

If Saul Was Saved on the Road to Damascus

Acts 9, 16, 26

I. INTRODUCTION: I

I. 2 Men disagree on God's terms of salvation.

- A. The "Protestant" denominations teach that all the Lord requires is faith alone.
- B. By that, they mean, simply believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and accept Him as your "personal Savior" (explain Protestant origin of "faith only").
- C. But, in reality, they believe more is involved in salvation than "faith only."
 - (1) Most would insist the Holy Spirit must directly operate on the heart of the sinner in order to allow him to have faith (sinner has no choice in the matter).
 - (2) This direct operation of the Holy Spirit is accomplished separate and apart from man's will (hearkens back to Augustine with roots in Calvinism; T-U-L-I-P).
 - (3) Most would also insist the sinner must repent of his sins to be saved.
 - (4) Many would insist that one must recite the "Sinner's Prayer" to be saved.
 - (5) There are many versions of the "Sinner's Prayer," but they all are essentially the same (involve expressing one's faith in Christ and "accepting Him as you 'personal Savior.'").
 - (6) In reality, because of their lack of respect for God's book; the denominations are quite schizophrenic about what they believe God requires for salvation (i.e., they say "faith only" but really don't practice it).

2. The "faith only" denominations are particularly fond of the story surrounding the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in the book of Acts (Acts 9, 16, 26).

- A. They insist Saul was saved by "faith only" while on the road to Damascus when he saw the vision of Christ.
- B. One important reason they insist Saul was saved on the road to Damascus is they are trying to escape the Bible's plain teaching on the necessity of baptism in salvation.
- C. They insist God does not require baptism for salvation.
- D. They claim baptism is a "work" of man; hence, is not one of God's requirements for salvation (explain how they leave out v. 10).

Eph. 2:8-10: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*

3. Was Saul of Tarsus saved on the road to Damascus?

- A. All false teaching always leads to unacceptable consequences.
- B. For example, most premillennialists (explain) claim Jesus will come a second time to set up an earthly reign in Jerusalem for 1,000 years. This false teaching has a number of unacceptable consequences: For example, if the kingdom has yet to come...

- (1) Why did Jesus say it was near in the first century? Mk. 9:1
- (2) Why did Paul say Christians are in the kingdom? Col. 1:13
- (3) Why did Paul say Jesus was already a king? 1 Tim. 6:15
- (4) The Roman Empire will have to be rebuilt! Dan. 2
- (5) Why did Daniel the prophet tell us He received the kingdom when He ascended into heaven? Dan. 7:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:22-24
- 4. If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus there are some very unacceptable consequences that make the Bible account contradict itself.
- 5. Before considering these consequences; let's read the three accounts:
 - A. Initial account is found in Acts 9:1-19.
 - B. Paul recounts his conversion to the Jews on the steps of the Fortress of Antonia when he was arrested in Jerusalem in Acts 22:1-16.
 - C. Paul recounts his conversion defending himself before King Agrippa in Acts 26:9-18.
- 6. **3** Let's consider the unacceptable consequences if Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus.

II. DISCUSSION: **4**

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved before and without being...

- I. **** Without being told what to do:**
 - A. In Acts 9 Saul, while on the road to Damascus, asked the Lord, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (9:6)
 - (1) If the doctrine of "faith only" was correct; this would have been the perfect time for the Lord to say, "Just believe I'm the Son of God, accept Me as your personal Savior and thou shalt be saved."
 - (2) But the Lord didn't say that did He!
 - (3) On the contrary, Luke records: "Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'" (9:6)
 - B. If saved on the road, Saul was saved before he was "told what you must do"!
 - (1) When Saul came into Damascus the Lord directed Ananias to go to Saul and give him some instructions (i.e., tell him "what you must do").
 - (2) One thing Ananias told Saul was, "The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will," (Acts 22:14).
 - (3) If Saul had to be told God's "will" when he came to Damascus, he surely did not know God's "will" when he was on the road to Damascus three days earlier!
 - C. So, men "must do" something to be saved!
 - (1) The denominations deny that; they say "faith alone" saves.
 - (2) But the Bible says Saul had to "do" something to be saved and so do we!

- (3) The only time the Bible mentions “*faith only*” we are told “*faith only*” does not save us!

Jas. 2:24: “*You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*”

- D. What was Saul told to do when he came into Damascus? It is undeniable that one thing he was told to do was:

Acts 22:16: “*Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”

- E. Do you believe Saul was saved on the road to Damascus?

- (1) If so, you must believe he was saved before he was even told what to do!
(2) If so, you must believe what the Bible clearly teaches otherwise!

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

2. ** *Before and without faith:*

- A. We’ve already established that if Saul was saved on the road to Damascus he was saved before he was even told what to do to be saved.

- B. This presents a major problem!

- (1) The Bible says: “...*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17).
(2) Saul did not hear God’s will until Ananias told him three days later in Damascus.
(3) Later Paul affirms how “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”:

2 Thess. 2:13-14: “*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (cf. Acts 17:1-4; Paul “*reasoned with them from the Scriptures*”)

Eph. 1:13: “*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...*” (cf. Acts 19; Paul “*spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God*”)

- C. The Hebrew writer wrote:

Heb. 11:6: “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*”

- D. If we cannot be saved without faith and “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”; how could Saul be saved on the road to Damascus before he even heard the gospel?!

- (1) The gospel “*is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*” (Rom. 1:16).
(2) But the gospel is powerless unless it is heard! Rom. 10:17

Acts 28:25-29: “*So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 saying,*

‘Go to this people and say:

*'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;
And seeing you will see, and not perceive;
27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.'*

28 'Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!'"

