

How the Lord Jesus Turns Rebellious Sinners into Saved Subjects

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Saturday, June 11, 2022 ◻ Read Acts 9:1–5

Questions from the Scripture text: Who was still doing what (v1)? Against whom? To whom did he go? For what did he ask (v2)? To where to do what? What was he doing in v3? What happened? What does Saul do (v4)? What does he hear? Whom is he persecuting? What does he ask (v5)? What does the Lord answer about Himself?

How does the Lord save even a zealous persecutor of the church? Acts 9:1-5 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these five verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that Jesus saves sinners by ordering their lives, proclaiming Himself to them, and subjugating them.

v1 ties us back to the beginning of chapter 8 and back to the subject of persecution. In that place, we saw how the Spirit used persecution to spread the gospel via the persecuted. Now, we see how the Lord uses the persecution to apprehend the persecutor himself. Saul is going to Damascus to eradicate the church (v2), but before he leaves Damascus, he will be irrefutably preaching Christ (cf. vv20–22). What happened?

Jesus apprehended him. Jesus is more diligent to save sinners than any persecutor is to destroy Christians.

Jesus apprehended Saul by ordering the events of his life. He gets Saul literally right where he wants him (near Damascus, v3), then He makes a light to shine on him from heaven. The Lord doesn't always do this so supernaturally. Sometimes, He brings an elect unbeliever to circumstances that undo him. Sometimes, He just brings them into contact with someone full of zeal for the gospel. Sometimes, He puts them into a covenant family where they'll hear the gospel on a daily and weekly basis.

Jesus apprehended Saul by addressing him. At first reading, it doesn't sound like much of a gospel presentation, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me" (v4) and then "I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting" (v5). But there are so many glorious things there:

1. Jesus is alive! Dead people don't get persecuted. He is risen.
2. Jesus is in heaven! The light shone down upon Saul to indicate the heavenly location of the risen Lord—just as Stephen had said.
3. Jesus is God! Mere men from heaven are not heard on the earth.
4. Jesus is united to His church! The question was not "why are you persecuting them?" but "why are you persecuting Me?" This is how we come to be saved, by being united to Christ. But it is also the ongoing reality of believers' lives; our everyday experience is so shared by Christ that our suffering is His. And by the same union His inheriting and glory will be ours (cf. Rom 8:17).

Jesus apprehended Saul by subjugating him. Saul had been resisting Jesus, in some ways, more than anyone else on earth. But now, he is brought to subjugation by conviction, emphasized by necessity.

Saul becomes subject to Christ by conviction, the fact of the matter is that Jesus is God. When Thomas discovers this, he falls down and worships. Saul has the advantage of already being on his face. Everything that he has known about the LORD from the Old Testament is now heightened by the fact that He is Jesus. It is one thing for Jesus to say "I am the Lord." But here, Jesus speaks by virtue of His divine nature with a sound that only Saul can interpret (cf. Ac 22:9, Jn 12:29), saying "I am Jesus." What a moment for the Pharisee of Pharisees, to learn that *the LORD is Jesus!* Suddenly, Jesus is the object of his worship as the divine LORD, as well as his allegiance as the Messiah, the King. Saul becomes subject by conviction.

But Saul's subjection is emphasized by necessity. What is Saul going to do now? His self-serving, Christ-opposing purpose in life has just been dashed to pieces. And how is he going to do it? He can't even get around without being physically led by others. We'll consider the Lord's leading of this new convert in the next passage, but for the purposes of seeing how Jesus subjected Saul, we observe that He brought Saul quickly to a place of extreme weakness and dependence. Often, Christ brings us into a greater subjection to Him by bringing us into a moment—or even extended season—of intensified weakness and dependence. This is a glorious mercy to liberate us from our rebellion!

Jesus is still saving sinners by apprehending them—by proclaiming Himself to them and liberating them from their rebellion. O that you would know Him to have done so for you, dear reader!

Have you been apprehended by Christ? How do you know—Whom do you know Him to be? What is your relation to His lordship? How does union with Him factor into your present and future life?

