

Sovereign Hand in Salvation

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Date: 09 November 2025

[0 : 00] All right. Well, as you can tell, I'm not Dave Nannery. He came back from the conference sick, unfortunately. So you can be praying for him. And Lord willing, he will get better soon.

We had an encouraging time this week at the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists. Our fellowship, the opportunity we had to represent Squamish Baptist Church and connect with all the other churches.

So thank you for praying for us. There was a lot of positive direction. We are, as a fellowship, we are working through some issues, mainly church leadership and what it means to faithfully follow the scriptures, mainly with male eldership and pastorship. And so those conversations are being held within the fellowship national level.

And so a lot of great direction was had there. So we feel very encouraged. There's still lots of work to be done. So would you just spend some time praying for Feb National and the other regions? We're a part of Fellowship Pacific. You have prairies and Central Atlantic. And so each region is walking through this issue as well as Feb National. So it was an encouraging time. And I haven't got to spend a ton of time with Dave Nannery like that.

[1 : 19] So for us, it was just neat to be able to eat and hang out and enjoy and connect together. So that was wonderful personally. And continue to pray for our dear pastor, BK and Daniela.

Thank you for already praying. I think your prayers helped move the hurricane north a little bit there. They call it a typhoon, which same thing basically. And they are doing well.

They wanted to communicate to you that they are being cared for and well-loved. So that warms our hearts, of course. BK is loving the time with the pastors that are there.

People are coming all the way from Pakistan. They're coming from Miramar. And of course, the church there, Higher Rock, which is hosting basically like a shepherd's conference.

He said there's over 850 volunteers helping out. So obviously a large church and they are caring for these people. If you do not know, it's called the TMAI, the Master's Academy International.

[2 : 20] It's the church planting and missionary arm of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, where Dr. MacArthur ministered. And so they are training pastors there and teaching them about missions.

Last year, a book came out on biblical missions. And so they went out to the Philippines and Manila there and they're helping pastors understand the Great Commission and missions there.

So BK said that what was communicated to him is that the only thing that is negative about his preaching there is that it's too short. So would you pray for him?

You know, he's really struggling with getting longer sermons, of course, as every pastor struggles with longer sermons. So he is blessing those pastors and those churches out there.

So continue to pray for them this time. So let's pray. And before we turn our eyes to the word of God. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word this morning, which is so precious to us.

[3 : 21] Your word says that it's better than silver or gold, any earthly material that we can have in our possession. And so we have that this morning. And Lord, we are just a part of a small fraction of churches around the world that are striving to be faithful to you.

And Lord, what a joy it is to be able to be a part of churches that long to be faithful to you. Lord, we pray for FEB National and the other regions as we strive to be faithful in what leadership looks like in the life of the local church.

Lord, would you give us wisdom and discernment as meetings are had, as pastors communicate. Lord, we just pray for our own FEB Pacific. We pray for the churches involved here that we get to fellowship with.

Lord, help us to be faithful and to stand on your word. Father, we pray for Dave Nannery this morning. Allow him to get the rest and recovery that he needs.

And we long to have him back here ministering with us, Lord. Father, we pray for the Smiths. We're just so grateful that Pastor BK can have the time and the influence with pastors all around the world.

[4 : 32] Lord, would you strengthen his voice? Would you give him clarity in the pulpit? Would you give them the physical ability for long days of ministry?

And would you allow it to just refresh him? And Lord, would you allow the time for he and Danielle to be encouraging? And Lord, would you build up these churches from Myanmar and Pakistan and the Philippines?

Lord, we pray for higher rock as they have the joy of serving all of these pastors in these churches. Lord, would it be a great blessing? And would it be marvelous in your sight to do great and wonderful things through this conference as the gospel goes forth in the Great Commission?

So, Father, thank you for your will this morning. And would it build up this body here, we ask in your son's precious name. Amen. Would you turn in your copy of God's word this morning to Acts chapter 9?

Acts chapter 9. And if you do not have a Bible, we can get some ushers around to you so that our eyes and our hearts can see what Luke is wanting us to understand at this amazing passage where the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

[5 : 50] And what that meant for the church and what that means for us is we're going through a book that Paul wrote. Acts chapter 9, starting in verse 1.

