on my conscience, I can never get rid of it,'* well, are you worse than Saul of Tarsus, or Jeffery Dahmer or Ted Bundy or Tex Mars? You are worse than those individuals? no. What you need to say is, *'Lord, I haven't believed you, I've withheld some right, to be self-condemning, self flagellating,*

punishing myself over this instead of, Lord, coming to you with my whole heart and believing that your blood was powerful enough Lord. And tonight I want to do that, I want to drop that burden here, and I want to leave believing that I'm justified, sanctified and glorified, that you in fact are the God that calls things that are not as though they were, that the work of Christ is as effective in my life as it was in the life of Saul of Tarsus.' Maybe you need to bring that to him tonight...[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Acts 9:6-35, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

related links:

Audio version: <http://resources.ccpilly.org/SPM604>

To see some of the prophecies Paul used in the synagogues to prove Jesus, Yeshua of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, log onto: <https://unityinchrist.com/prophecies/1stcoming.htm>

Most Sunday-observing Christians and denominations believe the early New Testament Church went immediately over to observing Sunday as their day of worship. Is that really true, historically speaking? To read a research paper using the latest secular as well as Biblical facts, see <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>