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Substance of Three Sermons preached by our Pastor

on Sunday, May 19, 1974.

Morning Lesson. Acts 9. vv. 1-22.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts 9. 6.

I think it will be clear to those who are spiritually taught and exercised, the theme that is with me is the manifestation and calling by divine grace of chosen vessels. It is a remarkable term and blessed word of information which the Lord communicated to Ananias to thoroughly convince his spirit that this man who had been such a terror to the Church of God in seeking to destroy them, was in fact a chosen vessel to the Lord.

So I feel as we begin we might mention one or two fundamental things. One is, the strength of God's decree and of electing love, and nothing can overturn or reverse the divine purposes of Jehovah concerning the royal seed. The next is, what a wonderful incentive and encouragement to pray on is this case of Saul of Tarsus, so violent, so filled with enmity and we see how Jesus feels this to be when His dear saints are persecuted His people are as the apple of His eye. So when He called Saul He did not mention immediately His dear people. He said; "Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me? That is the whole exercise of your antagonism to My people. You are persecuting Me." What an encouragement and incentive this is for gracious, Spirit-taught people to never cease to pray; to pray on until they receive the divine blessing as demonstrated in the case of Saul of Tarsus. It is this I wish to make special mention of, the sovereign, efficacious power of divine grace. You see, no case is beyond the power of God in His grace. So long as a sinner is out of hell, especially if there is a God-given prophecy, a sweet promise from His mouth to your soul, no poor sinner can be beyond the power of grace.

To take this extreme example, the man was not only antagonistic to Jesus and His followers, - the Lord had gone to glory; - he was a violent

man. We are shocked at violence to day. Saul stopped at nothing: he showed no mercy, even to women. His one objective was to exterminate the sect, yet all the time he was one of the Lord's people. What a miracle! How it demonstrated the power of His grace and the amazing character of the love of God to sinners! I have possibly referred to the meaning of the two names, Saul and Paul. Saul means, as you know, a wrecker. That is what he was: he tried to wreck everything in the Church of God; to pull it down and to destroy it, and he knew why. His malice was directed against Jesus.

You know I could say to you, all through the ages of time Satan has been active at this work. Has God a decree to fulfil? a purpose to accomplish? Satan will always try to wreck it. Satan tried to burn and destroy the Bible. Has God a purpose to verify and fulfil? Satan will try to wreck it. He tried to wreck the plan and purpose of God concerning Joseph, and his venomous brethren thought when the poor defenceless lad approached that it would be easy to kill him. Never! I say to you dear friends, what you have that is of God, your own salvation, safety, and those dear to you, your exercise and promise God has given you, you will find this is one of the proofs of it being of God. It is a negative pole of confirmation, but it is a confirmation. Whatever is of God Satan will attack. If you have got dead things Satan is not troubled with them. Satan goes for a living exercise and promise. He troubles with what is of God. Let me reiterate: this is a negative pole: a positive pole is the sweet, confirming presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and the ratification of the promise by love and blood. This is by no means lacking in a degree of encouragement:- you get something and Satan tries to wreck it. There are a few of you in the congregation who will deeply appreciate and understand this. The conflict of your life is there. Why is it Satan savagely attacks the people of God? Because they have the mark of God in their foreheads and they are going to glory. If you are dead he will not trouble with you: he will leave you alone; there is nothing to trouble about. You are fast going to the pit anyway, so there is no need to trouble. When you have the mark of Christ he will attack you.

How amazing is the case of Saul of Tarsus! We have made observations

on the malice of Satan to attack, to wreck and destroy the Church of God. The plain, blessed truth is, nothing that is of God can be destroyed or overthrown. "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." (Acts 5.39) If He has given you a promise nothing can overturn it; not all the powers of hell, sin, man in vast numbers. In Zechariah there is a challenge. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." There was hostility to the rebuilding of the temple. Presently, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" Some of you have seen a mountain. I have not, but I can imagine what it is like. You know how formidable a mountain is. Here stands a great mountain. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel, ~~know~~ - Christ, - thou shalt become a plain." I wanted to emphasise the point that Saul tried to wreck the Church: he never could. The more they were scattered and persecuted and afflicted the more they grew. This a wonderful law of grace, is it not? You will prove the same in your soul. The more Satan persecutes and afflicts you the more your soul will grow; the deeper your roots will go into Christ. Get into an easy path and Satan will leave you alone. How are you spiritually? Are you in a lukewarm state? If Satan sets on you and you are persecuted and in trouble and the Lord sanctifies it, the more you will grow spiritually

Wrecker. I want to refer to Stephen. As you know in his dying moments he prayed so lovingly for those who stoned him and who took part in it. He said; "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." and Saul was there. Think of the holy efficacy of spiritual prayer and how the Lord answered. Undoubtedly many participated in the divine blessing and answer to that prayer. The amazing example of the noble, godly martyr never left the spirit of Paul. I go to the other side, and say to you, those tears, groans, sighs,- and there is no need to expound,- if they flow from your heart when you go in secret before the Lord and groan, it is as though you feel the Spirit of God taking those groans to heaven. Do you understand? You will when you come into a deeper path before you go Home. Jesus sighed. That tear,- you need not say anything,- the Lord says; "I have seen thy tears." You might think there is not much in a tear, If it is sowing to the Spirit, I do not know how long you may have to wait,- you may not see it with your mortal eyes-

in great abundance the Lord will answer your groans, sighs, and tears. I must say that to you: they are never lost. I have proved it in a small measure. So there may be some here this morning, and certainly there are some who are not here yet they are in another sense. Their persons are not here: they are here in your hearts. This is an amazing thing. I wonder how many you have brought in your hearts? So they are here, though not in person. They will know the divine response of Almighty grace and power in their soul and salvation.