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus. So that if he found any belonging to the way, both men and women, he may bring them bound to Jerusalem.

As he was traveling, it happened, he was approaching Damascus. And suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.

The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing.

[7 : 05] And leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

The book of Romans has been riveting for us. I pray that your heart has been encouraged in these truths that Paul has been giving the church at Rome. It's been of vital importance, eternal truth, essential truths from heaven.

But what we must understand is that truth doesn't happen in a vacuum. It's not that God just kind of dumped the Bible down from heaven, and there wasn't context around it.

Which makes most false religions the reality. If some guy goes into a cave or in a field, all of a sudden gets this book, and all of a sudden you have to believe him. That's not how God revealed divine truth. He gave it to people in a context, with a certain purpose.

Paul was a man, a sinner like you and I, needing salvation. He had a home life. He had family history. He had a cultural history. He had religious history.

[8 : 12] And when saved, it's not like any of that just disappeared. It got transformed. And now Paul is going to use that in Paul's life, and as we will see in the church's life, so that he can be more useful for the sake of the gospel.

I want us to think about that reality as we approach these truths, as we approach this table, and as we continue on in Romans when BK gets back, that the heart of Paul in writing these letters to the church was what God did in this moment for his salvation.

What it meant for his heart for Christ. What it meant for going global with the gospel. And what it meant for the church. And what it means for us 2,000 years removed from this very event.

Acts is a vital book for the church to know. It sets a foundation in the trajectory of what the church is, and where the church is going. Why do we exist?

What are we doing and why? Acts teaches us convictions as a church. What God has done in history, and how that affects us even now. And that the Lord is the sovereign mover.

[9 : 33] He is the one who is in control of saving each individual person. Gathering them together from every tongue and tribe and nation in certain locations so that he can continue to use them for

his purposes according to his plan.

And how amazing is that even now, what's happening with Pastor BK being in another nation and building up other churches, and those churches going to other nations. God has a singular goal in this world where he is preparing his son to return on the earth.

And in that plan, the church is the central feature. He's chosen the church to bring the only message of the gospel that can bring the world salvation and hope.

It's amazing. To think about a group of disciples turned into a room full of 120 people. And after one sermon at Pentecost, nothing has stopped that progress.

Nothing has stopped from the ascended Christ where he said, I'm going to give you a power from on high so that you can be my witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth, to Myanmar, to Pakistan, the Philippines.

[11 : 00] Acts reveals how he has used certain men, certain people, certain places at certain times marked out for specific purposes. And how those transition, move God's storyline so we can have hope even now.

This is what God did so we can go back to that reality and trust that he's able to do that in the future so that we can have conviction we can have courage and we can have hope that God is continuing to move in that way.

So we come to Acts chapter 9. After all that has happened through Peter and the church and the disciples to the apostle Paul, he now becomes the central character in the story of the church at Acts in this time.

We have 13 letters, 15 or 5% of your Bible. So much clarity about the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about justification and sanctification, the church, all of it we have from the apostle Paul.

One pastor said, the Christian movement in AD 35 would have appeared to be superficial to the observer, to be a Jewish sect.

[12 : 18] 30 years later, it is plainly a world religion. This establishment as a world religion to almost as a greatest extent as any historical movement can be ascribed to one man was the work of Paul.

I think Paul, like personally, would be a little bit horrified if we spent too much time on him, thinking about him and not the work of Christ through him.

But he is here. His testimony is inscripturated. The work of the Lord in his life and we must remember at the heart of this narrative is Jesus Christ orchestrating, executing a plan for the church.

So that even now, we here in Squamish can gather together because of this event. That the head of the church is sending his body where the nations will hear his message and his plan and it will not be thwarted.

It will not be thwarted. Paul's a chosen vessel here for the sake of the gospel like many other figures and individual.

[13 : 30] but Paul will help you understand that it was I, the one, who received mercy, he says. The work of magnificent mercy and grace that is in the sovereign hand of the church.

God is moving all the way from Acts chapter 1 where Paul now is going to take the gospel from the ends of the earth but God has to save this man.

