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Substance of Two Sermons preached by our Pastor
on Sunday. February 3. 1980.

Morning Lesson. Acts 26. vv.1-23.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?
Acts 9.6.

These verses in the Acts of the Apostles written as inspired by St Luke, record the time when Saul of Tarsus, that violent persecutor of the early Church of Christ, was effectually, effectively, divinely, permanently stopped by God's almighty power and grace in his course of folly, wickedness, persecution and death. We have also recorded in chapters 22 and the Lesson his own testimony concerning the divine, glorious, sovereign occasion when God fulfilled His divine decrees, purposes of grace, heavenly will, and all He had designed to do in the person of Saul of Tarsus, and through him for His Church to make him a minister and the great apostle of the Gentiles. So I will mention from two view points what affects all who are concerned with their immortal souls, and who have a deep concern also for the immortal souls of those dear to them. For once you recognise and feel in you immortality,- the possession of a soul, (very certain and powerful is the realisation of the possession of an immortal soul.) -if guilt is resting heavily on your soul you will be aware of your soul. If you feel lost you will be aware of your soul. When the Lord blesses you with His love your soul will rise and transcend all of the flesh and terrestrial things. So being conscious and concerned for your own precious soul, you will begin to experience the deepest concern for the souls of all those dear to you. You will pray for them, as we remembered this morning in prayer those who are thousands of miles from Great Britain. This is important.

In pursuance of divine decrees and heavenly purposes of God's holy will, the time comes for God to exercise almighty power; not in destruction, in salvation; not in wrath, in compassion; not in vindictive anger, in clemency, by sending forth His Spirit, as there was the original creation of man in two parts,- the remarkable organism of the human body from dust, (what a divine Architect God is!) and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life,- the creation of the immortal soul.

Who can ever assess the solemnity and sacredness of the moment ^{when} the Lord quickens? Can you contemplate the amazing sacredness of an immortal soul being given birth to? It is a soul He formed and brought into existence and it will never die. A deep concern envelops the spirit and constitutes a weight of exercise manifested in groans, prayers, cries, tears to God for the salvation of precious immortal souls. So the language of the dear great woman, so positive, (and) it must be the acme of desire in the soul to harmonise with it in one's own testimony. - "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well." There was no hesitation, no doubt in her spirit, no uncertainty, but such an overwhelming sense of the presence of the Lord was known in her soul that she could give a blessed, adoring answer. "It is well." Dear friends, would you wish anything greater than this for here below? to be able to give your testimony concerning the whole family, "It is well."

I wish to take up before you some of the important things concerning Saul of Tarsus. He was brought into the world; he had a being, yet for a considerable time although he had a brain of tremendous potential, - he was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, - all his great powers were under the influence of Satan and sin. Who would have thought that this man, haling men and women to prison, causing them to blaspheme and giving word of consent to their death: who would have thought this was the person God had designed to be a great apostle? "And last of all he was seen of me also." says Paul. There is something else, and it came up on Thursday, namely, was there prayer for him? and the demoniac, was there any prayer for him? Do you judge the Lord is pleased to quicken into life souls who have ^{not} been prayed for? You may say we have no knowledge, - the Lord has. In any case it is certain that Saul was included in the prayer of the martyr Stephen, for he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." - what a prayer! "And when he had said this, he fell asleep." That expression is only used concerning the blessed death of the righteous. He fell asleep in Jesus. Was his prayer answered? did he not emulate the example of the Saviour when the crude nails were hammered into His hands and feet and He was fastened

to the cross? He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." You little know where is prayer going up and there is hope. I believe this is one of the early things recognised to be of great value by the young when brought into concern: they have a desire to know they are remembered in prayer. I remember them. I remember the dear children and grandchildren and those abroad. It is wonderful to be prayed for. I do not hesitate to say concerning all the dear saints Saul of Tarsus was violent with there were those who prayed for him. "Pray for your enemies."

