

**how much
evil he hath
done to thy
saints**

Acts 9:13 – 38

~ Our last report from our Spiritual Safari left a newly converted Saul of Tarsus wondering what in the world had happened to him on that road to Damascus; and what the “great things” he must suffer for Jesus’ Names sake were going to be. Also in our last report, we considered the remarkable manner in which the Holy Spirit used the Word of God to work through the man of God, Philip, and convert the Ethiopian eunuch. You will recall three elements are required for a genuine conversion of a lost sinner to genuine child of God who is trusting and obeying the Lord. Those three requirements are: **(1)** the Holy Spirit **(2)** the Word of God and **(3)** the man of God; all are mandatory to complete any conversion that ever has or ever will take place. So, someone has asked how that applies to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? And that is a fair and legitimate question. We’ll get the answer in this section of Scripture and with the help of the chart below:

The Three Representative Conversions
 Acts 8 — Ethiopian eunuch — Son of Ham
 Acts 9 — Saul of Tarsus — Son of Shem
 Acts 10 — Cornelius, Roman centurion — Son of Japheth

There must be 3 factors that come into focus before there can be a conversion. All 3 are evident in these representative conversions:

The HOLY SPIRIT (Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ)	The WORD of GOD (Faith cometh by hearing the Word of God)	The MAN of GOD (Instrument)
Ethiopian — Holy Spirit directed Philip	Isaiah 53	Philip
Saul — Holy Spirit led him down Damascus road; Jesus dealt with him directly	Was grounded in the Old Testament	Stephen
Cornelius — Holy Spirit supervised every detail; prepared Peter and Cornelius	Peter preached Christ	Peter

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared to Saul; but that's not the earthly man component in his conversion. On that day – and today as I type this report and you read it – the Lord Jesus Christ is the Man in the Glory. He ascended bodily to Heaven. You must remember that the Lord Jesus said before He died He was going to prepare a place for us, and that He would not leave us as orphans. Jesus also said in the meantime the Holy Spirit would take the things of Christ and show them unto us. That's precisely and only what we are searching for in this so-called safari, my beloved. When Jesus appeared to Saul, He opened his eyes spiritually while closing them physically! That was the only way Saul was ever going to see the Lord Jesus. Even so – and again – Jesus is not the earthly man's witness in Saul's conversion.

Saul was a Pharisee, and he knew Scripture well. I'm sure Paul was more acquainted with the Old Testament than all of the apostles combined. If any man was literally saturated with the Word of the Lord, it was Saul of Tarsus! When we get to the epistles, it is obvious Paul was more than well-versed in the totality of Scripture; and all the language and doctrine associated with it. Alright, we also said a man of God had to be involved, but there was no human instrument present on the Damascus road at the conversion of Saul. So, we still need to reconcile that.

In several previous reports, we learned the early church was really a youth movement. There was a young man named Steven who was diametrically opposed by Saul of Tarsus. Remember, Steven said he saw Heaven opened and Jesus standing there at the right hand of God to receive him as Saul was murdering him. Saul looked up and said he didn't see anything. Well, Saul had looked into the eyes of Steven; and Saul knew Steven had seen something. That was the human instrument that led to the account of salvation for Saul on the Damascus road. Friends, you can just write that down.

So, my premise that all three aforementioned elements are required for the conversion of any individual stands according to Scripture, friends. Without those three things – the Spirit of God using the Word of God through the true man of God – you just aren't going to have a true conversion – not

ever. That's the reason you and I need to cast our influence for the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere – even when we are around those who hate us and who would kill us if they had the chance. That may be the only person you truly witness to in your entire life.

So, we followed Saul last time as he was led into Damascus on a street called Straight; and we saw the brilliant man named Saul become extremely confused. That's when the Spirit of God sent Ananias over to pick Saul up, dust him off and give him some help. The Lord had appeared to Ananias in a vision, and the Lord spoke to him and told him to go get Saul. Of course, Ananias must have been questioning whether or not God was serious....

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 here he 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.

