

What Wilt Thou Have me Do?

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[0:00] Acts chapter 9, thankful that my wife brought me a fresh shirt because on my way over here I was drinking a cup of coffee with a lid that wouldn't stay on and when I got here I saw it looked like I drooled it all over myself so I probably would have most of them been covered by the tie but she brought me a shirt and oddly enough I have two shirts that are identical, I don't know why but no one would know.

Okay anyway, Acts chapter 9 and we'll get into this chapter a little bit, I want to give you a little background with it and then preach a short but pointed message to you and I hope you'll receive it.

In verse number 1 the Bible says, And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Now I think we all know the story here and we call this the conversion of Saul and where God, Christ meets him, we'll read that in a moment. But I want to give you a little of this, get the gravity of this man, of what he was all about.

It says that he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter. And that's not just words in the Bible, that's reality. This man, I don't doubt it for a minute, that he publicly threatened and perhaps stood even in the open and in the chiefest places of the city and declared, if I catch anybody that's a professed disciple of this Jesus, you're coming with me.

[1:36] I'm coming to get you. I'll hunt you down. I'm coming to your house. They all knew it. And they took off. I mean, it was just a chapter before this that they were taken off, running for their lives about this persecution of Stephen.

So that's already taken place in Acts chapter 8 where the Christians are running, the disciples of the Lord. That's Acts chapter 8 verse 4. They were scattered abroad everywhere. And so he makes havoc of the church.

He's been doing this. Now he's publicly threatening. And he says, and slaughter. He's threatening their lives. So if you stick around Jerusalem and you're a public disciple of the Lord and people know it, you're asking for it.

Because this guy's a head hunter. And they know it and he knows it and it's common knowledge. Look at Acts chapter 26. Keep your place just to give you his account of this very thing.

A little bit later in his life, he's given this testimony before King Agrippa. And in Acts chapter 26, he testifies to this violent and this deadly reputation that he held and why.

[2:41] Starting in verse 9, Paul says, I barely 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 priest. And when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme.

I think he's torturing them. How else do you compel them to blaspheme? How do you get them to do something like that? To speak against Jesus Christ that you love and believe in. Whether it's torture or not, I don't know.

But he's definitely doing something or threatening at the very least. But people are being put to death. They couldn't do that to Jesus Christ without getting the Roman governor involved. But they're doing it to these Christians.

Whether it's just kind of behind curtains, it's stoning them or whatever they're doing. They're killing people. And in verse number 11, he continues saying, Being exceedingly mad against them.

[3:37] I persecuted them even under strange cities. And then he gets into what we're going to read in chapter 9. We're about Damascus. So flip back to chapter 9. In Galatians chapter 1 and verse 13, Paul said, Beyond measure, I persecuted the church of God and wasted it.

That was his testimony. Okay, so in verse number 1, he went unto the high priest. Now that is the highest rank and position in the nation of Israel. The high priest. It doesn't get any higher than that.

And you don't just walk up to his front door and say, Hey, I want some time with you. I want to talk to you. I mean, in this valley, there's 2 million people. Go find a celebrity. Can you even get within hundreds of yards of their home?

Can you get a second of their day if you wanted it? Much less the highest man in the nation, the high priest. So he went unto the high priest.

He was somebody. I want you to know this is the position and the man that he was. He was somebody. He was coming up and getting groomed for something in that religion. And I think he had their ear because he's doing their dirty work, of course.

[4:44] So he's traveling to Damascus. He got permission, as we see, and he journeyed on his way to Damascus. And so you got to understand he's going looking for Christians, for disciples of the Lord.

If he could find any of this way. So he's not going by himself. It doesn't say it in the passage. It just says that the men that were with him. But they had to be some form of soldiers. Some form of something like that that they could be taking men and women and hailing them to prison.

Binding them up. That's what they said in the passages they were doing. So he's got some kind of band of soldiers, some means of force he's traveling with. And I doubt it's just three guys. I can't say what it is, but it's enough that they're going as far as Damascus, which is several days journey by foot.

Several days to get there. Who knows how long it took him? I don't. I saw on Google today that it was 56 hours on foot in today's standards of walking on nice roads.