Let us go to the other side. Paul; a builder. That is grace, the power of grace. A builder in the Church; a wise master-builder. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was to build. They were amazed "that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." (Gal.1.23) The man is preaching the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ: he is building who once was wrecking. What a demonstration of the amazing grace, power and love of God this is! So pray on: pray without ceasing.

We will come to the next point. There is an appointed time, as we shall sing in our last hymn (76) and the Lord knows when it is: we know not. Look at him. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." We have likened ^{him} to an eruptive volcano; all the hot lava of malice erupting, 'threatening slaughter.' and God knew that on the Damascus road, not far from the place where he sought to fulfil his evil designs,-He knew that on the Damascus road was the appointed time and place. The Lord knows. A cry went out of my soul before I stood up that it may be so this morning. The Lord will fulfil. So suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye,- and I suppose you might have looked on and said it would be impossible for a change to take place in Saul; - suddenly (he is a chosen vessel) there shined round about him a light from heaven: it was done. The Lord in that moment of time, (and I love the expression; it is Biblical) in the twinkling of an eye the Lord had cast out the vile usurper from his heart and claimed him. He had communicated to him the principle of life and as we had on Thursday there was breath. He breathed into his soul the breath of divine life. It is done. How this opens before you a

gracious hope, such a field for spiritual exercise and prayer! The Spirit of God must direct you. There are two things to be said concerning this. You must have a directive by a promise of God and a prophecy that has gone before. You say sometimes; "Before that child was born the Lord spoke." Or you say; "There is a specific meaning in that child's name. I did not name it. God did. There was no doubt about it: God told me the child's name." Don't you feel that name is in the Lamb's Book of Life? You have got ground to go before the Lord with and on. Or, let me show you another place, where the Lord puts one in your heart. He shows you one and puts that one in your heart. It is not for me to embark on but I have told you before as a dear flock, the Lord's flock in this place; with me it is not only you I carry, but those you carry as well. This is precious because my ministry either rises or falls with this. God has used me to encourage you: if this goes down I go with it. I do not believe this ship will go down because Christ is in the vessel with us. We may be tossed in the storm: if the ship goes down I go down. I am convinced it will not go down. I carry those you carry. So you see where prayer is directed.

There is another thing to be said, and to me it is of great importance and we know it is from the Word of God. There are those to be manifested as chosen vessels whose lives have been miraculously spared. There is no need for me to expound. They have been in imminent peril and on the verge of death, and God has brought them back so they died not in their sins; they were spared. I would say to you younger friends, you will come into this in years to come. You will walk in some of this after we have gone, then you will know the meaning of it. So see the miracle, - spared, when they were nearly over the precipice. Was not that emphasised in the case of the poor lad with the unclean spirit, and his father eventually brought him to Christ because the disciples failed? You know the language there. "And oftentimes it hath cast him into the ~~waters~~^{fire}, and into the waters, to destroy him." It never did; it couldn't. What you will pass through if you are involved in such a case is; "Thy soul, full of woe, shall pass as through hell." (297) You will never know how to live through it. Why? (I am speaking to those who know deeper teaching) If they go, you go. That is why. If they were destroyed by fire or water how would you live

or come back to the Church of God? You would be finished, my friends. I should go: my ministry, profession, all must go. I do not expect all to understand this; it is very deep. So one thing I think you will appreciate those of you in an exercise concerning yourself and others. You see how God by an hair's breadth has saved you from death. Blessed be God! some of you know the meaning of this. I know ~~you~~^I have got a few precious souls on this point. If the time comes for God to make you manifest the Church will have strength because you are a chosen vessel. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Behold the wonder of these cases! They could not die in their sins. I could well pause here and stay in quiet meditation on the wonder and glory of it. You know, some of you, when the moment came and God spared you. I am certain there are those of you here this morning in the depths of your soul are saying; "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

So the moment came. I have wished to name to you the amazing nature of love divine, that God could love a poor sinner in his blood, when there was nothing lovable about them. He looked on and loved me: not my sins, my person, and you in the same way can love one in the Covenant of Grace before the Lord has wrought the amazing change. So the appointed time came. Your prayers are directed to God. You have a promise or a persuasion or God has put one in your heart and you are praying, How wonderful! I have known what it is to preach a sermon relative to one out there, yet it has been ever so sweet. The Lord sometimes gives His dear people a feeling, and I say to you, you love the Church that has gone to glory, you love the Church that is now present on the earth, and you love those yet to be born, and you will pray that these may be brought forth out of the womb of the Covenant. Amen.