~ God called Saul and chose him as a vessel for two very definite reasons: First, and foremost, Saul was to bear the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. At this time, Saul is NOT called to witness for Christ. That's because Paul never knew Jesus when Jesus was a man here on earth. Saul was present at the crucifixion, but he would have known nothing about the earthly ministry of Jesus. The first time Saul met Jesus was in the dust of a road outside Damascus. The Name Saul was to bear is the Name we bear today. Saul was told he was going to go before three different groups of people: the Gentiles, kings and the nation Israel. When we see Paul go out, we see him use the synagogue as a springboard into the community and lives of any particular city he found himself in.

The second reason Saul was chosen as a vessel for God is that God was going to show Saul great things he must suffer for His Names sake. No one has ever suffered as much as Paul the apostle suffered in this life – and you can just write that down. Paul’s suffering prevents any of us from saying no one has ever suffered as much as we are suffering. Many people say that, and they ask why God would permit trouble to happen to them. Job sure wondered why. Well, if you are reading this report, the Lord will have you know you are not suffering anything even remotely close to what Saul suffered for the Name of the Lord....

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 Spirit.

~ The filling of the Holy Spirit is essential for service to God. We went over that exhaustively in our previous report. Baptism of the Spirit of God is experience or experiences revealed in the life of a believer. Saul was baptized by the Holy Spirit on a dusty Damascus road. That’s where Saul was saved. However, it’s not until Ananias came to him by the leading of the Lord that Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned for service; because that sequence of events must happen in order for Saul to become a witness for Christ. Of course, Saul is going to have to physically see again, and he regains his eyesight at the same time....

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.

~ Of course, verse eighteen refers to water baptism. Water baptism is a sign and seal of identification of conversion, and an outward profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As with us, physical water has nothing in the

world to do with salvation. Saul was saved on the Damascus road and baptized much later, according to the Scriptural account. Well, as soon as Saul can stand on his own two feet again, he immediately began to witness for Christ by preaching Him as the Son of God in the synagogues.

Now, my friends, you MUST know Who Christ is before you can truly believe what He did for us by dying on the cross. You must know Jesus is God. There's no other way around it. The only reason Jesus could die for our sin is because He is the Son of God. I couldn't die for your sins; you couldn't die for mine. That's perfect nonsense. We have to be clear in our minds that Jesus was the Son of God before we can ever begin to trust and obey; and trusting and obedience are inextricably intertwined, by the way. Well, this is where Paul begins his ministry....

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, the very True Messiah!

~ So, let's make sure we know exactly who Saul really was. He was number one in suffering; number one in the capacity of a missionary; and number one in the intelligence quotient department. Saul is a brilliant genius and, I personally, just do not feel there was ever any man smarter than Saul was. As we read his epistles, we are going to realize truths at depths none of us would have ever realized on our own; again, you can just write that down. Many are still trying to tackle Pauline intellect today; and Paul's writings are still confounding those people. Well, of course, if you can't win the argument, then why not just kill the man? ~

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of 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.

~ I'm sure this experience was both thrilling and humiliating for Saul. Interestingly, we don't find Paul running around the Roman Empire giving lessons or lectures about going over a wall in a basket! That ought to be a real lesson for those of you who constantly deal in sensationalism. We need to always keep our own experiences in check and never let them get in the way of presenting Christ! When our person gets in the way of His Person, we simply fail to present Him properly, correctly and completely. Candidly, that's Andrew Hunt's number one problem – but I digress.

There is a very pious prayer of yesteryear that says, "... hide the preacher behind the cross!" Oh, no, my beloved readers – you are to help the preacher or teacher who truly believes God to present sound doctrine – not hide anything. Help them present the Person of Christ in such a way that the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and make them real to myriad others. That is so critically important to understand....

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.

~ Naturally, the people were a little skeptical of Saul; and they thought he was being deceptive and trying to worm his way in to find out who the believers were so he could identify and kill them! They had some experience with Saul and others like him who had done this before. Simon the sorcerer was a little worm, and these believers knew Christian-haters would use any tactic at their disposal to infiltrate their group surreptitiously; particularly if there was financial gain to be had. Well, along comes Barnabus at this time; whose name means son of consolation and comfort....