He's got to give this man a mission and he's got to give this man a message. The entire chapter is God's sovereign hand moving in Saul's life in salvation, in his mission, and in his message.

We're only going to be able to cover salvation this morning and I thought as we approach the table it will give us an understanding. Even thinking about our own testimony. What motivation do we have now to be a part of this great commission?

To take the gospel that has saved us which we've received mercy and give that same mercy to others. So in Acts chapter 9 verses 1 to 9 we're going to see the sovereign, God's sovereign hand in salvation.

[14 : 41] Our first point we're going to see Saul's sin. The depth of sin meets the depth of mercy. Look at verse 1.

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way both men and women he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

We're met with Paul here who is blinded in his pride, his arrogance as he actually tries to take on the mission of God. Full steam ahead.

He's trying to take God on in what God is doing. He was probably named as the first appointed king of Israel, Saul. Saul started off quite well but was a tragic end through a self-inflicted ruin.

Saul here is going to do the opposite. He's not going to start off very well but man, is he going to ever finish well? We're met with a couple realities in this text.

[15 : 51] There's lots of details we can come in contact with and spend our time on but I want these couple of principles to shine from this text. One, Paul is the last candidate anyone would ever think God would use for his mission.

God's sake. God can't use a guy like that.

so when we think about the church and we see the the variety of ways the multitude of ways that God uses sinners changes them and transform them what we value and what we think creates advantage or disadvantage of how God would use something is not how God sees it remember King David there's no way that they would use that guy no God saw the heart he knew Paul he knew him from the beginning we can't put a human limitation on the mighty hand of God when he saves someone and then plans to use them for his glory second there is no sinner that can sin themselves out of the mercy of God if God has got his sovereign hand on someone he can take who they were maybe even who you are right now and he can change you he can give you the mercy required and for us as a church to be a church of conviction who we know that this God can save whom he wills when he wills and that's not going to stop us from spreading the gospel to every person we come into contact with we must know our God when we know the depths of the mercy of God is inestimable it's inexhaustible and it's incalculable there is no way we can put a barometer or a limiter or a gauge on how deep God's mercy is to save a sinner here's Paul's own evaluation of his conversion I was a chief of sinners you line them all up in a room you throw them all in a police officer's station

I am the gold standard of sinners pick me you can't get any worse than me so these two realities are what drove Paul the last candidate anyone would thought to be a forerunner for the mission of God in the church and the depths of his sin receiving the depths of his mercy both of those combined now and we must come to the conclusion God can work in and through anyone are we that kind of church that sees or seeks to see desires to see the spiritual realities of how God is working in each and every soul or are we putting human limitations on the sovereign hand of God that's what drove Paul that must drive us as well because this is the depths of his sin if you were to ask somebody I bet you they would probably come up with this what would be the way that you think you would not be qualified to participate in the mission of God how about murdering the people whom God is saving that would be pretty high up there I would think

Satan must have thought I'm winning with this guy I've got Paul pretty good right now he is bent on destroying the work of God he you got threats that you've got murder he goes to the authority of the high priest of the day he wants to go into the synagogues he wants to go into the places of worship Paul was deceived in thinking that he was probably one of those brave Israelites of the past trying to rid the Jewish people of the poisonous behavior he probably thought he was like Moses who tried to slay the idol worshipers at Baal he probably thought he was like Phineas who had to slay the immortal I'm sorry immoral Israelite men and the Midianite women I'm like those guys I'm trying to rid Israel of them believing in this false messiah Elijah had to slay the false prophets even hundreds of years before Paul the Maccabean revolt this Jewish victory to keep its land and traditions or maybe like we read in Philippians chapter 3 this zealotry for the law drove him like the stoning of Stephen for blasphemy he thought that he was being zealous because he was blameless in the law the book of Deuteronomy does not mince words about how to treat those who are claiming to be prophets or blasphemers again in Galatians chapter 1 here's Paul about his own business he said I tried to persecute beyond measure and destroy it Paul was going into Damascus seeing red with anyone who was associating with Christ Paul might have thought of history like this that he was being faithful to the righteousness of God and he wanted to brand himself like those freedom fighters of Israel's past and destroy anyone who thought to be an enemy of the Jews so Paul's driving concern was