Sample prayer: Lord, we praise You who rule and overrule all things for the purpose of bringing to Yourself each one for whom You have died. Open our eyes so that we may see, and open our ears so that we may hear, the wonderful truths about You in Your Word. Make us to know union with You and submission to Your lordship as the great realities of our life now and forever, for we ask it in Your Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP23A "The LORD's My Shepherd" or TPH425 "How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Acts nine, one through part of verse 6. This is These are the words of God. Then Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus.

So that if he found any who are of the way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem As he journeyed. He came near Damascus and suddenly a light, shun around him, from heaven. And they fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him.

Saul Saul. Why are you persecuting me? And he said, who are you? Lord. Then the Lord said, I am Jesus. Whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goats, So he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what do you want me to do?

So far the reading of God's inspired and there aren't worked.

So we have an example here.

Of the way God saves. One of the things I need to do is cut out as it were not really cut out, but highlight the fact that the majority text does not have from. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. All the way to the end of the Lord said to him a right versus six begins with horizon.

Go and verse 5 ends with whom you are persecuting.

But we have here really in these four and a half verses then or these five verses that go to the end of the word, persecuting, We have how the Lord saved the chief of sinners. Not only is pull the chief of sinners in his own eyes. As each of us ought to be for, we know our sin and although God knows it better than we do.

We know our sin better than anyone else does better than we know anyone else's sins. And therefore every one of us ought to have a profound humility before God, We're not going to be able to be humble in and about ourselves or before and unto other men. Unless we are profoundly humbled by God, unless when we come before him, we see ourselves as entirely deserving of his wrath entirely.

Without any goodness from ourselves. And any goodness that is now given to us as over against what we have deserved not just what we are in ourselves, but what we have deserved. So, there's a sense in which each of us knows ourselves to be sinful before God as the Chief of sinners and therefore, not having any grounds to theologize our way into viewing others.

In a way in which we look down upon them, But there is an objective sense in which Saul was the chief of sinners. He was literally the most opposed person to Jesus Christ in the world. He was the most zealous for the persecution of the church. He led the charge in Jerusalem and when he was running out of persecution options in Jerusalem or when he saw that there, perhaps were enough people persecuting the church in Jerusalem and he understood that Christians were spreading.

He wanted the persecution to spread as fast as the church did. And so he's going now to Damascus to, to persecute Christians there, and he himself will later. Identify the greatness of his sin with opposition to Christ. If the knowledge of God is first and foremost, knowledge of Jesus of love of God, is first and foremost, love of Jesus.

Then opposition to Jesus is the greatest sin that there can be. And so by giving us this introduction and reminding us of what Saul was doing. The last time we saw him that he's breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. Then the Holy Spirit is giving us a case study here.

This is someone, this is the account of someone's conversion, someone's salvation and he gives us someone who is the objective chief of sinners. Because each of us know ourselves subjectively in our own experience as the chief of Sinners from what we have experienced of the world. So we have a case study than of salvation.

How does Jesus save this center? And how does Jesus save such sinners as this, and we see him doing at least three things here. One is he saved sinners by ordering their lives? Second is he safe? Sinners by proclaiming himself to them. And third, we see that he saves sinners by subjugating them under himself, bringing them into subjection.

And submission. It's in the first place. He saved sinners by ordering their lives. Verse 3 as soul journeyed. He came near Damascus and suddenly a light shining around him from heaven. This light is from heaven, which means it is always available to God. Paul is on earth, and God is in heaven.

And the Lord Jesus himself is, of course in heaven. And Saul has been persecuting for some time At any one of these times the Lord Jesus, At any moment, could have sovereignly intervened. And so, the selection of this moment we see as being not up to Paul. But up to Christ, We are not in charge of when we are enabled to come to faith.

We are not in charge of when our hearts recognize the Lord. Jesus, as God, who came to save us, we are not in charge of when we submit ourselves to Him. And not only receive his testimony about him, but become his obedient servants, those who belong to him, whose hope is entirely in him and who are completely under his authority.

We're not in charge of these things. And so you see the, the first thing that we see about how Jesus saves sinners. Is he orders our lives? And so if we're hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, preached, he's the one who's in charge of when and where, and from whom he's no lesson charge of this with pole on the road to Damascus, Then he is with with Paul in the house to which Ananias comes in a few verses and he finds finds him there.

What is the house? The house of Judas? Verse 11, Jesus is in charge of both events, but here he has a spot picked that when Saul gets there on his way to Damascus, almost in the city, the Lord allows him almost to accomplish his goal of entering, the city for persecution, and they shines the light from heaven.