I'm sure it took him more than 56 hours. So he's going with some means of force. Several days journey to the north, outside of Israel, crossing country lines, looking for disciples of the Lord.

[5:59] This is quite a thing. Now come down in verse number three through six, and we'll get to where I want to be here tonight. Verse three says, And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

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, notice this in verse six. He says, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? That was his response. That was a question. And I want to consider the question tonight. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Saul's confronted by the very one that he is against. I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. The one he is against, the one he's doing everything against.

[7:02] He thought barely with himself to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And then he's confronted with that very deity. And talk about eating crow.

That was what he was doing in that moment. A slice of humble pie is a soft way of saying it. He is now, for the first time, understanding who Jesus is.

And then at the same time, understanding how wrong he is. That everything he's doing with his life, he's completely wrong. All of his upbringing. All this Jewish religion.

The whole thing, he thought he was on top. Finding out he's dead wrong. The whole time. But he asked this question, what wilt thou have me to do? And in that question, I believe it displays an intent for the Apostle Paul willing to submit.

What do you want me to do? I'm here for you now. Just like that. That intent is displayed. That offer, I think, is displayed there. Showing up. Think of this.

[8:02] I wrote this down. I read right through it. What wilt thou have me to do? I imagine having a church work day here. And somebody comes and shows up with work gloves and says, hey, what do you want me to do? What does that say?

It says, it's an offer. I'm here to do anything. Just point the direction I'm going to go. Versus somebody who pulls up in their car with cracks the window. Like, what do you got going on anyway? Like, not really interested in staying.

But Saul asked the question, Lord, what would thou have me to do? Let me say three things about this question. And try to make it very pointed that we all get this.

Number one, it's an immediate question. Did you see that? How fast it was? As soon as he says in verse 5, I am Jesus, he responds trembling and astonished and says, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

It's an immediate response. An immediate question. It didn't take him months. It didn't take him years for God to beat on him and beat on him and say, I want you to serve me. I want you to. No, just in that moment.

[9:03] If you're the Christ, you're Jesus and you're God shining out of heaven. Then what do you want me to do? Just an immediate question to the Lord.

When he reveals the truth to him, he gets it and he goes with it. He didn't have to have God give him little nuggets along the way to lead him into something. He didn't have to have other people praying for him and working with him and training him.

It was an instant response to meeting Jesus Christ. He didn't have to go to youth camp for a week to get the sin kicked out of him so that he'd open his heart to God. He didn't have to sit through a week of revivals or go to missions conference to warm up to the thought of, I should serve Jesus Christ with my life.

It was an immediate question. What a reaction. And what a testimony for you and I, to every believer, really. And oh, that we would win somebody to Christ and have them say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do right away?

Oh, that we would have that response today. It's an immediate question. In his mind, it's a reasonable response. He is Jesus Christ.

[10:13] I've been wrong all this time. And I'm going to follow and obey you from here on out. That sounds about right, doesn't it? I mean, doesn't it to you? Doesn't that sound like that should be the response?

If he's God, if he's Christ and he's calling to me, then what do you want me to do, Lord? That's a good response. I think it's the right one. It's an immediate response, an immediate question without thinking twice.

That's the way it should be. Yet some believers have never asked God what he would like for them to do in this life. They've never asked him.

They've never made that offer. For some, it takes years. They'll go chasing some dreams, some worldly desires. They'll go chasing after something sinful or carnal before they end up stumbling and falling and come crawling back to God and surrendering.

And I'm a testimony to some of that. I understand it. And it's sad. Because what happens is God, what do you offer God? You offer him a broken mess instead of a clean vessel, sanctified, meat for the master's use like you could have been?

[11:22] What do you end up offering to God? What's left of your life versus your life, the whole thing in its entirety? That's the way it ought to be. Get saved and offer it to God.

What will they have me to do immediately? I wonder if you in here have asked that question to God yet. And if you haven't, what are you waiting for? What in the world are you waiting for to ask God, God, what will you have me to do?

It should be immediate. He saved you. What else should he do for you before you would ask him that question? What else does he need to do to convince you that he's worthy of your heart and your life?