[21 : 59] Christians at the time he was very intentional he helped put Stephen to death he was in a hearty agreement and he was foaming at the mouth and hatred for anyone who is following the way again in Acts 26 verse 11 Paul describes himself as furiously enraged at them remember in Acts

chapter 5 the Jewish teacher Gamaliel told the council if we're trying to figure out if this movement is actually from God just kind of let it be because it'll probably just die down on its own Paul didn't get that message Paul says no I'm going after them he was bloodthirsty or as one commentator described he was a bounty hunter of Christians for Judaism remember in Philippians 3 he's the tribe of Benjamin which in Genesis 49 Jacob describes his sons of the Benjamin tribes as a ravenous wolf well prophecy was fulfilled here in Saul even millennia later but the gospel kept on spreading it didn't matter what happened

Paul might have thought not on my watch maybe I can be that one guy to stop it you ever see those commentators now whether these podcasters and they're making these arguments thinking I'm going to be the one atheist that makes the argument against God that was Paul here's how far he was willing to go Damascus was over 200 kilometers from Jerusalem therefore he was going to do a 400 kilometer round trip to bring followers of the way Christians back to Jerusalem it's about a five or six day journey for a little local context here Paul's walking up to Lillooet when's the last time you walked up to Lillooet save never yeah I think so we're going to hope ready aim to handcuff Christians and bring them back that's how far he was really willing to go that's how unhinged in his zeal against the church that's how the depth of his sin and the blindness caused him to go again we can look at Paul and go wow that's pretty far don't let this point pass us up though the blindness to our own sin can take us to places that we would never expect or even desire to go

Paul was mistranslating God's word he said I can do this on my own nobody is going to stop me he was blinded by his own zealousness and his sinfulness and it drove him to incalculable measures so when we just go over a chapter in Romans chapter 5 do you get where Paul is thinking now while we were enemies he's thinking about his own depths of sin while we were yet enemies God demonstrated his love while I was on the road to Damascus about to murder my Lord and Savior's people while I was in hearty agreement of putting true prophets to death while I was enraged while I sought to destroy

God demonstrated his love to me does it make a little more sense why Paul talks so much about mercy and grace and salvation in all of his letters all have sinned and fall short of the glorious glory of God even if sin even if your sin isn't a murderous rage against other believers we can't be in this comparison mode as if one sin against God is more sin than another all sin fall short of God's glory all sin God can get justice in all sin will be brought to the bar of justice we cannot get into the habit of comparing sin we must understand the depths of sin as an offense to the almighty eternal holy God we must have a right view of our own sin before God so that we can have a right view of the mercy of God and how he can use us

God created Paul as a man of conviction just as a man like there's no doubt about that so as we transition here to God's glorious mercy and saving him the zeal that he had for killing believers would now be changed to the conviction and the zeal to go to the nations and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost he really doesn't change in his zeal but it's now transformed he uses how he made him so that he would promote the gospel as far as he could possibly go because that's what he was willing to do in his sin that's mercy that's grace that's the sovereign hand of God moving in Saul's life he was willing to take men and women and drag them 200 miles to allow the chief priest to decide their fate and now we're in the book of Romans pretty far away a lot farther than 200 kilometers he's like

[27 : 59] I can't wait to see you guys I can't wait to fellowship with you I can't wait to be used of the Lord with my giftings and give you what the Lord has made me to be and how your gifting can encourage me now he was looking for the mutual edification and encouragement of the church in Rome and he hadn't even met the people yet the depths of sin met the depths of God's mercy and totally transformed Saul so as we move to God's intervention God's glory the glory of heaven meets earth verse 3 as he was traveling it happened as he was approaching Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him Saul Saul why are you persecuting me and he said who are you Lord and he said

