

031 - Acts 9:8-17 A Chosen Instrument

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 66:18-23

Sermon: A Chosen Instrument Acts 9:8-17

Benediction: Isaiah 9:2

I. Proud Saul has been Humbled by the Lord Jesus Christ (8-9)

-Saul had thought himself to have keen insight into matters of religion and of God's law; He thought that his nation, Israel, and specifically his party, the Pharisees, and particularly his school, the school of Gamaliel, could see the truth more clearly than anyone else in the world; but the Lord Jesus has struck Saul blind, to show Saul that he had closed his eyes to what could be seen so clearly about Jesus; to show him that he was spiritually blind, and to show him what it is like for the gentiles, not to have any spiritual light, to be worshiping statues as if they are gods, to have no true hope, joy, or love (8a)

-Saul had come to Damascus to seek and find all who claim the name of Jesus; but the Lord Jesus has rendered him blind, so that he could not even find his next step unless someone held his hand; much less could he find all the disciples of Jesus Christ in Damascus to persecute them (8b)

-Saul had practiced fasting, twice a week, but all for show; he abstained from a little food, but only fasted to himself for the praise of men; now he has spent three days without eating or drinking, this time unto the Lord, not unto himself (9)

-Saul had thought himself a mighty man of prayer; as a Pharisee, he has worn his prayer tassles long, and made long, wordy prayers in the public places; but he was not praying to God; he was only praying to himself, to be heard by men, and thought religious; now, though, Saul truly is praying, humbling himself before God and praying to Him in the name of Jesus Christ (11b)

II. Humbled Saul has been Helped by the Lord Jesus Christ (10-17)

-The Lord has sent a disciple to him (11); Ananias, one of the very men Saul has come to put in chains and drag back to Jerusalem for punishment, has been sent to Saul to help him; and the Lord Jesus has shown this to Saul in a vision, so that Saul will know this help is coming from Him

-The Lord's disciple has welcomed Saul as a brother (17a); Oh, what a work of God's grace

-First, that such a wretched sinner as Saul has been so thoroughly changed that he is now a brother to those whom he previously persecuted

-Second, that Ananias, afraid of Saul, and dubious about his conversion, is given strength by the Spirit of Christ to embrace his persecutor as a brother

-The Lord has healed Saul of his blindness

-Jesus Christ's servant, Ananias, has laid his hands on Saul

-something like scales have fallen from Saul's eyes, to show how Israelites, blind in their stubborn rebellion, and Gentiles, blind in their ignorant darkness, will see the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the preaching of Saul

-The Lord has filled Saul with the Holy Spirit

-The Holy Spirit has come upon Saul, that Saul may be powerful in the work that Jesus Christ has for him to do

III. But why? Why has proud Saul been humbled and helped by the Lord Jesus Christ?

-Has the Lord Jesus Christ done this for Saul because Saul, with his free will made a choice, made a decision to believe in Jesus Christ?

-no, which we can see in what happened: Saul had been persecuting the church--- starting with Stephen, continuing in Jerusalem and other cities, and lately coming here to Damascus to continue the persecution; right up to the moment that the Lord Jesus Christ struck him down . . .

-no, which we can know from a consideration of our will (elaborate)

-free to do what he wanted to do, desired, wished

-nature, heart handed down from Adam contains no desire to trust . . .

-and so this free will is actually captive to its own sinful desires

-Has the Lord Jesus Christ done this for Saul because He looked ahead in time and saw that Saul would believe if only he heard the truth about Jesus Christ?

-God does not know the future because He merely sees it; He knows the future because He controls it

-God would not be God if someone else were controlling the future, and He were only observing it

-Even God could not know the future if He were not controlling it

-It cannot be that the matter was up to Saul, and God just looked ahead and knew what Saul would do, entirely on his own

IV. The Lord Jesus Christ has done all of this for Saul because Saul is a chosen vessel of His (15)

-What is meant by a chosen vessel? (elaborate)

-The Lord Jesus Christ knows Saul to be a chosen vessel (eternally)

-So, the Lord Jesus Christ has done this not because of Saul's choice, but by His choice

Was it because He sought the Lord? Was it because He chose Christ out of the goodness of his heart?

-No, he had done much harm to the saints already, in Jerusalem

-He had come there to Damascus to arrest all who called upon the name of Jesus Christ

You see, Saul, like all of us, had sinned in Adam. And the horrible, sinful corruption that came upon Adam's human nature when he sinned had been passed down to Saul, as it has been passed down to each of us. And so Saul was acting out that nature.

In the late 300s and early 400s a church teacher named Pelagius put forth his idea of why. He taught that when Adam sinned, the human race did not become quite so corrupt in nature as others might think. Pelagius taught that no person is born into the world with a nature already corrupted by sin. Instead, every person is able to desire true devotion to Jesus Christ, and so must simply choose to be obedient to Christ, instead of choosing to be disobedient. His views were challenged by Augustine, Jerome, and others, who taught the truth as to this

1200 years later, in the early years of the 1600s, another church teacher, named Jacobus Arminius, arose in Holland, the Netherlands.

Mahan:

-Saul had LOTS of orthodox religion, but no sense that he needed forgiveness.

Acts 22:6-16 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. (7) And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' (8) So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' (9) "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. (10) So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' (11) And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. (12) "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, (13) came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. (14) Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. (15) For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. (16) And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Acts 26:13-18 at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. (14) And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' (15) So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (16) But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. (17) I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, (18) to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

Gill:

real blindness; and which was an emblem of the ignorance and blindness he had been in

His eyes were blinded to communicate to him that he had been spiritually blind; blind to the truth.

Poole:

He shall suffer as great things as he ever did cause or inflict;