

“I ONCE WAS LOST BUT NOW AM FOUND”

Acts 22:1-10

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INTRODUCTION

What do you have to do in order to be saved?

- “Pray the sinner’s prayer.”
- “Ask Jesus into your heart.”
- “Accept Jesus as your personal Savior.”
- “Make a decision for Christ.”

Why is it that we see so many “lousy Christians”? Christians that live just like the world and don’t seem to have changed lives? Christians that are “up and down”—but mostly down? Christians that live in defeat and worldliness?

Mostly because we often have it all backwards. Many believe that the Christian is saved because he seeks God, decides for Christ, asks Jesus into his heart etc. The Bible is clear; no one is saved unless the Lord seeks the Lost, calls him, opens his blind eyes, and transforms him into a new creation.

I am not here today to solve the problem of Calvinism vs. Arminianism; man does have responsibility and will give account for his lack of response to the divine call. Man is required to repent and trust Christ and Christ alone. **But we must be clear: God always takes the initiative and He alone saves a person and gives Him eternal life.** We must give Him and Him alone the credit for our glorious salvation.

People who are “Christians” and don’t live like it generally **are not saved**; they need to be truly “born again.”

- Remember, Religiousness and busyness in Christian work does not save a person.
- Zeal for God does not save a person.
- A good Christian heritage and upbringing does not save a person.

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Humbly acknowledge your gross sinfulness, your lost condition, and your helplessness to save yourself.

Trust Jesus Christ alone, as the perfect, sinless, Son of God and your substitute for sin, to forgive you and cleanse you.

Receive from Him with no merit of your own His free gift of eternal life.

Experience a transformation of your mind, of your will, and of your emotions.

In this passage God gives us an amazing example in the life of Saul of Tarsus.

- Paul makes his “defense” before his Jewish (unsaved) “brethren” and “fathers” (such as priests, rabbis, and Sanhedrin members. The word “apology” refers to a formal defense—here of one’s Christian faith. (v. 1)
- *I Peter 3:15 tells you and me that we must be able to do this!*
- Paul with God’s help is able to calm and quiet the mob by speaking in their language (v. 2)

I. ZEALOUS BUT LOST (22:1-5)

A. Every human advantage (3)

1. Jewish in ancestry—the seed of Abraham and David; part of the covenant people
2. Born in a significant city with a well known educational institution and with a good family.
3. “Brought up”, trained effectively.
4. Moved to the heart of Judaism—Jerusalem—for continued training.
5. In adolescence educated thoroughly and impressively under one of the premier teachers in first century Judaism—Gamaliel; one of only 7 men with the title “Rabban.”
6. Strict, accurate, and meticulous training “according to accepted orthodox teaching—“the law of our fathers.”

B. Abundant Human Effort (3b-5)

1. “Zealous for God”—just as these Jews in the mob are! He defended his faith! He opposed anyone of any movement that might damage or weaken his faith system.
2. “Persecuted ‘this Way’”—as it was known among the Jews [Christians could call themselves “The Way” because Jesus was the only way to salvation and Heaven.
 - Even to death—as we see in the case of Stephen (7:58)
 - Binding and putting into prison both men and women—facts that can be verified by current Sanhedrin members and the current high priest—Ananias; Paul had even obtained official letters from them (some 20 years prior) to do his work. The “brethren” of v. 5 are Jewish brothers in Damascus.
 - Traveled even to remote cities such as Damascus in order to apprehend and bring to justice and punishment back in Jerusalem Jewish followers of “the Way” who had gone there to escape detection (5).

You cannot fault Saul of Tarsus for not taking his religious faith seriously!

He was “pursuing” (persecuting) Christians, BUT SOMEONE ELSE WAS PURSUING HIM!

II. PURSUED BY CHRIST (6-9)

Someone was chasing Paul—had been for some time. In fact, evidently ever since Paul had participated in Stephen’s execution his conscience had been bothering him. It was “hard for him to kick against the pricks” of divine conviction that Stephen had something that he did not have—something that he needed. Despite all that he had he was really empty—empty and **lost**. *Someone that he hated loved him, died for him, and was desiring to save him.*

THIS “SOMEONE” WAS JESUS CHRIST!

- Saul was on his way to do his dastardly deeds in Damascus.
- He was nearing the city; his goal was within sight.
- It was about NOON—the brightest and hottest part of the day.

A. Brilliant Glory (6)

1. The light was brighter than that of the noonday sun!
2. It came suddenly upon him.
3. It came from Heaven—this was not satanic delusion or his own active imagination.
4. It shone “all around” him.
5. It was so startling to him that he “fell to the ground” (v. 7).

B. The Divine Call (7)

- He hears a divine voice—it can be no other than divine.
- The voice calls him in his native “Hebrew” dialect.
- “Saul, Saul, why are you actively persecuting—pursuing Me with harmful intent?”
- Saul was “called on the carpet—no longer could he ignore nor set aside the convictions and troubled conscience that had been harassing him for some time. He was forced to face the reality of his **despicable and sinful** behavior.
- The Heavenly Speaker directly identified Himself with the Christians whom Paul was persecuting and pursuing! **He is one with his people.**

C. The Divine Enlightenment (8-9)

1. The one speaking with him is “**Lord**”—**a divine being**. He gains His first true insight into the reality of the Deity of Christ.
2. “I am Jesus the Nazarene”—the One despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The One who had “humbled Himself” and had become flesh, and had become obedient unto death—even to the death on a cross.
3. Saul was continuing to add to His persecution by persecuting His beloved followers.
4. Saul’s traveling companions saw the brilliant light—but did not “**see the light**”—they were not spiritually enlightened and did not recognize the person manifesting Himself.
5. His companions heard a sound—chapter 9:7—but did not understand the words of the “One speaking with me.” **This was a personal encounter with the living Christ—such as is true with anyone who is saved in any true conversion experience!**
6. Saul actually “saw” the Risen Christ here as he became blinded—he testifies of this on several occasions: “Have I not seen the Lord?” “Last of all seen by me.”

Saul was done resisting; he was ready to surrender.

III. PURSUADED TO SURRENDER (10)

- A. His humble question of submission: “What shall I do Lord?”
 - He acknowledges Jesus as Lord—**so does every truly converted person**.
 - He is willing to obey whatever the Lord tells him.
- B. Divine Direction
 1. Arise—get up off the ground; you are not “dead” any longer
 2. Go on into Damascus”—but now with a different plan and purpose; **things are different now** for him.
 3. There you will be told what to do: “**all that has been appointed for you to do.**”

CONCLUSION

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