I am Jesus whom you are persecuting but get up and enter the city and it will be told you what you must do so in these previous verses it's Luke recording the blindness of Paul's pride and arrogance and seeking to stop the gospel and in these texts now the sovereign hand of God blinds Paul to his own pride and now blinds him with his own glory which will transform him and make him into the man that he's called to be the glory of heaven now meets earth which means a couple of things for Paul in the plan of God there's clearly a change in Paul when he sees the glory of God it is not that

you became more intellectual it is not because you woke up one day and had this pity or feeling stomach it is not that you had more information one day than you did to the next it is not that you had enough money to purchase revelation it's because the glory of God Christ shone down while you were a sinner and changed you and transformed you it's the sovereign hand of God when the depths of sin meets the depths of mercy the glory of God now comes to earth and it enters into your heart in the Old Testament the glory of God would come down to the temple and now it comes into your heart and he changes and he transforms you and he wants to use you and he wants to build up the church and send forth the gospel to the nations because of what he has done in your life so salvation here in Paul we're going to see is not mainly about him in the same way that salvation is not mainly about you it's about the work of God it's about God's glory it's about what he is doing around the entire world this conversion experience was Paul's motivation for his mission which in effect becomes our motivation for our mission he's almost there he's so close to Damascus

I love God's humor in all of this gets him right up to the edge right he's probably thinking I got these guys he can probably smell the markets he can smell the food wafting in he's ready to pounce he can he can smell the fear of people because they know that he's coming he can hear the rattling of the chains in his mind going I've got 200 more kilometers to go with these people and heaven exploded on the scene he didn't ask for Paul's permission didn't wonder whether this was going to work or not heaven came down the depths of sin met the depths of mercy heaven's glory came down in a supernatural revelation experience and Jesus Christ appears to Paul in a spectacular way everything about this event

God's glory shining in his heart is what happens in our lives we just don't get to see it the way that Paul does we don't get to experience maybe a vision in the way that he does but God's glory did come down in your heart if you're a professor of the Lord Jesus Christ if you are truly saved we get though that this is no normal conversion experience you know how even the world uses this oh yeah Damascus experience you ever heard that when there's a sudden change in something my Damascus road experience you don't even have to be a believer and we understand that concept but what happens here changes Paul and changes the direction that God puts his people on in his mission the specific language about this vision here connects Paul with the prophets of old and the work of God from Israel to all the nations through a glorious vision this vision is no ordinary vision look at the text here real quick when he was traveling suddenly approaching

[33 : 35] Damascus a light from heaven flashed all around him lightning flashed all around Paul he falls to the ground and he hears a voice just like Ezekiel just like Daniel and just like John because the people around him are not seeing the vision the vision that has flashes of lightning connects us to so many other prophetic texts you have Ezekiel chapter 1 where flashes of lightning are associated with a divine vision you have Daniel chapter 10 verses 6 and 7 where the appearance of lightning is around this figure this divine figure this direction of the world in the Old Testament where God was going to use Abraham to create a nation and that nation would be a blessing to all the other nations remember in Acts chapter 7 where the son of man is standing when Stephen is stoned connecting back to Daniel chapter 7 where the son of man one like the son of man is coming and receiving his kingdom so in this vision it is not just a salvation story of Paul although it is it is connected to

Ezekiel and Daniel and Stephen that there is going to be a victorious son of man son of God son of David who is going to establish his kingdom on his throne on the earth surrounded by tongues and tribes and nations worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ and you and I are part of it and you and I are contributing to it you and I may not be an apostle may not have this divine vision inscriptured for people to see but Paul is continuing in this vision that God gave him about his son that is coming to rule the earth which is going to happen it is going to be fulfilled in him the resurrected exalted one in the heavens will come back to rule and reign on his glorious throne he sees the resurrected Christ he sees the saints with him he sees victory ahead of him how else can you think about Paul experience what he experienced all you have to do is go to 2nd Corinthians 11 and he just talks about all of the things that he walked through day and night in the deep the lashings the rejection why would he go through all of this because in his conversion experience here and in this vision he has already seen the future of this victorious Jesus Christ who has his people from every tongue and tribe and nation beloved we don't need a personal vision all we have to do is go to Revelation chapter 4 and 5 we have what Paul saw in the inerrant infallible authoritative word of God we know