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 that he had spoken

to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

~ It can be a great witness - and even an entire life's ministry - to simply put your arm around a new baby Christian and give them some loving encouragement. Helping a newly converted child of God is a ministry that is severely neglected and desperately needed today. All I seem to see are negative posts about unbelievers going to hell or pointing the fingers at so called "false teachers" and "false prophets" – well, friends, that type of talk just doesn't save souls, it will never encourage anyone to believe, it certainly does not edify you; and does absolutely NOTHING for the cause of Christ....

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.

~ So, now we see Saul back in Jerusalem with the Israelites. The "Grecians" are not Greeks – this means Jews; and the only way they thought they could deal with Saul was to eliminate him. Saul is getting a little taste of his own medicine! We reap what we sow, friends – even if we are converted in the meantime. There are very definite consequences of sin. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth betimes. That will be the story of Paul's life; culminating with being murdered by Nero in a Roman Mamertine Prison. Alright, after this, Saul is going back to his hometown. I think he went back to tell his mother and father, brothers and sisters and relatives all about the Lord Jesus and about being saved. Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about any of them; Paul does mention some of his relatives in the epistle to the Romans, but we aren't given any details....

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 Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied.

~ The church is continuing to grow in this passage. Now, I recognize there are many people who read these reports to merely satisfy a curiosity but, internally, are looking only for some small error in teaching; or to just attack me personally - because what I write is generally much different than what most people have been taught concerning the Bible. That's okay with me, because I recognize the Bible is not taught properly, correctly and completely in our contemporary churches. Some of the seemingly most-educated pastors in the world are woefully Scripturally illiterate. Well, friends, I don't guess at the Bible. I actually studied it – the whole thing – from front to back, and several times, too, by the way. I just thought this would be a good time to reiterate my credentials and let you dear readers know that...

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.

36 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.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

~ Simon Peter had the sign gifts of an apostle because he was an apostle. The only gift Tabitha, or Dorcus, possessed was engaging in the social service of sewing. That was her gift, and it was an extremely important gift from the Holy Spirit. Even something as seemingly mundane as sewing clothes can be a gift of God. I think we would all be quite alarmed if we discovered the things God actually uses for His glory from our lives; and what things He doesn't use. Likely, most would be disappointed. Others would be dumbfounded. Everyone would offer a completely errant guess.

Too many modern-day Christians are seeking some exciting, sensational and fleshly gift of service. The simple help that is badly needed, such as sewing clothes for someone, is deemed beneath the saints. Everyone wants to be the leader, pastor, music director – or Bible teacher. Some want the self-appointed holy spotlight of being the one who heals. It's all shameful nonsense, friends! Instead of babbling in tongues, which does no one any good, and no one understands – including yourself – why not pray for a real gift that is practical and useful because it can be shared? The Spirit of God knows what you are thinking, friends – He doesn't need you speaking gibberish to Him. In fact, I believe God would like you to be honest with Him for a change. Perhaps confess your sins in a language you both understand. It will do you well.

Sisters in Christ, why not learn how to sew since you can't speak in tongues? Men, maybe you can learn to financially support the man who DOES actually have the gift of teaching Holy Writ sincerely and systematically - instead of usurping something you aren't called to do. Dorcus likely never gave a speech at a woman's Bible class, and I highly doubt she ever attempted to teach anything – except sewing. Even so, she was a better saint than most of us ever will be.

Alright, our safari ends this report with the preparation for the burial of a dear saint in verse thirty-seven; and, in verse thirty-eight, these people certainly expect Simon Peter to raise her from the dead. Simon Peter had that gift – and anyone that has the gift of tongues – or healing – my friends, you better have the gift to raise the dead, also; otherwise, you're nothing but a phony and a fraud! In the next leg of our expedition through the

entire Word of God, we will see the raising of Dorcus, from the dead. I hope you can continue with us ~