The Lord Jesus is the one who picked your family for you. The Lord Jesus in His providence. See works. All things according to the council of his will has ordained even through our free choices. He is not less free because we are genuinely free. He is the one who ordained that we would be sitting here.

Looking at this, passage thinking about these words, Saul is definitely responsible for his sin and yet, we see that the one who is going to save him as the one

who had laid out ordained the events of his life. And he has laid out and ordained the events of our lives as well.

So sometimes the Lord brings, you know, an elect unbeliever into circumstances that undo him, that make that bring us very low. Sometimes he brings them into contact with someone full of zeal for the gospel. That's the way They get to hear about the gospel. They haven't gone seeking because of how low they've been brought, but rather the Lord just brings someone into their lives.

For some of us, he brought us into a covenant family, where we would be addressed with the gospel of Jesus Christ over and over our whole lifelong. And yet he has picked the moment. Even if we can't remember what moment it was that he would bring us to a realization of our sin and His mercy and his salvation that he would bring us to faith.

So the first thing that first way by which Jesus apprehends soul, is by ordering the events of his life. The second way that Jesus apprehends, all is by addressing him. The scripture will say, actually this man, who's being converted in, this passage will be the one who's whom. The Holy Spirit is, is to write how will they believe him whom they have not heard.

And how will they hear without a preacher? Well, Saul heard the Lord. Jesus preached. Many times in the synagogue of the Friedman earlier, at least discussed many times witnessed many times by Stephen And he was there for Steven's defense, his trial that wonderful gospel sermon about who the Lord Jesus, is that he is both Lord and Christ and yet the time that he was brought to faith, Jesus himself was the preacher.

And the sermon was Saul Saul, why are you persecuting me? I am Jesus. Whom you are persecuting. All he did was proclaim himself. Now, there are some things that solve finds out in this small address this 30 or 15. However, many seconds it would take in Greek, or maybe Hebrew, Paul, knew both.

So, we don't know if this is a translation of a Hebrew conversation and he finds out first of all, that Jesus is alive, he thought that Jesus had been a mere man. He was put to death but he finds out that Jesus is alive. You know, you can't persecute dead people.

He's trying to persecute people to death But then once they're dead he stops persecuting them and finds a live person to persecute. What he finds out though here is that he's been persecuting Christ the whole time. Second thing he realizes Jesus is not just alive, but he's in heaven, Jesus is alive.

And he is in glory, and the voice has shown, or the light has shown from heaven, the voice that he hears is associated with the light. The risen Lord Jesus is where Steven said he was. And so, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus are part of the proof of everything else that Stephen had preached about Jesus.

And so, Paul has all of these Old Testament passages and that he knows. And he's a Pharisee and Pharisees and he has an explanation of each of those Old Testament passages about Jesus that he's heard from Stephen. But one of the linchpins in Paul trying to cling to this opposition to Christ, is that Jesus can't be God.

And man. But Steven's been preaching that Jesus is not only God and man, but they proved it by rising from the dead. And that the further proof is that he's sitting at the right hand of God and of course Paul doesn't believe that he thinks that's blasphemy. He holds the coats of people who stone people who say such things.

But then he finds out, it's true from personal experience because a light shines on him from the place that Steven says he saw him. And here's a voice from the place that Stephen says he saw him and he realizes all of those things about Jesus or true. He's not just alive, but he's in heaven and therefore, he is not just the Christ, he is, as had been preached in the day of Pentecost by Peter.

And as Steven opens up in his defense is trial and had been arguing before, in the synagogue of the Freedmen that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. So he's not just in heaven as the mediator as a man. He has God and this explains why who I Paul can hear him on earth because there's a gap between the the living.

And the debt that no man can bridge. And yet Jesus has not just a human voice, but a divine voice, he is able to speak in the way that he has been speaking from for 4,000 years, before he ever becomes a man. And so he realizes that Jesus has two natures and he is able to do, according to each nature That which is appropriate.

In fact, there's a point There are several points at which Jesus identifies himself as the Lord, but here it is. Jesus as the Lord identifying himself as the man. So, there's this wonderful inversion that takes place here. The Lord Jesus, addresses him by his divine nature, and identifies himself, as the man who had died and risen on the cross died, on the cross and risen from the dead and descended into heaven.

