**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Resurrection Series**

Acts of the Holy Spirit – In Paul: Acts 9:5 “Who Are You Lord?” III

November 10rd, In the Year of Our Lord 2024

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(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

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Note: Final version of sermon is posted with possible additions.

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**Paul’s Life**

It is important to study the life of Saul/Paul because he penned thirteen letters (Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus and Philemon) that became part of the twenty-seven letter New Testament written by nine writers. The writer of the book of Hebrews is unknown but the author is God. The overwhelming historical evidence dates twenty-one (21) of the New Testament letters to be circulated by 70 A.D. The five letters attributed to the Apostle John, and Hebrews, were in circulation by the end of the 1st century. With the death of the last eye-witness, Apostle John, the twenty-seven (27) letter New Testament became the unique standard accepted document of God’s incarnation

into flesh as Jesus the prophesied suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53).

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, [Paul’s thirteen] Hebrews, James,

1st and 2nd Peter, 1st,2nd, 3rd John, Jude, Revelation.

We have the account of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9, written by Luke, which is supported by Paul’s own letter to the churches in Galatia. Galatia is the name of the central region of Asia Minor. Paul planted churches in the southern region of Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe). Therefore, the letter was intended to be passed from one town to the next. In fact, all the New Testament letters were intended by God to be circular.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians’ is his account of Luke’s report of his epiphany with the Resurrected Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

**Galatians 1:13-24**

Paul speaks (autobiography) to the Believers in Galatia who had been influenced by Jews (legalist, false teachers -Judaizers) who taught that approval to God was through the Law. Paul claims his extensive Jewish credentials is his witness that the Law of Moses is insufficient in justifying a person to God.

13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to

persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

15 But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called

me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me;

but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

 18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with

Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.

 19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

 20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

 22 I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;

 23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the

faith which he once tried to destroy."

 24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

**Galatians 2:1** Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2 It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.

**Let us read and compare Paul’s autobiography in Galatians with Luke’s report in Acts 9.**

1 Now Saul,

still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

 3 As he was traveling,

it happened that he was approaching Damascus,

 and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;

 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice [Jesus] saying to him,

**"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"**

 5 And he **[ Paul ]** said, "Who are You, Lord?"

 And He *said*, **"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,**

 **6 but get up and enter the city,**

 **and it will be told you what you must do."**

 7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

 8 Saul got up from the ground,

and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing;

and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias;

and the Lord said to him in a vision,

 **"Ananias."**

And he **[ Ananias ]** said, "Here I am, Lord."

 11 And the Lord *said* to him,

**"Get up and go to the street called Straight,**

**and inquire at the house of Judas**

**for a man from Tarsus named Saul,**

**for 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 harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests

to bind all who call on Your name."

 15 But the Lord said to him,

"**Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine,**

**to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;**

**16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."**

 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said,

"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales,

and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

 19 and he took food and was strengthened.

Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,

 20 and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying,

"He is the Son of God."

 21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying,

"Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name,

and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"

 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength

and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus

by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

 23 When many days had elapsed,

the Jews plotted together to do away with him,

 24 but their plot became known to Saul.

They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;

25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

 26 When he came to Jerusalem,

he was trying to associate with the disciples;

but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took hold of him

and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

 28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem,

speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

**Luke also reports Paul’s defense (apologia) after he was arrested at Jerusalem Temple.**

**Acts 22:1-30**

**1** "Brethren and fathers, hear my **defense (apologia)** which I now *offer* to you."

2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,

 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

 4 "I persecuted **this Way** to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

 6 "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,

 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me,

'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

 8 "And I answered,

'Who are You, Lord?'

And He said to me,

'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'

9 "And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

 10 "And I said,

'What shall I do, Lord?'

And the Lord said to me,

'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'

 11 "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light,

I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.

 12 "A certain **Ananias**, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near said to me,

'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. 14 "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

[Back to Paul]

17 "It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance,

 18 and I saw Him [Jesus Christ] saying to me, '

Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me [Jesus Christ].'

 19 "And I said,

'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.'

