

Jesus, Offering Grace to His Enemies – Part 2

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. 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.
3. 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.

Second, Paul learned that Jesus is all-powerful.

Third, Paul learned that Jesus is alive.

1. Up to this point, Paul was an unbelieving, skeptical, religious zealot. He held to the religion of Judaism, but did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus made a surprise appearance on that Damascus road and asked Paul a question: “Why are you persecuting me?” Paul answered in kind of a strange way: “*Who are thou, Lord?*” What was the answer (vs. 5)? “*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*”
 - He basically says, “I’m Jesus. I’m the One you are running around persecuting. I’m the one you are saying is not alive. Guess what, Paul. I’m alive! I did rise again.”
3. After Paul’s salvation experience on this road to Damascus, his main message was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts 13:28-39
4. Everywhere Paul went, he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. What is the gospel? 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 has the answer. Many times people will leave out the resurrection when presenting the gospel. Without a resurrection we have no gospel. If you stop at the cross, you have a dead Savior who can’t save anybody.
5. Until a person accepts the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he cannot be saved. Romans 10:9
6. Do you believe Christ rose from the dead? You can live in denial of it like Paul was doing, but it is a historical fact. One day every person will know.

Fourth, Paul learned that Jesus is full of grace.

1. Paul called himself the chief of sinners. He had just taken part in the brutal murder of a man of God, Stephen. Paul was now on his way to Damascus to persecute and jail more believers. He epitomized Israel's rebellion against Jesus Christ. He was the ringleader.
 - Israel had said about Jesus, "*We will not have this man to reign over us.*" **Luke 19:14**
 - This attitude was wholeheartedly endorsed by Saul of Tarsus. When Israel stoned the man Stephen in Acts 7, Saul was right there consenting unto his death. Acts 8:1
 - Paul was viewed as the leader of the rebellion against Christ. Saul was the personification - or symbol - of Israel's rejection of Christ, the Messiah. Acts 26:9
2. When a light suddenly appeared, and Paul was thrown to the ground, you would have expected judgment on this wicked man. Many times in Scripture, the word "*suddenly*" is associated with judgment. Proverbs 6:14-15, 29:1
3. But the word "*suddenly*" in our text did not mean judgment, it meant **grace**! Paul deserved divine judgment, yet he received grace from the hands of Jesus. Paul knew this better than anyone. 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 1:13, 15; 1 Timothy 1:13-14
 - Paul was kicking against the pricks. Paul was a sinner who was guilty before God, and his rebellion just increased his guilt.
4. Paul deserved the wrath of God, but instead received the grace of God. To Paul was revealed that God would give not only him, but the entire world, an opportunity to be saved from their sin by the grace of God. Ephesians 2:1-8
 - The world's rebellion was to have resulted in the outpouring of God's wrath, but God deferred judgment and ushered in the dispensation of grace.
5. For the past 2,000 years, God has been pouring out His grace on this world. Paul was the chief (or first) in a line of sinners saved by pure grace. Christ is now offering grace and reconciliation to all of His enemies in the world. Colossians 1:21-22
 - The very basis of God's offer of grace is the cross-work of Jesus Christ. He paid for our sin and disobedience. God can offer grace to us because Christ took our judgment!
 - The salvation of Paul is the supreme demonstration of what the cross could and did accomplish.

Fifth, Paul learned that Jesus is Lord.

1. At first, Paul was not sure who was talking to him, but he suspected that it was a divine manifestation, so he asked, "*Who art thou, Lord?*" He was thinking it was the Jehovah God of Israel that he already knew about from the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. After he discovered that it was the God-Man, Jesus Christ, Paul used the same word and said, “**Lord**, *what wilt thou have me to do?*” This is very important. Up to this point, Paul didn’t believe Jesus was anything other than a man, or false prophet. Now he calls Him “*Lord*,” the same name as Jehovah God of the Old Testament!
 - Paul learned that they are one and the same. Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one.*” He said, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*”
3. In that one word, “*Lord*,” Paul was saying, “I now believe that Jesus is all He said He was. He is the divine Son of God (vs. 20). He is the very Christ, or Messiah.” vs. 22
4. Paul believed that Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh. 1 Timothy 3:16
 - Later Paul would write about Christ in 1 Timothy 6:15: “*Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.*”
 - Paul would also say these words in Philippians 2:9-11: “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”
5. If a person simply believes that Jesus was a good man, a prophet, or a moral teacher, he cannot be saved. You must believe that He is Lord, and He is the only Savior.
6. Have you ever humbled yourself and trusted Christ to be your personal Savior? He is offering you the same grace that He offered Paul on that Damascus road.
7. Paul was the enemy of God, but came to a place of total forgiveness and peace with God through his faith in Jesus Christ. You can have peace with God today. Romans 5:1

Some of the most precious words ever written are the words, “*Christ died for our sins.*”