that it's going to happen we don't need a vision we have God's word so Paul's on the ground just like everyone else in these previous visions knocked to the ground because of the glory of Christ now coming to earth and Jesus speaks he fell to the ground verse 4 and heard a voice saying to him Saul Saul why are you persecuting me this emphatic prophetic calling like the men of old Abraham Abraham Jacob Jacob Moses Moses Samuel Samuel Samuel these men who have been called by God in unique ways Paul follows the line of these men Paul knew his Bible he was zealous for the law he knew that there would be something different about this this question is piercing why are you persecuting me Jesus sees no difference from Paul persecuting the people who he is saving to him the ones who are on earth and him in heaven there is a seamless unbroken union connection relationship from those whom Christ has saved by his sacrificial blood and because of his resurrection there is no difference from those whom he has saved that are a part of his body and him who is the head no difference from the saints to the savior from the

Christians to the Christ he doesn't say the church he says me why are you persecuting me if you ever wonder why the church is so significant come back to this text why we put so much emphasis in the life of the church and Christ in this new covenant relationship we have with him because of this text yes there's other text but Jesus here calls out from heaven the one who is murdering his children murdering his body why are you persecuting me with the kingdom that Jesus receives are the saints they receive the same inheritance they receive the same realities that Jesus

[39 : 59] Christ did all people nations from every tongue and tribe and language Paul is now understanding that fact Paul's whole paradigm changes now because his heart is transformed so when you go to a passage like 2 Corinthians 2 verse 14 and he says God leads us in triumph in Christ this is it Paul had this thought process that God is always leading the church in triumph in Christ and I know that as we have walked through Romans chapter 5 and we've talked about suffering and we've gone through trials as a church sometimes it doesn't feel that way no one knows that better than Paul or he said to the Galatian church in chapter 6 do not grow weary!

in doing good keep persevering God is always leading the church in triumph in Christ because Christ triumphed we don't have to worry wonder BK's preaching is going to be effective in the Philippines we know it's going to be effective we know that his word is going to triumph we know that these churches are going to be built up we know that there's going to be missionary sent and churches that are growing and they're going to send out missionaries to the far reaches of the earth because Christ always triumphs in the church he is saving his people how does he know that because of verse 5 and he said who are you Lord this response alone reveals this conversion experience the transformation that Paul goes through the power of the glory of God draws him to his knees brings him low to the ground and the sound of the voice of his savior the brightness of his glory the call to his soul submit submit to the messiah submit to the prophesied one submit to the lord and savior his heart was changed his mind was now convinced and he recognized

Jesus glory and his sovereignty that Christ is the one who is in control I was going to go to Damascus I was going to bring people back and he stopped me he alone could be the only one that could stop me Jesus is now his master his savior and his lord nearly 250 times in Paul's epistles he calls him lord this is why and he calls him to go to the city not to bring people in chains not to go take people back to Jerusalem but he calls him to go to enter into the city and to be told what you must do he got up and he followed his lord and master that's the change of heart when the glory of heaven meets earth when the depths of sin meets the depths of

God's mercy when a heart of stone turns to a heart of flesh pride turns into humility and now there is a following of Jesus Christ you follow his word get up and go Jesus is now recognized for who he actually is not merely who Paul wanted him to be but Christ is Lord Lord the world!

the world wants to try to change and manipulate who they might think Jesus is or who they want him to be for their own life but Christ is Lord whether they like it or not whether you and I like it or not he is the Lord of his church he is the Lord of our hearts he is the Lord of heaven and earth do you and I and do we respond to him as that because that will radically change how we used to respond Christ is Lord Saul's sin his depths of pride met the depths of God's mercy God's intervention the glory of God came down to earth and lastly here we see Saul's humbling grace produces repentance verse seven the men who traveled with him stood speechless hearing the voice but seeing no one

[45 : 07] Saul got up from the ground and though his eyes were open he could see nothing and leading him by the hand they brought him to Damascus and he was three days without sight neither ate or drank clearly this vision was for Saul alone this was for him and his eyes only the men who traveled there understood something was going on this voice was taking place they stood speechless because even the glory of God hitting Paul was still resonating out to those who were traveling with him he receives the first revelation knocks him down pretty hard spiritually and physically his eyes opened but he could not see which I think is a metaphor because before he could see physically but he was blind spiritually God says I control the eyes of your heart he was charging hard to