I can't think of anything. I don't think it's not for adults only. Every child of God, no matter, no limits on this one, can offer God their life and ask him, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

It's an immediate question. Secondly, notice it's an intimate question. Intimate like this in verse 6. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

[12:25] Paul didn't say, oh, bright light. Oh, hey, guys, hold on. Okay, Lord, what do you want? Well, Lord, we're here. What do you want us to do about it? We're already up here. We, we, we, we. No.

Paul, there's nobody else around right now in his mind. He's got a confrontation with the Lord of glory. And he says, what do you want from me? It's an intimate question.

It's an intimate question. A personal question between a man and Jesus Christ. That's the question. An intimate question. There's no priest.

There's no disciples of the Lord that show up miraculously to point him in a direction right away. That went to get him to ask this question. There's no pastor. There's no spouse. There's no parents involved.

It is a closed conversation. It's Paul, Saul in this passage, and Jesus Christ. And this is a conversation that every single believer ought to have.

[13:22] Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? It's an intimate question. It's a personal ask of the Lord and offer.

It's a private conversation between a Savior and his property. Nobody else needs to be consulted in order for you to ask this question.

Nobody needs to know about it even for you to make this offer to God of what will you have me to do. Now, counsel may follow as the Lord leads you in your life and things of that nature.

But the offer, the question is intimate and it's personal. It is you opening your heart before the great and holy God of glory and saying, What will you have me to do?

This life is yours. What could you use me for? What do you want from me? It's intimate. And understand this clearly. Only you can ask this question for yourself.

[14:22] Only you. I can pray for you. Others can try to convince you that it's right. But only you can ask this question. And only you can ask.

And my question is, have you asked him? Have you asked Jesus Christ that question? Have you ever gotten personal with God? Or is your prayers to him as if he's just some distant almighty being that you know is God?

Or can you get personal with him? This is a personal question. I want you to consider that you need to open your heart and seek his will and direction for your life.

And don't be afraid to be intimate. And don't be afraid to be vulnerable. Because you can trust him. You can absolutely trust him to ask that question of him.

It's an intimate question. And then thirdly, and finally, it's an important question. It is an important question. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

[15:28] What is more important than finding out what God wants for you in this life? And what is more important? We could just sit around the room and come up with an answer collectively if we can do it.

Is there anything more important in this life after you're saved to find out what it is that God would want from you in this life and then doing it?

I've been taught in my life the most important thing is finding God's will for your life and doing it. And I haven't found anything yet that beats it. I can't find anything, not in the scriptures, not in this world, not in the vanity of this life.

It's an important question. I wonder if your job or your career, do you find more important than asking that question? Do you find the best education, the best home?

Here's one. This is a question that comes up, kind of a big one in people's lives. At some point in your life, usually the young men, will you marry me? That's a big question that's asked of young men.

[16:33] Is that more important than, Lord, what will thou have me to do? It's not even close. It might be an important question along the lines, but this one is the most important.

I believe this is an important question. I'm curious, have you asked God this question yet? Have you honestly and unreservedly asked this question?

And if not, what are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? To get older? To get things established? To get things figured out? You're fooling yourself. And you're wrong.

If you're saved, your body and your spirit belong to him. So what's the holdup? Is it sin? Is it something you don't want to let go of? Is that why you wouldn't ask that question?

Is it fear? Are you afraid to ask that question? Do you have plans that are more important to ask that question? This is sad, but it's true.

[17:38] Is that you and I, we can believe on Jesus Christ. We can be saved for the rest of our lives. We can find ourselves with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and received up into glory.

And have eternity with the Lord. Sins paid for and forgiven. We can go through all of that and have never asked in this life, Lord, what will thou have me to do?

Because our salvation is not conditioned upon whether we surrender our lives to him or offer anything to him at all. But I think it's a tragedy to go through life, not offering God the opportunity, the willingness to use you and have you completely.

I think it's a wasted life, especially if he wants to do something with you. But I think maybe consider that the important question here.

I fear maybe it's the importance of the question that keeps people from asking it, keeps it off of their lips. They fear if I ask God what will thou have me to do, they fear what his answer might be.

[18:47] And because of that, they stay away. They take a step back from the Christian life. They fear if I ask, I don't know what he'll say.

And let me just clarify so we all understand. That is so wrong of us. You don't even consider. But in that thought, you are accusing God of not caring about you.

