

# Great Commissions

Sermon Five: Great suffering for the Great Commission [I will show him how much he must suffer]

## Acts 9:1-19

**Opening ILL:** When I was an unbeliever, I was miserable. Now, when I say this, I don't mean that I was ALWAYS miserable or that I was never happy. What I mean is that as an unbeliever, although I sought to be happy, my heart was filled with pain. And then I started to read the Bible and go to church. I got saved and started to worship God. And you know what happened? I was still in pain. The sufferings of my life didn't vanish. Here's the good news, though. I didn't expect them to. Why? Because I started reading the Bible, going to church and in hearing the true gospel, got saved.

I wish that I could say that everyone who claims to preach the gospel is really preaching the gospel. I wish I could say that every book that is called a "Christian" book would lead you in the truth of the Bible. Sadly, this is not the case. So many go to Hell on the offer of the "Happy Life" gospel. They are promised that coming to Jesus removes all suffering.

Tonight, we will see that God had a plan for the Apostle Paul. Now, wouldn't we expect that God's plans for Paul/Saul would be pleasant, happy plans? Let's see how much he will have to suffer for Christ.

*Galatians 6:17* From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

### I. Review/Introduction

- A. We are examining these times in the Bible in which God approaches a person.
- B. Today, we will interact with the conversion of one of the most important people in the history of the world.

### II. What do we know about Saul of Tarsus before chapter 9?

- A. Up to this point, he is known as a
  - 1. Co-conspirator with those who killed Stephen (Acts 7:52).
  - 2. Horrible persecutor of the church (Acts 8:1,3)
- B. What else do we learn about Saul?
  - 1. He was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6; 26:5)
  - 2. He was the protégé of a famous rabbi (Gamaliel—see Acts 22:3)

### III. Saul's bad breath (Acts 9:1-2)

- A. Saul was "still breathing threats and murder" against the disciples of the Lord (v. 1a)
- B. Saul obtained official permission to arrest any and all Christians (v. 1b-2)
  - 1. Saul approached the High Priest
  - 2. Saul asked for letters in order to ensure his authority.
  - 3. Saul was looking for any and all Christians...not just men.
  - 4. Saul was authorized to bind them and bring them to Jerusalem.
- C. What is the point of all of this?
  - 1. To remind us that Paul was trying to make people suffer.
  - 2. To remind us that Paul was hostile to the church and to the Lord.

### IV. Saul sees the light...or does he? (Acts 9:3-9)

- A. Saul was traveling toward Damascus.
- B. Saul was suddenly enveloped in a strange light.
- C. Saul is made to kneel before the Lord.
  - 1. Notice that Saul does this before he has any idea what was going on. (see v. 5)
  - 2. Notice that Jesus identifies Himself as "Jesus" instead of the other choices at His disposal.

- a. He could have said, “This is the Son of God” or “This is the Messiah”
  - b. It seems that Jesus wanted to get right to the point.
- 3. Notice that Jesus says that He Himself is the victim of Saul’s persecution.
  - a. What can we draw from this?
- D. Saul receives new orders (v. 6)
- E. Saul’s experience happened in front of witnesses (v. 7)
- F. Saul obeys the command of His new master (vv. 8-9)
  - 1. He got up had to be led to Damascus, not being able to see (v. 8).
  - 2. He was blind for 3 days as punishment (v. 9a).
  - 3. He fasted for 3 days in a show of repentance (v. 9b).

#### **V. Here am I...send me? (Acts 9:10-19a)**

- A. Ananias gets “thrown to the wolves” (vv. 10-14)
- B. The Lord reaffirms His command (vv. 15-16)
  - 1. He is a chosen instrument of mine.
  - 2. To bear my name before the Gentiles, Kings, and the Sons of Israel.
  - 3. I will show him how much he must suffer for my names’ sake.
- C. Ananias lays hands on the one who wanted to lay hands on him!
  - 1. Notice that he refers to Paul as “Brother Paul”.
  - 2. Notice Who Ananias points to: “The Lord Jesus, the One who appeared to you.”
  - 3. Notice the purpose Ananias cites.
  - 4. Notice there was something fishy about Paul’s eyes (v. 18a).
  - 5. Notice that Saul’s obedience was immediate (v. 18b)

#### **VI. The hunter becomes the hunted—How much DID Paul have to suffer for Jesus?**

- A. **Acts 9:16** for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.
- B. **Galatians 4:12-16**
- C. **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**

#### **VII. What does this mean to us? (Conclusions)**

- A. We may not always feel that we are good at what God calls us to. (Moses, Jeremiah)
- B. We may not always feel successful in what God calls us to. (Isaiah, sermon one)
- C. We may not always be safe in what God calls us to. (Paul)
  - 1. Romans 8:16-18
  - 2. Philippians 1:29-30
  - 3. Acts 5:41

**Closing quote:** "If your Lord calls you to suffering, do not be dismayed, for he will provide a deeper portion of Christ in your suffering. The softest pillow will be placed under your head though you must set your bare feet among thorns. Do not be afraid at suffering for Christ, for he has a sweet peace for a sufferer. God has called you to Christ’s side, and if the wind is now in his face, you cannot expect to rest on the sheltered side of the hill. You cannot be above your Master who received many an innocent stroke. The greatest temptation out of hell is to live without trials. . . Lay all your loads by faith on Christ, ease yourself, and let him bear all. He can, he does, and he will bear you. Whether God comes with a rod or a crown, he comes with himself. ‘Have courage, I am your salvation!’ Welcome, welcome Jesus!"