

## **Jesus, Offering Grace to His Enemies**

### **Acts 9:1-7**

#### **Introduction:**

1. In our Bible, we see several appearances of Jesus Christ. All of these appearances were prophesied beforehand. But did you know that Christ made a surprise, unprophesied appearance? He appeared in Acts 9 to a man named Saul of Tarsus.
2. One of the most significant events in the Bible is the salvation and conversion of Saul of Tarsus (better known as the apostle Paul). Why do I say this? Consider this:
  - Saul's conversion is more **fully** described and more **often** referred to than any other conversion in the Bible.
  - It is more fully described and referred to than any other personal experience in the Bible, other than the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.
  - Virtually three entire chapters in the book of Acts are taken up with the account of Paul's salvation.
  - So aware was Paul himself of the significance of his conversion that he refers to it repeatedly in the 13 books he wrote in the New Testament.
3. Paul was a blaspheming Christ-rejecter on his way to Damascus to arrest believers. On the road to Damascus, he had a face-to-face encounter with the risen Savior, Jesus! Paul was the chief enemy of Christ, but that day he became a believer. He was a changed man.
  - Paul stands as an example of the fact that no person is beyond saving and beyond changing. Paul was blaspheming Christ at the beginning of this chapter and was boldly preaching Christ to others by the end of the chapter.
4. Here in Acts 9 we have the record of exactly what happened and what was said. Paul recognized and accepted several truths about Jesus Christ that he had not understood or accepted previously.
5. Christ can save anybody, but every person must accept the truth about Jesus Christ if he or she is to be saved. What did Paul learn that day about Christ?

#### **First, Paul learned that Jesus Christ is light.**

1. Paul was a cruel persecutor of Christ's followers (vs. 1-2). Notice the word "yet." How much blasphemy and bloodshed is contained in that little word "yet!"
2. This is a reference to the entire time period of chapter 8 when Paul made havock of the church (8:3), persecuting it beyond measure, laying it waste. Galatians 1:13
3. Then suddenly a light shines around him (vs. 3). This wasn't a normal light, but a light from heaven (vs. 3), a great light (22:6), a glorious light (22:11), and a light that was brighter than the sun at full strength. 26:13
  - **Illustration:** Here in Florida we know about the sun at full strength. You can't look into it. It is blinding. It is why we wear sunglasses.

4. As you read on, you learn that this light was Jesus Christ! Over and over again, Jesus declared Himself to be the light of the world. John 12:46
  - Paul didn't believe this about Christ. Paul thought his self-righteous religion was light. He thought he **was** walking in light. He excelled in the Jews' religion. Paul was religious, but lost, groping in darkness. Then he realized, **Jesus** is light!
  - Without Jesus Christ, you are in darkness. John 8:12
5. Paul was walking on the road in the physical light of the sun, but in spiritual darkness. After meeting Christ, he was walking in physical darkness (blind), but in the spiritual light of the Son, Jesus Christ.
6. Maybe today you feel like you are stumbling through life in darkness. Come to Jesus! He will give you light to walk through this life. Ephesians 5:8, 14

### **Second, Paul learned that Jesus is all-powerful.**

1. Notice Paul's response when Christ appeared: he fell to the earth (9:4), he trembled (9:6), the men with him stood speechless (9:7), and they were all afraid. 22:9
2. Let me remind you, these were not a bunch of sissies. They were mean, tough, cruel, and brutal men. They were in the business of torturing, imprisoning, and killing people.
  - They were the religious gestapo – mean dudes! Yet, these men were stopped in their tracks, and thrown to the ground, trembling and speechless.
  - Paul was the ringleader. He had his letters from the high priest that he felt justified his violence and rage against Christians. He was arrogantly walking this road to Damascus, full of himself, and then, "Boom!" He is thrown to the ground and blinded.
3. Paul learned that Jesus' words were true when He said, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" **Matthew 28:18**
4. After Paul experienced the power of Christ on that Damascus Road, he later would write these words:
  - "*Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord... declared to be the Son of God with power...*" **Romans 1:3-4**
  - "*...Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*" **1 Corinthians 1:24**
  - Christ is "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.*" **Ephesians 1:21**
  - "*Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting.*" **1 Timothy 6:16**
5. If Jesus is your Savior today, that King, that Lord, that light and that power dwells in you! You have an all-powerful Savior!