21 "And He [Jesus Christ] said to me,

'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

 29 Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains. 30 But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them. 31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

**So, what do we learn** from reading God’s Word written by Luke and Paul…

 about Saul/Paul? Concerning the name change, we have many different ideas presented over history. What we do know, is that sometimes in the Old Testament when there are accounts of a person having a personal encounter with God, their names were changed. Abram to Abraham (Gen. 17:5), Jacob to Israel (Gen. 35:10). Saul is a common Hebrew name, as in King Saul, who was the first king of the United Monarchy (1050 B.C.) Paul is a Latin name which was the language used by the Romans. The Greek rendering of Paul, is *Paulos*.

In reflection of these three passages of Scripture in Acts and Galatians, I see a template for our own testimony and witness to how the Lord saved each of us and who we are to witness. I ask that we consider Paul’s encounter with the Lord and his response that leads to his witness. Paul went on at least three missionary journeys through southern Asia and eastern Greece that are chronicled in the New Testament witnessing and founding churches along the way. <https://www.theologyfortherestofus.com/pauls-four-missionary-journeys-the-complete-guide/>

I present an abridged list of Paul’s witness from which we can draw from and apply to our own personal ministry.

1. God can use the most capable person who had been in opposition to His redemptive plan. Saul, being one of the most learned and zealous Pharisees was confronted by God in the midst of his rage (Acts 22:4; Galatians 1:13-15).
2. Paul’s is a ready witness, (Acts 22:1) and he presents his life-story as his personal apologia (defense) including where he was born, grew up, education and religious background in Judaism and his former manner of life before he surrendered to the Lord. Above all, Paul claims that he was set apart by God from his mother’s womb to do the work of God. This is reminiscent of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5).
3. Paul includes detail about his commissioning authority to the high priest and Jewish counsel in Jerusalem in persecuting Jesus’ followers (Acts 22:4,5; Galatians 1:13).
4. Paul testifies to his personal conversion from Judaism to Christ (Acts 22:6-21).
5. Paul includes witnesses to His life and conversion (Acts 22:12).
6. Paul provides geographic detail pertaining to his conversion and events after he met the Resurrected Lord (Acts 22:6).
7. Paul witnesses that after his conversion he did not consult with flesh and blood but went away to Arabia for three years (Galatians 1:16-17).
8. Paul testifies that he confirmed his understanding of the Gospel with the leaders in Jerusalem, being Peter and James the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:18, 2:1-2).
9. Paul provides witnesses he traveled with and those he reported to in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18, 2:1-2).
10. After years (fourteen) in the ministry field Paul still reported back to the leaders in Jerusalem to confirm his teaching and understanding of the Gospel (Galatians 2:1).
11. Paul witnessed to the fruit of the Lord’s ministry in him by reporting that the Lord was Glorified (Galatians 1:24).
12. Paul, as Saul, asked the basic question most people have about God, “Who are You Lord?” (Acts 22:8).
13. The Lord made it clear to Saul who He is. Remember that Romans 1:18-20.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

1. Saul asked a basic question anyone would ask, 'What shall I do, Lord?' (Acts 22:10).
2. Once Saul surrendered to the Lord, he could not see (Acts 9:8; 22:11) and had to be led by others. I see Saul’s blindness as a message to all of us. Once we have surrendered to the Lord, we can be in a weakened state. . . meaning that even though our hearts have surrendered to the Lord, we need others to guide us and help mature us in order that we can serve the Lord. This may take some time. I also note that after Saul was physically healed, he still had a long way to go in order for the Lord to use him. Saul went away to Arabia for three years (Galatians 1:17-18).
3. Like Saul’s friends and associates in Judaism, not all our old friends are going to greet us with open arms once a person surrenders to the Lord. And not all Believers will accept a new Believer due to their knowledge of a past life (Acts 9:23,26; 22:18,19).
4. God will assign others to help us and serve with us. Paul was helped by Anaias (Acts 9:12) and served with Barnabus, Peter, Mark, Luke, and many more.
5. The Lord will direct our path as when Jesus directed Saul to leave Jerusalem (Acts 22:19).
6. The Lord told Saul that he will suffer for His name’s sake (Acts 9:15). We too will have hardships because we witness in Jesus’ name.

There are many more attributes and ministry characteristics we could list. However, we are all unique in the Lord and do not have the same spiritual gifting or life experiences. We end today with contemplation on Ephesians 2:8-10. The Apostle Paul penned these words, and I know he lived the plans God had for him.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith;

and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

10 For we are His workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus for good works,

which God prepared beforehand

 so that we would walk in them.

**AMEN**