And instead of Jesus saying, I am the Lord. Now, the Lord says, verse 8, I am Jesus. And so these aren't just theological revelations where, where the Jesus apprehends Saul by proclaiming himself to Saul, but it is a new reality for him. Saul comes to faith, not just by intellectually concluding, huh?

I guess. He's God and the Christ after all. But by becoming a worshiper of him as God and becoming a servant and a subject of him as the Christ As the text is written in our passages. You know, we have here before us the text is receptus, which has the least at this point more in common with drone's Latin.

Then then the majority text, the Byzantine, ecclesiastical the historic Greek text throughout the ages. So it is hard for you to kick against the goads and then so he trembling an astonished said Lord, what do you want me to do? That's not actually in there, but we have, if we were going to read it the way it's originally written, he says, I am Jesus.

Whom you are persecuting arise and go into the city. And you will be told what you must do. The men. Then the tells us about the men in verse 7. And then in verse 8, then Saul arose from the ground, They let him by the hand, brought him into Damascus and so forth.

There's nothing for soul to do, except for what Jesus says to do. For two reasons, One, he's just realized that Jesus is God and the Lord, but second of all, he's been rendered completely helpless. What's he going to do? He can't even walk himself now. He has to be led by men wherever he's going to go.

If you is going to have any kind of effective, life whatsoever going forward, he's going to need his sight back and so God brings him both by conviction. And by necessity into subjection into obedience, he has to have help getting up and going When Jesus saves someone, when he who died for us and when he who died for a particular elect center, has brought them to the point of their life in which he is going to bring them into union with himself through faith.

He not only orders their lives so that they get to that point. He not only proclaims himself to them and gives them experience of him knowing that it's not just a preacher on earth who has dressing them. But Jesus himself, who is revealing himself to them through his word, He always brings that person to be a worshiper and obeyer of himself.

The, the only Savior there is as the one who brings us into subjection to himself. Jesus, Jesus brings us to the place where the rest of our life must be lived in obedience to him. Whether we realize it or not and often he gives us extra weakness. Like he did here for Saul, who has become Paul, so that he would realize it.

So, let us ask the Lord to help us see him as a savior to praise him for the providence, by which he brought us to the point of salvation or to ask him to save us. If we are not sure that we are saved that he would make us to hear and know him as both Lord and Christ and that he would help us to remember that.

We are His subjects and so not only are we helpless, but we also are obligated apart from obedience to let's pray. Lord, would you pray that you would help us? I stumbled fair amount in my explanation, my speech, but it's just another reminder O, Lord of how entirely we depend upon.

You, you are the one who lends us, our sight moment by moment. You lend us our breath, our physical life moment by moment. You lend us our spiritual life moment by moment and so we thank you that we may have life in you. We thank you that the one has died for us as the one who has ordered out the events of our lives.

We bless your name for that, We pray that you would make us to be grateful and thankful. Lord, if there are any listening even live now, or want to recording later, whom you had not yet. Brought to that moment where you made them to realize who you are. I pray that even now as I pray or as they hear the recording of the prayer that it would be the time that you make their heart to know you as not only the risen, mediator the Christ, but the Lord Himself, who created all things and rules over all things, proclaim yourself to our hearts.

We pray by means of this work in which you have proclaimed, yourself fully, and clearly grant the attending of your spirit that we might here your voice and enter while there's room. And so we pray that you would having convinced us of who you are that you would sustain us in a right response to you.

That we would be worshipers and their bears that we would be subjects not trying to make you serve our interests, but delight it to do all that pleases. You are God and King. You have saved us. We ask that you do this for us in your own name. Lord, Jesus 425.

Her sweet and is the place With Christ within the doors while ever Lasting love displays The chores and stars While and all our songs Join to the feast each cries with thankful tongue. Lord, why was I Against? Why was like to hear your voice and enter while there's room When thousands That's a choice and other starve Then come Twice that spread the yeast.

That sweetly drew us. You refuse to test and Parished in our sins. Petty constrain the earth to come tell you brought and bring the strength stranger's home. We want to see Your church, just fall that over the truth and raise may live one voice and heart and soul. Sing your read me.

Great. Amen.