

## *The Spiritual Pattern of Salvation*

Acts 9:1-19

Series: Topical

### 1. Introduction:

- a. Beloved, I preach here a message that we have previously heard but one that I believe is important for us to consider again.
  - b. Namely, today we discuss the process by which God converts the human soul.
  - c. We will endeavor to see, in the conversion of Saul, the radical nature of grace as it takes a previously worthless and violent life and transforms the individual into an instrument of great beauty of use.
    - i. Beloved, only God can save and the story of Saul's conversion teaches us great truths that God would have us now contemplate.
  - d. Today we discuss the pattern of salvation:
    - i. **1 Timothy 1:16** But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.
2. Verses 1-2 – **Natural Man, an Enemy of God** – But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

- a. Our passage begins with Saul **breathing threats and murder** against the church of God. Our Scripture compares Saul to the biblical dragon known as Satan. Although a religious man, Saul is in the kingdom of darkness and does the enemy's work. Saul, as representative of all lost men, is an enemy of God and His people.
- b. Saul **asked for letters...so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem**: notice with what ferocity the natural man fights against the things of God. Inside each man, there is a war being waged against God and His rule. This war frequently gives way to external demonstrations against God and His people.
- c. Up to this point, never had the church encountered such a foe
  - i. Saul represents the worst of human nature in opposition to God.
    - 1. And yet, Saul believes he is right with God and convinced of his Orthodoxy.
      - a. Man is not opposed to religion but is opposed to God and His Son
- d. The question arising from our passage is simple. Can such a man be saved? The Scriptures call us to understand that if the worst sinner is savable by infinite grace, then there is hope for all men. God can, and does, save all kinds of vile sinners.
  - i. **1 Timothy 1:15-16** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of

whom I am the foremost. (16) But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

1. Beloved, notice what this verse tells us. In saving Paul, Jesus openly displays Saul as an example of perfect and conquering grace. By saving Paul, Jesus declares his ability to save any man.

3. Verses 3-9 – Let us look into God’s Salvation manifested at the appointed time

4. Verse 3 – Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.

- a. Our passage opens with Saul unconcerned with conversion and salvation. Saul is occupied with the work of cleansing the true faith (Judaism) from error (Christianity). He is a pious Jewish man.

- b. But God interrupts Saul. Saul, hiding behind religion, is giving expression to the deadness within. Saul’s hatred is disguised as piety and murder as a duty. The salvation of the natural man first requires Divine Illumination - **a light from heaven shone around him.**

- i. **Romans 8:7-8** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. (8) Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

- ii. **1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

5. Verse 4 – And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

a. **Divine Humiliation** – Salvation must come through a humbling – no one can come into the kingdom boasting or full of pride. A person may not walk through the small door of salvation while standing erect.

- i. God knocks Saul off the horse. God puts Saul’s face into the dirt!
- ii. There must be a realization that, “I am not right with God.”
  - 1. God is stripping away all confidence that Saul might have. God is not pleased with Saul.
  - 2. Saul, because of his sin, is an enemy of God.

b. **Divine Separation** – **Why are you persecuting me?**

- i. Here God reveals to Saul that Saul’s soul is at war with God and all his self-justification and works are of no consequence. Saul is far from holy or pious, he is a most desperate sinner in need of a savior.

1. Saul realizes that what he thought commended him to God (cleansing Judaism from Christianity) is actually what condemns him before God. **Why are you persecuting me?**
  - ii. Saul realizes that the God of heaven is an enemy, one which Saul has been fighting against. God is not the natural man's friend but a foe.
    1. This is a desperate time for the unconverted sinner. He sees the separation caused by His sin. All his works, the initial source of pride, are as filthy rags before God.
6. Verse 5 – And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said,
- a. **Divine Desire for God** – **Who are you Lord?** We must ask ourselves, why did Saul ask such a question? Previously, he thought of himself as a knower of Yahweh. Now he openly admits his ignorance as to the identity of God.
    - i. GK. – **Kurios** – he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, Lord – In our context, the very person of God.
  - b. Saul freely admits that he doesn't know God. He thought he did, but this encounter has removed all false thoughts of knowing God.
  - c. **Divine Revelation** – **I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting**

