

A New Man With a New Mission!

Text: Acts 9:20-22

Introduction:

Saul is a changed man! While on his way to Damascus, with letters in hand, preparing to arrest any and all, who were of "The Way," Saul was arrested by the Lord Jesus Christ, brought to his knees, granted repentance, and ultimately baptized by Ananias, in Damascus. Following this, we were told that he spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Indeed, great rejoicing must have intruded upon the lives of the brethren in Damascus, when this former blasphemer and persecutor of the church, was converted; now a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ!

This morning, we move on to consider the beginning evidences of Saul's conversion, and the beginning of a ministry, though not unacquainted with many trials and sufferings; a ministry full of much precious Gospel fruit! Saul is a new man with a new mission!

I. A New Man With a New Mission

"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (20).

Talk about a change of plans! Behold, the power of the Gospel! The very synagogues, which Saul was preparing to enter, for the purpose of soliciting the approval and help of the lead Jews there; the very synagogues, which Saul was to enter, with letters in hand from the high priest, giving him permission to arrest all who were of, "The Way;" the very synagogues, where Saul would have been respected for his scholarship and especially for his opposition to the church, were now the very synagogues, that he would enter, for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus was indeed, the Son of Almighty God!

Notice brethren, we are told, "Immediately," Saul began to do this. Saul has come to the truth. He has seen that his whole life and training were taking him in the wrong direction. He was hell bound, and he didn't even know it. And what does one do, who is found in such a position? He immediately attempts to bring others into the light, which has exposed the truth to his own soul. There were synagogues full of unconverted "Sauls," blindly following through with their ritualistic traditions, walking right past the eternal life that is found in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. Granted, Saul was called to be an apostle, but in any case, could he just leave his fellow kinsmen in the flesh, bound to their darkness, when he has seen the light of God's truth?

Of course not! He had to expose the darkness, which once enveloped his own soul, so that he might set the prisoners free, in Christ. This was an immediate and urgent necessity! It was a rescue mission of desperation for Saul! And so, he went into the synagogues, and perhaps, much to the confusion and awe of the people, he proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ, and the Son of the Living God. Paul now owned, Peter's great "Caesarea Philippi" confession, because it was granted him, by the Father, to believe!

And friends, does such an urgency arrest our own souls, for the lost, who yet walk in darkness? The "walking dead," are ever before us, but we have the antidote, which can bring them back, which can give them new life, indeed, abundant life, in Christ! We have the Gospel, which God has used to awaken our dead souls, in our possession! The Lord said, "Lazarus, come forth," and out of the tomb we came, with the burial bandages still swinging from us! And brethren, sadly, it is so easy for us to lose the vision! It is so easy for us to settle down, and to forget the glory of our spiritual resurrection, and the hope that yet remains, for those who are still dead in their trespasses and sins! If the fire has dwindled, if the flame is shrinking, brethren, let us pray anew, for God to reignite our hearts with His precious Gospel truths, so that we might seek out Christ's lost sheep, from out of a perishing fold! Paul "immediately" went into the synagogues and preached the offensive, and yet, powerful, life-changing Gospel of Christ, and in doing so, he had separated himself from all of the support that once held him. The affluent lifestyle of a Pharisee, was now cast away forever! And Saul would learn what it is like to suffer hunger, thirst, pain, oppression, persecution, and much want, because of his new mission. Saul risked everything; but he had to, for He was arrested by Christ, and now belonged to Christ. Saul died, and now Christ lived in Him!

"Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?'"

"What a change? What is going on here? Is this not the same Saul, who reeked havoc in Jerusalem, arresting and imprisoning many, going from house to house, laying hold of men and women alike, who were of "The Way?" "And did he not come here, to do that very same thing? Did he not come to arrest all who are of "The Way," so as to bring them bound, back to Jerusalem, to stand trial before the chief priests?" Naturally, those in the synagogues were amazed and dumbfounded! What happened here? Well, we know of course, that this was

nothing less than a miraculous work of God, transforming the heart of a sinner. Saul had experienced the new birth, and he was now a new man, with a new mission!

Notice brethren, the people saw obvious, visible, tangible change, didn't they? This flies heavily in the face of that "private Christianity" notion, doesn't it? There are those, so-called "Christians," who are "closet Christians." They fear men and not God, and would rather bury their so-called faith in the closet of privacy. They say, "Well, religion and Christianity are private matters, not to be forced on others...etc." But again, notice the evident change in Saul. Saul did not hide his conversion, and someone in his position might very well be tempted to do so...for, he had much to lose! But the desperate need of lost sinners; the true understanding of Satan's deception, where we were and where we are now; indeed, the very glory of Christ, compels us to testify to the truth of the Gospel! We cannot feign a lack of change, if the Gospel has truly changed us! It is impossible! "Woe to us, if we preach not the Gospel!" [The Samaritan woman by the well in John 4---went and told many].

We are often excited to share our experiences with others, are we not? Things we have witnessed on vacation, amazing things that have happened to us, good news, bad news, current events, sports updates, political updates, movie reviews....etc. It is our nature to want to share with others, our experiences. How can we not share the most life-changing experience imaginable! We know God! We have been forgiven for our sins! God has delivered us from our blindness and darkness, and He has brought us into the light of Christ! Jesus is the Son of God, and the only way to God! Those who do not know Him, will perish eternally! How can we hide these glorious truths, brethren?! Like Saul, we are a new people, on a new mission! Our ideals, our interests, our desires, our entire life-focus has changed!

"But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (vs. 22).

Saul increased all the more, not in physical strength, but spiritually, and in his ability to understand, preach and defend the Scriptures, and especially the reality of Jesus as the Messiah. By use of the OT, Saul was able to confound the Jews in Damascus. He was able to show how those ancient texts, spoke directly of Jesus, who was crucified, and who had risen again, on behalf of lost sinners. And his opponents could not refute or answer him. Saul, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and having a more solid understanding of Scripture, was able to prove that Jesus was both the Messiah and the Son of God, in accordance with Scripture.

When the spiritual eyes are opened; when an individual is now occupied by the Holy Spirit, he can understand spiritual things. The blinders have come off, and he can see clearly, what he once could not see at all. Saul, could now see very clearly, Christ, in the OT. The Suffering Servant texts, and the Conquering King texts, now made perfect sense, converging together, in the One Man, Christ Jesus, who is the Son of God! [Similar to Stephen, whom Saul once persecuted and opposed. Now Saul could identify with Stephen, having been brought out of the blind position, of the opposition, and into the position of the regenerate testifier. Paul will, likewise, face intense persecution, beginning in the verses that follow].

Notice, the sufficiency of the OT, in defending the faith, and the truth of the Gospel! Saul did not have the NT. He had to preach from, and open up the OT. And, it is from out of the OT, that Saul drew forth all of the proofs, which confirmed Jesus to be both the Messiah, and the Son of God. Which texts might he have used? [Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Psalm 22, **Psalm 2**, *Deuteronomy 18:15ff*, Psalm 118:22, **Psalm 110:1**, **Isaiah 9:6-7**, Zechariah 13:7-9, **Zechariah 9:9-10**, **Micah 5:2**, Daniel 9:24-27...etc]

Amen!!!