

Paul's Commission

In chapter 26 of Acts we have Paul giving the account of his conversion, when he's standing before king Agrippa. If you'll remember Agrippa was the one that was almost persuaded. If you're almost persuaded, you're not persuaded. You never become a Christian at that rate.

Acts 26:9-16a:

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice [a pebble that's used in voting i.e. - his vote] against *them*.

And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice [accusative case – heard to the point of understanding] speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew [Aramaic] tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: ...

Order in Acts 26:

- 1) "why persecutest thou me?"
- 2) "*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks."
- 3) "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."
- 4) "But rise, and stand upon thy feet:"

Acts 22:7-10a:

And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; ...

Order in **Acts 22:**

- 1) "why persecutest thou me?"
- 2) "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."
- 3) "Arise, and go into Damascus;"

Acts 9:4-6:

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Order in **Acts 9:**

- 1) "why persecutest thou me?"
- 2) "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:"
- 3) "*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks."
- 4) "Arise, and go into the city"

In all three records the first thing was, "why persecutest thou me?" The second thing was, "*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks." But that's only recorded in chapter 26, not in chapters 9 & 22. The third thing, in all three records, is, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Then in chapter nine it says, "*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks," but not in chapters 22 & 26. The last one is essentially the same, "arise and go."

In the order we have a discrepancy. In Acts chapter nine, "*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks," is after "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." In Acts chapter 26, "*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks," is before "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Of course that problem was reconciled because there are only a couple of critical Greek texts that have that in chapter 9. The only manuscripts that had it were a couple of old Latin manuscripts and the margin of the relatively late Harklean, Syriac manuscript. Our problem is abolished. We just put an 'X' through "*it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,*" in chapter 9.

Acts 9:6:

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

"And he ... *said* unto him" – you've already scratched

"Arise, and go ..." – this was the commission; what Jesus Christ told Paul to do.

When you've got these parallel records given in different places, then to understand the whole picture, you use scripture build-up. Like in the Gospels: there may be certain information given in Matthew, certain information given in Mark that's not in Matthew, then when you put them both together, they build it up.

Acts 22:10:

And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

Does it add anything there? It tells you which city.

Acts 26:16:

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Here it's telling him a little more. It's not going to give everything but it's giving some of the highlights of what he's doing. This is adding a lot more to the record than what was in chapter 9 and chapter 22.

"minister" – is a servant – not a king or a lord

"witness" – not a defence attorney – a witness. He wasn't going around defending Christianity, or at least he wasn't supposed to.

Had he told him everything yet? No.

“things which thou hast seen, and of the things in the which I will appear unto thee” – i.e. the things that you already know and the things you’re going to learn. Did Paul know much at this time? Had he seen some things? He saw Stephen. I’ll bet he heard a few others.

Acts 26:17:

Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

“the people” – i.e. the Jews

“the Gentiles” – the nations; the others

Were there Jews during Paul’s ministry? Sure. Were there Gentiles? Sure. God said he would deliver him from them.

Acts 26:18:

To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive [*lambanō*] forgiveness [remission] of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified [set apart] by faith [believing] that is in [unto] me.

He says, “I’ll deliver you from the Jews and the Gentiles but I’m also sending you to them (why?) to open their eyes.” What just happened to Paul? God just opened his eyes. Satan just closed his eyes but three days later Paul got his eyes opened again.

“power of Satan” – not the devil, because it’s indirect. It’s talking about all the network that he set up in the world; the snare; Satan, who is the indirect influence of all the things that go on in the world that’s negative and opposed to the Word.

There, He really sets Paul’s commission; what God commissioned Paul to do. Then he’s led into the city of Damascus.

Galatians 1:15-16:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen [Gentiles]; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

When He revealed His son in him that Paul might preach His son among the Gentiles; the one that he had formerly persecuted now He’s sending him to teach him among the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:7-8:

But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;

(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision [the Jews], the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

Peter's basic ministry was to the Jews but did Peter win Gentiles? How about Cornelius and his whole household? Who knows who else? But Peter's basic ministry was to the Jews. Paul's basic ministry was to the Gentiles but did Paul win Jews? Sure. Just because Paul was sent to the Gentiles, if a Jew came along that didn't mean he would say, "I can't witness to him. That's not my ministry. That's not my 'bag'." Peter, out witnessing to the Jews and here comes a Gentile, wouldn't say, "I can't witness to him. My ministry is to Jews."

We've got to keep all facets of the ministry in our vision; in our sights. Sure there's a time when maybe you're falling down in an area and you need to put a little emphasis on it but that doesn't mean you de-emphasize everything else. Isn't that tremendous?

Peter won Gentiles. Paul won Jews. But Peter's ministry was to the Jews and Paul's was to the Gentiles.

Now Paul moves on to Damascus. He was commissioned on the road to Damascus. He was converted; born again of God's spirit. Jesus Christ had a heart to heart talk with him right there on the spot. He may have said a lot of other things that are not recorded here but the things that we need to know are here; the basic. Paul's commission, his ministry, was to the Gentiles for the most part.

Acts 9:8-12:

And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord.

And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

He'd been praying there for three days. He didn't even eat or drink for three days. He was praying. He wanted his sight back.