- i. What stunning revelation. Imagine Saul's dismay. His hated enemy, Jesus Christ, is the God of heaven, the Lord.
  - 1. Saul's world is turned upside down.
- ii. There must be a revelation that the Lord (God) is Christ; that Christ is all that scripture says about him. Being the fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus is the one that can judge the actions of men as he does here with Saul.
  - 1. **John 5:22-23** For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, (23) that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.
- iii. Jesus teaches Saul that opposition to the church of Christ is opposition to God. By fighting against the church, Saul had been fighting against God Himself.
- d. To fight Christ is a losing proposition.

7. Verse 6 – *Divine Submission* – **But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”**

- a. Saul submits to the revelation of the true nature of Christ.
  - i. Without as much as a fight, Saul does what he would never have before. He submits to the Lordship of Christ.
- b. A Command Given
  - i. The Lord commands Saul as one that is under His Authority

8. Verse 7 – *Divine Election* - The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

a. God calls whom he wishes

- i. All the men saw the light, and heard the voice but they remained unconverted.
- ii. **Romans 9:15-16** For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” (16) So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

9. Verse 8 – *Divine Helplessness* – Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

a. God strikes Saul with physical blindness that is indicative of his spiritual blindness. Every man, naturally, is spiritually blind.

- i. **John 12:39-41** Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, (40) “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” (41) Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.
- ii. Brothers and Sisters, notice that before he thought he could see but not realizes how blind

he truly is. In order to see we must realize that we are blind.

b. The brash Saul is now being led by the hand; he is utterly dependent

10. Verse 9 – And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

a. *Divine Repentance* – The extent of his sin begins to sink heavily upon Saul’s conscience

i. **Acts 26:9-11** “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. (11) And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

11. Verses 10-14 – *The Church’s Unbelief and Unforgiveness* – Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” (11) And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of 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 evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. (14) And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”

- a. This portion of scripture starts with God calling Ananias. God sends Ananias to the exact house necessary to find a praying Saul.
  - i. What was the content of Saul’s prayer?
- b. Ananias initial response to God’s call was godly. But when Ananias hears the name of the man that he is to go to and accept into the brotherhood, he protests. He had two arguments:
  - i. Saul’s evil committed against the church of God – a forgiveness issue
  - ii. Saul’s possible evil motives –
    1. Mistrust
    2. Fear
- c. Beloved, we say that we believe that the gospel can change any man. We say that the new birth is the metamorphosis process by which the old has passed and the new is come. However, frequently we look at sinner’s and at their depravity and do not sincerely believe that God can save such an individual. We, like Ananias, would argue with God, “Are you sure?”
- d. Beloved, I want to ask you, “Do you believe that God can save anyone?”

12. Verses 15-16 – **Divine Election** – But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children

of Israel. (16) For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

a. Verse 15 – An emphatic command

i. Go – God is sending

ii. He is a chosen vessel of mine –

1. God’s chosen are forgiven all their multitude of sins.

2. God’s chosen are redeemed and used by God to bring Glory to His name!

a. Saul, this vile ex-sinner, was a chosen vessel by which God would proclaim the matchless riches of His grace to gentiles. Saul, this terrible persecutor of the church, would be transformed into one of the church’s best defenders and preacher.

3. Saul would learn to suffer in the same manner that he caused Christians to suffer. He would learn to love Jesus above his own life.

b. The beauty of God’s electing love is indescribable.

i. **John 15:16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

ii. **Ephesians 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, (4) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the

world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love (5) he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

1. Beloved, I believe that God's grace can make any man holy and blameless in His sight.

13. Verse 17 – **Divine Inclusion into the family of God**

– So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

14. Verses 18-19 – **Divine Renewal** – And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; (19) and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.

- a. Immediately He could see
- b. Immediately baptized as obedience in the name of Jesus Christ in the prescribed way
- c. Then he took food – obedience before food
  - i. He had not eaten in three days

15. Benediction:

- a. **1 Timothy 1:15** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

**Public Reading of Scripture**  
**Acts 3:12-26**