

July 28, 2019

### **Some Things A Blind Man Saw**

*“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (3) As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. (4) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ (5) 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 goads.’ (6) So he trembling and astonished, said, ‘lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ (7) And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no one. (8) then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. (9) And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:1-9).*

These verses describe the events which preceded and culminated in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. We first learn about Saul in Acts 7:58, wherein we read about the martyrdom of Stephen who had preached the truth about Jesus Christ, but whose hearers stoned him to death! And in this verse we learn that those who stoned Stephen *“laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”* In Acts 8:1 we learn that *“Saul was consenting”* to the execution of Stephen, and in Acts 8:3 we read that *“he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.”* And in our opening text (Acts 9:1-9) we learn that Saul’s animosity against *“the Way”* (the religion of Christ) was not confined to the disciples in Jerusalem. In fact, according to Acts 9:1-9, he was traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus (over 200 miles!) with the intention of apprehending disciples of the Lord, whether men or women, and bringing them *“bound to Jerusalem.”* His intentions was to exterminate the religion of Jesus Christ from the earth! However, as he neared Damascus an amazing thing occurred — a *“light shone around him from heaven,”* resulting in his falling to the ground, at which time he heard a voice saying to him, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”* Saul then asked, *“Who are you Lord,”* at which time the Lord replied, saying *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”* Saul was further told to *“Arise, and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”* From verse nine we learn that *“he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”*

Yes, Saul for three days was *“without sight;”* he was blind! However, during this time *“the eyes”* of his *“understanding”* (cf. Eph. 1:18), were opened so that he was able to “see” things he had never seen before! And we suggest that we, too, ought to see (intellectually) what Saul saw while he was physically blind. What are some of the things that Saul “saw” while he was blind?

### **While Blind, Saul Saw:**

**1. That simply being religious is not enough.** Though he “*persecuted the church of God beyond measure,*” he was at that time highly religious. In fact, as he later described himself, he had “*advanced in Judaism beyond many*” of his contemporaries, “*beyond more exceedingly zealous for the traditions*” of their “*fathers,*” Gal. 1:14. He was very religious, but he was religiously wrong!

**2. That thinking a thing to be right does not make it right!** Even though he had “*imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on*” Jesus (Acts 22:19), Saul had nonetheless “*lived in all good conscience before*” God, (Acts 23:1). He had a “*good conscience*” because he “*thought*” he “*ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*” (Acts 26:9). Indeed, thinking a thing to be right does not make it right!

**3. That he had been ignorant of God’s will.** Yes, Saul had sat at the “*feet of Gamaliel*” (Acts 22:3), one of the most famous teachers of that day, but he was ignorant of God’s plan of salvation,. In fact, years after his conversion, Saul (now known as Paul) wrote of his former life, saying that “*I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*” (I Tim. 1:13). According to the culture of that day he was a very learned man; yet he was ignorant of God’s plan for saving sinners!

**4. That the chief of sinners can be saved!** Saul (Paul) later wrote that “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief,*” I Tim. 1:15). He was “*chief*” of sinners, but he was saved when he obeyed the gospel of Jesus.

**5. That he had to change his religion.** And that came at a great price! He had to give up the faith of his parents; he had to turn away from that taught by Gamaliel; he lost most of his Jewish friends. But when he learned what to do he obeyed without hesitation (Acts 9:17-18; 22:16).

**6. What he and all sinners must do!** When the Lord first appeared to Saul, he asked, saying, “*Lord what do you want me to do.*” The Lord told him to “*Arise and go into the city, and it will be told you what you must do*” (Acts 9:6). Saul then went into Damascus, and the Lord sent “*a certain disciple named Ananias*” to him, and Ananias said “*and now why are you waiting, Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 9:6; 22:16).

**7. That faith only cannot save!** By the time Ananias approached Saul, he for three days had been “*without sight, and neither ate nor drank*” (Acts 9:9). And he was “*praying*” (Acts 9:11). From the time the Lord appeared to Saul, he was a **believer!** The fact that he, during that time, neither “*ate or drank*” necessarily infers that he was very **penitent**. Here was a believing, penitent, praying sinner, but he at that point was lost. He had to be baptized that his sins might be washed away. Faith only cannot save! In fact, if faith only could save anyone then the demons would be saved, because they both “*believe — and tremble*” (Jas. 2:19).

**8. The oneness that exists between Jesus Christ and Christians!** Saul had “*persecuted the church of God*” (Gal. 1:13), but when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, He asked him “*Why are you persecuting Me*” (Acts 9:4). Jesus was in heaven; Saul was on the earth persecuting the followers of Jesus. And Jesus took it Personally! In persecuting Christians Saul was also persecuting Jesus!

**Conclusion:**

Yes, Saul was temporarily blinded, so much so that others “*led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus,*” and for “*three days*” he was “*without sight*” (Acts 9:8-9). But while he was physically “*without sight,*” intellectually he began to “see” some very important truths. And what he “saw” while he was “*without sight*” is what all accountable people must now “see” through the “eyes” of their “*understanding*” (Eph. 1:18). Friend, we now ask this question: “Do **you** see what Saul saw while he was blind?”

\*\*\* —B. Witherington