Damascus on his own strength where he had to be the lead he had to charge and storm the gates now he couldn't even take one step without being led he didn't run off say I can do this on my own God you changed me and yes I verbally assent that you are Lord but I'm now going to do my own thing he was now physically dependent for every step for every direction he was dependent on the Lord not even on the food the physical sustenance three days without sight neither ate nor drank everything now God is teaching him saying I am the one that you have to depend on wholly and solely that's what repentance means the grace of

God the mercy of God in repentance says I am no longer my own I deny myself I take up my cross and I follow Christ I don't buck up against the goads I don't try to go my own way try to prove God wrong it is a complete and whole surrender and Paul shows that they take him by the hand and they brought him into Damascus this is what humility looks like you are led by God's instruction this was God's word to these men that were around and he had direction in Damascus he had Ananias just ready to go waiting for him he had a plan already in place he wasn't questioning

God because he knew that as a sovereign God he already had the plan waiting for him to walk so remember in Ephesians 2 verse 10 when you're a workmanship in Christ Jesus and he he's already given you good works beforehand that you may walk in them do you trust that as your Lord he is preparing for you to be faithful and he is now helping you understand what that faithfulness looks like there's this change that happens in Paul where he's!

submitting himself to his Lord and Savior it is clear that he is not the same man as he was before that's what repentance means you turn from your old life and you are no longer following the old ways of life and he has to prepare and he has to prepare him for this mission and call of apostleship he brings Paul low so that he can exalt him at the right time it's like Jesus Christ coming low on the earth and being exalted for us to be used of God he's got to tear down some of our old patterns of life our own patterns of thinking he might need to deconstruct some of the realities that we've built up and he's got to renovate our lives a little bit to make us useful he breaks down in order to build up there's a cost to following

[50 : 00] Christ to walking the path of our Lord and Savior and God created this man for his specific mission he was a Jew that was brought up in Greek culture he was a Roman citizen he was trained in Judaism he knew the Greco-Roman philosophies and world views growing up in Tarsus he had very raw leadership qualities that as long as they were worked within the power of the Holy Spirit he'd be able to work through those leadership challenges God's mercy was all over Paul's life as God is all over your life he knows exactly when you were born who you were born to what challenges you have when he saved you why he saved you when he did what the challenges were in your life what the challenges of your life now what we are walking through all of that is known to

God and all of that is preparing us to be faithful with wherever God is leading us we think of it as stumbling block sometimes because it feels like it I get it!

hard but what does James say when you go he is perfecting you he is conforming you to the image of the glory of his son we're going to get there in Romans chapter 8 all things work together if we're going to love God and are called according to his purpose what you are walking through in your life potentially hard difficult you can't see in front of you you feel like you're blind you're struggling just know that God is using to prepare you so that you will be faithful for whatever he has for you next that's how he works he only works triumphantly he only works faithfully are we going to humble ourselves and submit to him and trust him Paul went from mercenary to mercy godless to godly deceived to faithful prideful to humble blasphemer to believer slave of sin to slave of christ murderer to messenger persecutor to persecuted apostate to apostle that's what god did to paul but that's all of salvation history so let's pray and ask the lord how is he using us now he's not just using bk in the philippines although he is mightily he's using you and i where we are at now in squamish for his

glory so that every tongue and tribe and nation can worship around the throne of our victorious savior let's pray father we thank you for inscripturating this story we're so thankful for paul and how you used him we're so thankful for your sovereign hand over his life and i know sometimes even in our weaknesses and sometimes our unbelief we can say things like well i'm not paul and we can say amen to that because you have perfectly created and crafted every soul here in wisdom you have created personality and conviction and sovereignty you've provided stumbling blocks and barriers because you're teaching us you're not just our heavenly father who instructs you're our shepherd who leads father as we even come before the table this morning would you help us to remember this glorious salvation that we've received in christ would you help us to see your glory remember the depths of mercy we received and take that as our motivation to go wherever you lead us whoever needs to hear the gospel whoever needs to be encouraged and built up and strengthened and let us never doubt your sovereign triumph in christ as you lead this church so father we thank you and we praise you this morning in your precious son's name we ask amen