Of not being able to take care of you or protect or provide for you. You're telling him I can't trust you. If you're afraid of what his answer might be. Amen. If you're afraid to give your life to God, something's wrong with you.

You're saying there's something wrong with you, God. If I ask, what will he say? People fear that he'll tell them to give something up.

They don't want to give up. Something that's close to them. It doesn't have to be wrong, but they just fear that. They fear where he may direct them to go. And they don't want to do that.

[19:48] And they allow that fear to overcome the faith that is inside of them. That reminds them, just like Paul said in Romans 12, it's your reasonable service.

But Christians are afraid of this question because it's an important question. I know some people, I'm sure I've told you about them before.

I had a time or two of a man that's probably, he's probably pushing 80 years old now. And he told me God called him to be a missionary. And he said no. And he still regrets it today.

And he's afraid to face Christ. He doesn't tell anybody about it. But he had a heart-to-heart with me one time. And I know it bothers him to this day. Another guy, when I was younger, he was a young man.

He said he was called to preach. And he said, I'm not doing it. And he was very adamant about it because he was convinced that God was going to send him to Africa. To a place he, in his mind, could never go minister to those people.

[20:48] And I said, man, just answer the call of God. Don't let Satan tell you it's going to be something you can't do or won't want.

Just God is good. Answer his call. But he wouldn't have anything to do with it. He ran from the Lord. And I know I've met him and I've met several guys that have run from the Lord's calling.

Because they were afraid of what he was going to call them to do. And shame on any man. And if you can think rationally, not emotionally, but rationally, you would agree and understand.

If God, if I offer to God, if I ask the question, what will they have me to do? And he answers with something. It's right, number one.

If he decides it for you. Number two, it's the best thing you could possibly do with your life. What are you going to do that's better than what God offers and asks you to do?

[21:43] Second place? Second place is junk. When God's calling you to something. It's an important question.

Don't be afraid to ask that question. Parents. I will hope that's what you want for your children. Is that they'll ask that question on their own.

It's my desire for my four kids. Is that they'll come to a time that they'll face God and say, what do you want me to do? And he'll answer them. And then my hands are off of it.

They've got a thing with him. Whew. That'd be great. You ought to be pointing them that direction. And when God speaks, you answer.

And be willing to follow and be willing to obey. Because after salvation, it is by far the best decision you'll ever make. And probably the worst would be to ignore or to reject the opportunity to serve God.

[22 : 44] So it's an immediate question from Saul. It's an intimate question from Saul to make it personal between him and God.

And it's an important question. One that we all need to ask. And be willing. It doesn't mean God's going to call all of us in the next week to... We're all on deputation for somewhere.

And nobody's here. I'll preach everybody out of this church. One way or another, huh? That's not the meeting. And that's nothing to be afraid of.

But if God's dealing with your heart, or if this stuff is... You know it. It stirs inside of you. I wonder if you've asked that question. Because I believe God will ask... He'd love to hear that from every one of us.

That offer. What would you have me to do? And let him answer you. And he may not answer you at all. And what does that mean? Nothing. It means you just do what you know is right.

[23 : 43] You stay faithful. You read your Bible. You be a faithful witness. You obey him in the things you know. And keep offering. And keep asking that question. And when he sees fit, you'll know it.

I promise you. He has a way of doing it that you can't miss it. When the Lord speaks, you'll know it. So that's the message tonight. I hope you'll think on that.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I hope that's something you're willing to open your heart to God. Realize that he wants to hear that from you. And whatever he answers is the absolute best thing in this life.

There's no second place that's even close. So let's close in prayer. And then we'll have a time out there with some food. Father, we love you. And we thank you for your word.

Thank you for this example of this man and his reaction to his meeting with you. I pray, Father, that the words would find a place in our hearts. That we'd respond.

[24 : 41] And Lord, that you'd get what you want from every one of us. I pray nobody in here would hold back from you. And God, help us to be faithful witnesses. And love you. And declare it to this world.

I pray that you'll bless as Riley gets back to Florida. Lord, that you'll have your hand on him. And as he works and studies and goes through that cycle, just be close to him. Grow him.

And be a blessing and minister to him. And we thank you for him being here with us tonight. Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ and for your words. And it's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.

You're dismissed.