

# SEEING THE LIGHT

*how to prepare your heart for learning and sharing the gospel*

## LESSON 9 | PAUL CAME TO SEE THAT GOD'S PURPOSE for him would include HIS SUFFERING | 1/31/2021

Already in this study of Paul's conversion to Jesus Christ, he learned to had to accept that 1) Jesus was the Son of God, that 2) God commanded people to be loved, not hated, that 3) sin was the source of his problems, that 4) there really is life after death because of Jesus' resurrection, that 5) all religions were not equal before God, that 6) conversion is not a miraculous event, and that 7) the FAITH that truly saves is manifest in true PENITENCE and BAPTISM. Last week, we noted that Paul would come to see the light when he would see the purpose God had for him – a destination beyond anything he would have imagined as Saul of Tarsus.

And today, in complete counterpoint to the way Christianity is often sold to the masses that "God would want me to be happy", we are focusing on the words spoken to Saul as he came to see the light:

- **God to Ananias** (Acts 9:16) | "But the Lord said to him, "...For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My name..."
- **God spoke to Paul** (26:16-18) | "For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you...; **rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles**, to whom I am sending you....".
  - a. Luke recorded, "When many days had passed, the Jews' plotted **to kill him**... They were watching the gates day and night **in order to kill him**..." (9:23-24).
- **Jesus to Paul** (22:17-21). | "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly because they will not accept your testimony about Me...." "Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles"
- **Paul to Christians:**
  - a. Paul wrote, "Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, **such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me**... (2Timothy 3:10-11).
  - b. Paul wrote to Corinth, "Why are we **also in danger every hour**? I affirm, brothers and sisters, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I die daily. If from human motives I **fought with wild beasts at Ephesus**, what good is it to me?" (1Corinthians 15:30-32).
  - c. Paul to Rome, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, **that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart**" (Romans 9:1-2).
  - d. Paul to the Galatians, "But as for me, brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, **why am I still persecuted?**" (Galatians 5:11).
  - e. Paul to the Corinthians, "But in whatever respect anyone else is bold—I am speaking in foolishness—I too am bold. Are they Hebrews? So am I!... Are they servants of Christ?—I am speaking as if insane—I more so; in far more **labors**, in far more **imprisonments, beaten times without number**, often in **danger of death**. 24 Five times I received from the Jews **thirty-nine lashes**. Three times I was **beaten** with rods, once I was **stoned**, three times I was **shipwrecked**, a night and a day I have spent **adrift at sea**. I have been on frequent journeys, in **dangers** from rivers, **dangers** from robbers, **dangers** from my countrymen, **dangers** from the Gentiles, **dangers** in the city, **dangers** in the wilderness, **dangers** at sea, **dangers** among false brothers; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" (2Corinthians 11:21-29).

Paul would go on to say to all Christians in his last letter to Timothy, "Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..." (2Timothy 3:12). He saw the light of what the life of living as a Christian looks like.

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Saul of Tarsus went through an incredibly thorough transformation in becoming the apostle Paul – a change from darkness to light. It was more than just a name change, from Saul to Paul; it was more than a religious change, from Jewish to Christian; it was a wholesale change of everything about him. That he went from “persecutor to persecuted” is more than just a catchy way of saying it, it was visibly true<sup>1</sup>. And Paul was clearly warned to help him see the light of what was ahead of him – and what it would mean for him to be converted to Jesus Christ – in his time.

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Making application to today, when people find themselves on the fence of serving Jesus...

1. Jesus wants me to be happy.
2. Jesus does not expect my life and choices to be hard.
3. Jesus would not let these things happen to me.

Some even validate their pursuit of worldly objectives under the guise as the Christian religion so that they have little to fear or to worry about.

So, what do I mean by “Visibly true<sup>1</sup>?” While on his Third Missionary Journey (and with about 12 more years of life to add to this “visible” evidence), Paul recorded to the Corinthians that he had been “beaten times without number,” plus “five times” he received “thirty-nine lashes,” plus “three times” he was “beaten with rods,” plus “once” he “was stoned” (2Corinthians 11:23-25). Is it likely there were not visible evidences of what Jesus said would happen to him – even besides the times Jesus said he would rescue him?

When Saul saw the light, he did not know the depth of suffering in which he would be immersed – especially as an Apostle. To all the Apostles, Jesus replied, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized” (Mark 10:38-39; c.f. Matthew 20:22-23).

Likely on the same Third Missionary Journey, Paul wrote the Galatians and said, “I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus” (Gal. 6:17, NASB). The ASV translates that, “I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus.” It is very probable that **Paul bore the wounds and scars of persecution** that he had violently endured for the cause of Christ. Interestingly, in this passage, he chose to use a word (“brand-marks”) that was used of the marks that were put on a slave to identify his owner. The marks on Paul’s body were visible identifiers of his owner.

So to see the light, we need to know we have signed up for living godly – and facing the ungodliness of our world – even if it is in a landmark. We may not bear literal marks of persecution that identify us as followers of Jesus Christ, but I ask: *Do you bear any marks that would help an observer to identify you with Christ?* Paul stated it another way in 2 Corinthians 4:10, “Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” Is the life of Jesus manifested in your body?

When others look at you, do they see the humility of Jesus? The compassion of Jesus? The servant-heartedness of Jesus? The forgiving spirit of Jesus? The steadfastness of Jesus? The gentleness of Jesus? The obedience of Jesus? The patience of Jesus? The self-control of Jesus? The courage of Jesus? The friendliness of Jesus? The honesty of Jesus? The dependability of Jesus? The purity of Jesus? The zeal of Jesus? The peace of Jesus? The love of Jesus?

There were certain “marks” that made Jesus stand out as the Son of God. Those same “marks,” when emulated in our lives, can help us to stand out as sons of God and friends of Jesus Christ. If someone looked at the “brand-marks” manifested in your life, who would they surmise to be your owner?

Lesson 10 – Amazing Strength and Convincing Proofs