(3) This is why the Lord gave the Great Commission:

Mk. 16:15-16: *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"*

Matt. 28:19-20: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."*

E. Saul wasn't saved on the road to Damascus because he had not yet heard the gospel message (Rom. 1:16).

(1) Hearing the gospel precedes "faith."

(2) And, one cannot be saved without "faith"! Heb. 11:6

F. If Saul was saved before he heard what to do, then he must have been saved before and without faith!

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

3. **** Without pleasing or coming to God:**

A. Remember what the Hebrew writer wrote?

Heb. 11:6: *"But without faith it is impossible to **please** Him, for he who **comes** to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

B. If Saul was saved before he was told what to do, he was saved without faith, and he was saved without pleasing or coming to God!

Jn. 14:6: *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"*

Heb. 7:25: *"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

4. **** Without obedience:**

A. Do you believe an individual will be saved from their sins without obeying the Lord?

(1) That's the inescapable consequence of "faith only" taught by the denominations.

(2) As we've noted, James already exploded that myth:

Jas. 2:24: *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."*

(3) But, that's the consequence, if Saul was saved on the road to Damascus

B. Let's note the following passages:

Matt. 7:21: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*

Lk. 6:46: *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"*

Heb. 5:9: *"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,"*

Rev. 22:14: *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."*

C. Many other passages make it clear we must do what the Lord says to be saved.

D. Baptism is an act of obedience required by the Lord:

Mk. 16:16: *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

Rom. 6:3-4: *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

Rom. 6:17-18: *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*

Acts 22:16: *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

1 Pet. 3:21: *"There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,"*

E. If Saul was saved before he was baptized, then he must have been saved before he obeyed the Lord!

(1) Baptism is essential for salvation! Mk. 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21

(2) Baptism is an act of faith; not a "work" of man: (explain passage)

Col. 2:12: *"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."*

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

5. **** Outside of Christ:**

A. The Bible unequivocally teaches that "salvation" is "in Christ."

2 Tim. 2:10: *“Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

Acts 4:12: *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

Jn. 14:6: *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

B. But, what does the Bible teach insofar as how one gets “in Christ”?

Gal. 3:26-29: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

- (1) This passage clearly teaches we “put on Christ”; we are “one in Christ” only when we have been “baptized into Christ”!
- (2) But Saul was not baptized on the road to Damascus; he was baptized three days later in the city.
- (3) The inescapable consequences is this: If Saul was saved on the road, he was saved while outside of Christ, before he was “in Christ”!

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

6. ** In his sins:

A. When Saul of Tarsus went into the city of Damascus he was told by Ananias:

Acts 22:16: *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”*

B. THINK!

- (1) What was Saul told to do to “wash away” his sins? “be baptized”
- (2) When were Saul’s sins “wash[ed] away”? Before or after baptism? AFTER!

C. Unacceptable consequence: If Saul was saved on the road, before and without baptism, then he must have been saved in his sins!

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

7. ** Without calling on the name of the Lord:

A. Note that Acts 22:16 connects calling on the name of the Lord with baptism.

Acts 22:16: *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”*

B. Paul: *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Rom. 10:13).

- (1) Was Saul saved without calling on the name of the Lord? NO!
- (2) But how did Saul “call upon the name of the Lord”?
- (3) He did so by when he was baptized!

C. On the Day of Pentecost Peter recounted Joel's prophecy.

(1) Part of Joel's prophecy was: (connect w/work of Holy Spirit):

Acts 2:17-21: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God...21 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

(2) Did the Pentecostians "call on the name of the Lord"? They sure did! How?

Acts 2:36-39: *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' 38 Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'"*

(3) They called on the name of the Lord when they:

- ☛ Heard the gospel message (Rom. 10:17),
- ☛ Gained faith in Christ (vv. 36 & 37),
- ☛ Repented and were baptized (vv. 38, 41)

(4) When they obeyed Peter's command to "repent and be baptized" they were "calling on the name of the Lord"!

(5) When they called on the name of the Lord, they received something: "the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(6) What was that gift? V. 21: *"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

D. If Saul was saved on the road to Damascus, before and without baptism, then he must have been saved without calling on the name of the Lord!

If Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved...

8. ** Without knowing it:

A. If Saul was saved on the road to Damascus, he must not have known it for he was led by the hand into Damascus and was "...three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink" (Acts 9:8-9).

(1) Does that sound like a saved person?

(2) If so, this is the most miserable saved person I've read about.

B. Contrast this with:

(1) The Ethiopian eunuch:

Acts 8:38-39: *"So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."*

(a) Which came first? Baptism or rejoicing?

(b) Baptism! He rejoiced because after he was baptized he knew he was saved!

(2) The Philippian jailor:

Acts 16:33-34: *“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”*

(a) Which came first? Baptism or rejoicing?

(b) Again, baptism!

C. The same was true with Saul: After Saul *“...arose, and was baptized”* (thus did what he was told he *“must do”*) that he *“...received meat...was strengthened...And straightway preached Christ in the synagogues...”* (Acts 9:18-20).

III. CONCLUSION: 6

I. This should help us realize we're not saved before and without water baptism.

I Pet. 3:21: *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”* (KJV)

Col. 2:12: *“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*

2. Jesus said, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mk. 16:16).

3. Do you believe that? Have you been baptized? *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* (Acts 22:16; KJV).

Adapted from an article (*If Saved on the Road to Damascus*) by John Isaac Edwards in *The Terre Haute Speaker*, Vol. 7, No. 23; June 10, 2018.