I would like to advance this to you in two ways. Are you praying for others, for some who may be wild and violent, far away? yet there is a breath of prayer for them. The Lord answered that prayer, You may think, "O, they will never be believers; they will never walk in the narrow way." My friends, prayers' prevails through the mediation of Christ. How happy it is to win souls,- "He that winneth souls is wise." and the Lord knows how to do it. It is nothing to do with the flesh; it is the Spirit. And from another view point, oh the wonder of coming to know however far away you are you are prayed for! And there is something else occurs to my spirit. You will know the testimony concerning King David, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." You might say that applies to dear Mr Gosden and Mr Delves: their prayers are ended; they will never pray again. What about the poor Church and souls? what will they do? What about the children they prayed for and now their prayers are ended? It applies to praying fathers and mothers whose prayers are ended: your prayers will end. I will give you a cheering word. The intercession of Christ never ends: that is the vital thing. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." And in the economy of grace in the Church: say the dear father is glorified, and the dear nother, and their prayers are ended. Do you know what the Lord does? He will put it on a son or daughter so there is prayer without ceasing. In a family the father dies: the Lord will put the burden of the family on a son and he becomes as a father in the family and prayer goes on. This is very sweet and precious. The son takes up the load father puts down, or the daughter the load mother puts down, and prayer goes on. All the time the Throne of Grace is open to prayer there must be a blessed issue. I will go aside to say to some of you, the Lord has so

wrought on your souls as a son or daughter in a family and you are praying for your brothers and sisters: you have got a load on your spirit. Joseph brought his two sons to his father, and Jacob said, "And now thy two sons,, Ephraim and Manasseh....are mine; as Reuben and Simeon." He raised them from grandsons to sons and heads of tribes. Their prayers will go on. Some of you begin to feel this; you are carrying, not only your own case but other cases. O the blessedness of this! If any said to me, "Where is the prospect in the Church?" It is where the Lord does that. He will perform miracles and exercise His glorious power to this end. This has all arisen in our meditation from the point as to whether there was any prayer for Saul of Tarsus. Before I leave this section, what a mercy if the Lord has laid on your hearts some who are ungodly. (I am not to dilate considerably on this.) It might ^{be} one of the worst swearers, an immoral person, a wreckage of humanity. The Lord gives His people a spirit of prayer, and an heir of Glory is born. Has the Lord laid on your hearts any in the world, and those who are as far from God as it is possible to go, yet the Lord gives you a spirit of prayer for them. I do not infer that all are living in such sinful form. There ^{are} those who are highly respectable; there is no question of vice in their lives: it is just that they need the quickening Spirit of the Lord so that they live before Him. Or they need to be brought out of a dead religion of talking professors with no grace in the heart. That is what dear Mr Eli Ashdown said when he was preaching here on the morning of the Jubilee services, concerning the ministry of William Cowper, how he would show the emptiness of a talking professor with no grace in the heart, and the wonder of the working of the Holy Ghost in the souls of His chosen people.

I will look at what is antecedent to the words read. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is a word that has interested me spiritually for a long time. Saul fell to the earth, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." That is what the Lord did for him. He effectually stopped him; that was the end of his course in sin. That is a great word in Job 38. "Thus far shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." What about you young people? has the Lord done this for you? I speak in great affection. It is fair to say I do not judge you have

all gone to great lengths in the world: you may have had a taste of things in the world, I do not know. Is this your experience of divine almighty power, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further."? You have come to the end. There is something here that is so interesting and attractive to me. When Saul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" the Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." These pricks are so valuable and very precious. It is clear the Lord had begun to work in him before He actually stopped him. Pricks are of conviction in the conscience. A prick is as a goad or a sting, but especially a goad. A goad is a sharp pointed stick that activates an animal into movement. Pricks are of the Holy Ghost. I put it to you: when the Lord begins His work He interferes with everything. There ^{is} a project, pleasure, a determination to go in a certain course and the Lord spoils it: it is His almighty power. There is a prick; you are guilty. Take those who are absolutely guilty concerning not following the Lord: you are not comfortable. Rebellion is kicking against the pricks: disobedience is; resisting is. It is clear that Saul was uncomfortable and miserable. God disturbed him: there was a prick from God every inch of the way. How futile it is to kick! It is a mercy to have pricks. You may have said you would have a taste of the world, and God upset everything, turned it over, made you miserable; you were kicking against the pricks. Take the Lord's way or will for you. It is likely God's way you would not have chosen: it is something you may resent and you kick against it. "Not this way, Lord." You know what the right course is. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." You do not know how many are in this to day. It is a mercy when they fall before Him at His blessed feet, pleading for divine mercy. Amen.