

## 77. Paul Said the Lord Called Him to the Gentiles

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to see the glory of the Lord. We saw that Paul explained how the glory of Jesus as He spoke from heaven to Paul totally changed his life. We want to help our children understand that the Lord also wants to change and transform their lives. In this topic, we will see that Paul finished sharing how Jesus of Nazareth had changed his life. We also see that the Lord had told him what he would do in the future.

Acts 22:12-16 says, “Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*, 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. 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. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”” As we continue the testimony of Paul to the Jews in Jerusalem, Paul told them about Ananias.

We see that Ananias was a devout man according to the law. Ananias was a Jew that was a godly man. All of the Jews who lived in the city of Damascus knew and respected Ananias, because he lived a godly life. Paul said that Ananias was the man who came and spoke to him when he had been blind for three days, because of the light that had shown from heaven when he was getting close to Damascus. He said that Ananias had called him brother Saul. Paul had come to arrest the Christians in Damascus. The first recorded words that Paul heard from a Christian were, “Brother Saul”. Here, we see one of the great changes that also happens in each of our lives at the moment of salvation. At that moment, we become a part of the family of God.

That Ananias told Saul to receive his sight and immediately his vision was restored. However, Paul went on to tell a few of the other things that Ananias said to him. First, we learn why a person is changed and becomes a part of the family of God. Ananias said, “The God of our fathers has chosen you.” This is a key thing for every new Christian to understand. Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” The Father chose us to be in Christ before the world was ever created. Second, we see that God chose Paul to know His will. Ephesians 1:9 says, “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.” Here, we see that it is the desire of the Father for every Christian to know the will of God.

Third, God chose Paul to see the Just One. Fourth, God chose Paul to hear the voice of His mouth. In these two statements, we see that Ananias told what had happened to Paul on the road to Damascus. He had both seen Jesus and he had heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him. Paul made a similar statement in Acts 26:16 where we read, “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.” Paul had seen Jesus (the Just One) as well as heard His voice that day on the road to Damascus.

Then, Ananias invited Paul to give testimony of the fact that he had repented of his sin of unbelief. Paul had repented and placed His faith in the death and resurrection of Christ and so Ananias invited him to give testimony of his salvation by being baptized. Paul had shown his repentance when He said on the road to Damascus, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Romans 10:13 promises, “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” Paul had been calling on the Lord for three days as he prayed without His sight. Acts 9:18 says, “Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.” This verse shows us that Paul was baptized that day.

Acts 22:17-18 says, “‘Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, “Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’”” After a period of time, Paul had returned to Jerusalem. Galatians 1:15-18 says, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.” Here, we see that it was a period of three years before Paul had returned to the city of Jerusalem. During this time, Jesus had taught him personally in the desert.

When Paul had returned to Jerusalem, he had been praying in the temple. While he was praying there, we see that Paul was in a trance. The word translated “trance” means *a condition in which the ordinary understanding of circumstances is not happening so that the person can focus totally on a vision that is given by God*. In Acts 10:10-12, we read, “Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.” Peter was the other person in Acts that had fallen into a trance and God had shown him that he was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles gathered in the house of Cornelius.

Here, we see that Paul experienced the same kind of a trance in the temple. The Lord gave a message to Paul just as He had earlier given a message to Peter. In this message, Paul said that the Lord had told him to get out of the city of Jerusalem. Acts 9:29 says, “And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.” Here, we see that when Paul had returned to Jerusalem, he had boldly shared the Gospel with the very group of people he had led and for whom he held the coats when they stoned Stephen to death. That was why the Lord warned him to get out of Jerusalem quickly. The Lord knew that his former friends would not receive the message of Paul.

Paul then shared the answer that he had given to the Lord. Acts 22:19-20 says, “‘So I said, “Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’”” Paul had a great concern to share the

Gospel with his friends. He had probably thought they would listen to him, because of the way that the Lord had changed his life.

Those friends had known how Paul had gone to many synagogues to imprison those who had placed their faith in Jesus. They knew how he had beaten them in his efforts to destroy the church. Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.” Paul had been so eager to stop the followers of Jesus that he did not even care whether they were men or women. Whoever he found who was a follower of Christ he would imprison, whether it was a man or a woman.

Paul said that his friends knew how he had participated with them in the stoning of Stephen to death. They knew that he had guarded the clothes of his friends who had stoned Stephen. Acts 7:58-59 says, “And they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’” However, the Lord had told Paul to get out of the city of Jerusalem quickly, because these fellow partners in the death of Stephen would not listen to him. Instead, the Lord knew that they would kill him just as they had killed Stephen. These people were no longer his friends. Instead, they had become his enemies.

Paul then told the crowd the final thing that the Lord had told him in that trance in the temple. Acts 22:21 says, “‘Then He said to me, “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’”” Here, Paul told the crowd in Jerusalem the commission that the Lord had given him. The Lord had said that He would send Paul far from Jerusalem to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. This reminds us that both the trance given to Peter and the trance given to Paul in the book of Acts were direct messages from God for them to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews had been listening to Paul with a great silence that day until he said the word “Gentiles”. Acts 22:22 says, “And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!’” Here, we see that the Jews gathered there that day were immediately ready to kill Paul when he mentioned the Gentiles. We will learn more about what happened that day in our next topic.

We see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. We want them to understand that God has also chosen them for a purpose. John 15:16 says, “‘You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Just as the Lord chose Paul to bear fruit among the Gentiles, the Lord has also chosen each of us to bear fruit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children discover the purpose that the Lord has given them for their lives.