

Behold, He Is Praying.
Acts 9:10-12.
Sunday morning, March 14, 2010.

I. A remarkable statement.

These few brief verses teach us that the reason Ananias is being sent to Saul, with healing and a whole new calling, is that Saul is praying. This happened on the third day after Saul was struck with blindness on the road to Damascus.

A. It is a remarkable statement because we might say: “Of course he was praying, he was a Pharisee.” Pharisees were very rigid about their prayer times. They would do so faithfully three times a day. Later Saul could write to the Philippians that while he was a Pharisee, as far as the observance of the law was concerned (as interpreted by the traditions of the fathers), he was blameless. Philippians 3:6. This would mean, among other things, that he did not miss any prayer times. So why does Luke include the obvious? And why does the Lord single out this piece of information in sending Ananias?

B. Again we might say: “Of course Saul was praying; he was struck with blindness and wanted to be delivered from this affliction; I would be praying too if I were him.”

So again we ask, why does Luke belabor the obvious, and why does the Lord point to Saul’s praying in sending Ananias?

II. Praying for the first time.

A. Saul had been trained to be a praying man at least since the time he, as a young Adolescent, had come to Jerusalem to be trained in the law and the traditions of the Jewish fathers in the school of Gamaliel.

Men all around him would have known him as a praying man.

Every morning in his morning prayer Saul would have thanked the Lord that he woke up, not as a gentile, nor as a woman, but as a Jewish man, as Jewish men were accustomed to do.

B. From the perspective of man upon the earth Saul had been a devout man and a praying man. But from the perspective of heaven Saul had never offered up a single prayer in his life.

1. In Luke 18:9-14 the Lord sheds light on the nature of true prayer.

A Pharisee and a tax collector went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee said: “God I thank you that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess...”

The tax collector also prayed; he did not want to come too close to the Lord’s sanctuary, and stood afar off, (probably in the court of the gentiles.) He would not lift his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and said: “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

The Lord Jesus tells us in this passage that the Pharisee’s prayer was not heard. It was not even considered; it was not prayer in the eyes of God. The tax collector’s prayer however was answered, for what he offered up was prayer.

2. The remarkable thing about the words of our text: “Behold he is praying”

is that the Lord in heaven is speaking the words. From the Lord's, and from heaven's perspective Saul is finally a praying man. And being a man of true prayer, his prayers can not go unanswered.

- At once an answer is sent to Saul; a man named Ananias will come, lay hands on him, and restore his sight.
- At once Ananias is dispatched. He must go at once, for behold, Saul is praying, and no delay can be tolerated. When Ananias hesitates in vs. 15, note the urgency of the command, "Go!"

III. Taking our rightful place before God.

From the passage in Luke 18 we learn that for our prayers to be prayers in the eyes of God we must take our rightful place before God.

A. We must come in a right spirit and with a right frame of reference:

1. Not pleading our own assets; our own righteousnesses; our own pedigree, or talents or accomplishments.

Saul was brought to the place of abandoning all those things; indeed he says he counts them as rubbish in Philippians 3:8.

2. It is a coming to God in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and on the basis of the Lord Jesus Christ's righteousness and merits alone.

- The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man

1 Timothy. 2:5.

- The Lord Jesus Christ's own confession is that "No man comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6.

B. We must come to a right end or for a right purpose.

Much later in the life of Saul he would summarize that purpose in three phrases in his letter to the Philippians in ch. 3:8,9,and 10.

1. "...That I may gain Christ." That means that the object of true prayer is that we may belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He may be ours.

True prayer entrusts itself to the Lord Jesus Christ. It lays its hand in the hand of Christ.

2. "... That I may be found in Him" That means that we look for the acceptability of ourselves and our prayers, not to our own accomplishments, but to the accomplishments of Jesus alone.

3. "...That I may know Him." The meaning of the Greek word "know" is a rich and varied one. It includes the idea of knowing intimately; knowing relationally; knowing in union with another. It is used of the sexual union as in Matthew 1:25. The objective is here union with Christ.

IV. Taking our rightful place before men.

A. We can not take our rightful place before God without also doing so in relation to men, for God is a covenantal God.

B. His people are His treasure; they are the love of His life; the apple of His eye.

C. His heart, His longings and His love are ever toward them.

D. That is why in union with Christ, the love of our hearts belongs to His sheep as well. "Peter, if you love Me, take care of My sheep." John 21:15-17.

E. Take care that you save the love of your hearts for the Lord's sheep.