Acts 9:13-14:

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

They had pretty good telephone system in those days. Ananias, way up in Damascus, knew that Paul had letters before Paul even got there. I'll bet somebody down at Jerusalem got the word and told James or Peter or somebody there at the top and they got on the phone and called the leaders. I'll bet they had a "hot line." Maybe not a telephone but they had tell-a-man and tell-a-woman. The word got up to Damascus before Paul even got there.

Another great thing there is that Ananias didn't go around and blab to everybody else about this revelation he got from the Lord that how he disagreed with it. He took it up with the management. He took it right back to God and he argued with God.

If God tells you to jump: if you're going to argue about it, why do you want to go argue with your neighbors? Argue with God about it: "God, I've been working all day. I'm too tired to jump." Argue with Him but also listen; see if there's a reason why.

Acts 9:15-18:

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother [he was already born again] Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

“was baptized” – did he need it? No, but the great mystery hadn't been revealed yet to the apostle. He'd only been born again for three days. The others in the body hadn't believed to the point to receive the revelation.

Acts 9:19:

And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

There you have Paul going to Damascus. It shows you his healing in a period of three days by Ananias at the house of Judas on the street called Straight. He was born again on the road, received the holy spirit into manifestation after he got to Damascus, spoke in tongues like crazy like it says in Corinthians and all these other great things.

Acts 22:11:

And when I could not see for [away from] the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

He could see with the light but he couldn't see away from it.

Acts 22:12-14:

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour [Fig.-immediately] I looked up upon him.

And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice [accusative – to the point of understanding] of his mouth.

Has everybody heard the Word? Yes. It says someplace in Romans, “It's clearly seen and they're without excuse.”

[**Romans 1:20:** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:]

But has everybody heard it to the point of understanding it? No. It doesn't sink in. But it says that Paul would hear the voice to the end that he understood the voice of his mouth.

Acts 22:15-16:

For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Those are the only two places that you have anything about what happened at Damascus right after his conversion.

We go into the early years of Paul's ministry. We left Paul in Damascus at the house of Judas with Ananias. Ananias had ministered to him. He's healed now, ready to go.

Galatians 1:13-14:

For ye have heard of my conversation [behavior] in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

“profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals” – my peers – “I was way above them” – he was above his peers; he was a “straight A student plus” all the way through when it came to the Jewish religion.

He was really zealous above his equals when it came to the traditions of the fathers. Jesus sort of categorized traditions.

Galatians 1:15-16:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Immediately Paul did not communicate with body and soul and spirit men. He didn't communicate, flesh and blood-wise, with those that knew the Word.

Galatians 1:17:

Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

Paul, for three years never went up to Jerusalem. He was in Damascus. Then it says immediately he went out into Arabia; the desert. When he got born again, it was some kind of a jolt to his life. He was going 500mph in one direction and turned 180 degrees in 3 seconds. That's kind of hard to do. It was quite a jolt to his life, not to speak of his theology; the traditions of his fathers. The group that he had once persecuted: now the chief was telling him he's a part of it; that he's going to be a witness to it and a servant to it.

He went out into the desert to get his head together; to study the Old Testament, maybe. I don't know. I wasn't there. I'll bet it began to gel with him and he knew the Word from the Old Testament because he had studied it before. But now it started to take on a new shape; new meaning. He wasn't interpreting it in light of the traditions of the fathers, he was letting the Word speak for itself; no private interpretation.

How long was he out there? Three hours. Three weeks. Three months. I don't know. He returned to Damascus and that's where he spent the rest of that three years teaching the Word. You know how I know he spent the rest of that time teaching the Word? Because it says so:

Acts 9:19-22:

And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. [Doesn't say right away]

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. [It doesn't say he taught right away]

But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

“increased the more in strength” – *endunamoō mallon* – *mallon* means “more” – *endunamoō* means “empowered” – he was empowered more and more and more; he got more *dunamis* in operation. He had it all on the inside but he just kept working it, manifesting more and more of that *dunamis*.

“that this is very Christ” – that this is absolutely, no questions asked, Christ

“confounded” – means; he mixed them up; confused them; entangled them

I don't know what happened in that desert but he suddenly got renewing his mind to the Word; Old Testament and New, which hadn't been written. But he had heard some things; Stephen, Peter, James, John, the man who was healed over 40 years old. Things started adding up. He was increasing.

While he did it he mixed up the Jews; confounded them; he entangled them. They really entangled themselves because what Paul said was logical and it fit. If you don't accept that you're going to end up gnarled, or something. Proving that this is very Christ; this is really Christ; it's really him. "The one I was persecuting before, man it's really him. This is the one we've been waiting for, not some political deliverer. (Like the Pharisees and the Sadducees were expecting) This is him. He's been here and we missed it."

Acts 9:23:

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

"many days" – that means; sufficient days; enough days – worthwhile is the root of the word

When they really got to the breaking point; enough time; enough days; when they were full of it, they took counsel to kill him.

Acts 9:24-26:

But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem [3 years later – **Galatians 1:18**], he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

II Corinthians 11:32-33:

In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

This Aretas was assigned about 37 A.D. by Tiberius. The Jerusalem council in Acts chapter 15 was 51 A.D. That's the date we worked it down to. How many years from 37 to 51? – 14

Galatians 2:1:

Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.

Then it fits date-wise.