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THE POWER OF AN ORDINARY LIFE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 109
ACTS 22:6-11

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ACTS 22:6-11 "And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus."

In this passage we have two principles--

First--We have a second recording of the conversion of Paul.

Second--We have an illustration of the importance of an ordinary life.

Here we see the importance of other members of the team, such as a man named Ananias.

ACTS 22:6 "And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me." Paul had quieted the mob and they are now listening. He was on the journey from Jerusalem to Damascus to arrest and imprison and kill Christians. He related that as he was making the journey from Jerusalem to Damascus "There shone from heaven a great light round about me". The great light is Jesus Christ. It is similar to the concept of the burning bush. The light is perpetuated and it is the presence and power of Christ aside from his actual physical form. Throughout history we have the same idea repeated many times. Christ was the cloud that led Israel when they came out of Egypt. Christ was the pillar of fire that protected them. Christ was the fire in the burning bush that arrested the attention of Moses in the desert. Here in the conversion of Paul he was this amazing light.

ACTS 22:7 "And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" This light was so powerful when it struck Paul he fell to the ground and he heard a voice instantaneously, and the voice said, "Why do you keep on persecuting me?" The reason Jesus Christ revealed himself to Paul at that point was that many years before that time at the point of God-consciousness Paul had gone on positive signals. This means he was conscious of the existence of God and he was anxious to know God. God was therefore responsible to provide Gospel information to him. Now what happened to Paul between the point of God-consciousness and gospel hearing? At the point of gospel hearing, he will go on positive signals again and he will be saved. He was Saul of Tarsus but he was changed to Paul the Apostle. What happened between the point of God-consciousness and Gospel hearing? Well, for one thing he had legalistic parents. They were very definitely steeped in Pharisaism. They sent him to the great school in Jerusalem, the school of Hillel, and there Gamaliel was his teacher. So this was his training and his background, and they carried legalism farther than most people do. He carried it to the point where he wanted to destroy everything that was anti-judaism, everything that was opposed to legalism. He really had it in for the Christians. Now how could one be on positive signals at the point of God-consciousness and then turn in such a radically different direction? The answer is parents and training. Both were legalistic to the core. Paul reached God-consciousness and really wanted to know God, but legalism led him in the wrong direction. It led him so far that he arrested, hounded, persecuted and even killed Christians. His training put him on a detour. He saw Stephen and heard his testimony and he was impressed with Stephen's courage and relaxed mental attitude, yet he did accept Stephen's witness and did not take it to his mind and believe it until after

his conversion. In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul says that he was the worst sinner that ever lived, all because of religion. So when Christ appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, he appeared to the worst sinner that ever lived. There was no preaching that ever touched Paul up to that time. Paul didn't allow the words of Stephen to get to him. But you say, "Didn't Stephen impress Paul?" Yes, he did impress Paul after he was converted, but not before. Paul gave consent to the death of Stephen. He was glad to see him stoned to death.

So Paul was a hardened unbeliever when Christ appeared to him on the Damascus Road. He literally had to be knocked off his feet by that startling light before he would listen. Moses wasn't knocked down when he saw the burning bush. Moses was a believer and God said to him "Take off thy shoes--this is holy ground". But here the light knocked Paul down. Paul was completely antagonistic to everything that is grace. So he had to be knocked down. "Saul, Saul why do you keep on persecuting me?" Now Paul knew he was persecuting Christians. He wanted every one of them killed. Now please notice the answer.

ACTS 22:8 "And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." "Who art thou, Lord?" The word is "Curios". He wanted an identification. Saul thought that God was pleased with him. He thought he was actually doing God's will and God's work in persecuting Christians. Paul was that far off the real way. He used the word "Curios" for two reasons. He knew it was the power of God that had knocked him down, and he knew it was the voice of God talking with him. So Jesus identified himself in order for Saul to become Paul. "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." In other words, every time you touch a Christian you touch me. This is the doctrine of positional truth. Every believer is in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the first time Paul ever understood this doctrine. In verse 10 he will call Jesus "Lord", "Curios" again, and in between those two "Lords" Paul was converted. Between the word "Lord" in verse 8 and "Lord" in verse 10, Paul was converted.

ACTS 22:9 "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Please notice those who traveled with Paul. They saw the light ("were afraid" is not in the original) but they didn't hear the voice. Even though it was noon, they saw the bright light. The light of Christ is brighter than the noonday sun. The reason they heard not the voice is this--Christ was here dealing with one man, it was a personal message, and Christ would not impose his message over on others. Neither would he force the gospel on those who had negative volition. Those traveling with Paul were Jews on negative volition and Christ would not force his message on them. (So in witnessing, you remember the same thing).

Let us state this principle here--When it comes to the training of young people, it is the responsibility of parents. What had happened to Saul? His parents were legalistic and they had him trained in legalism. His positive volition was offset by legalism which has been unparalleled in human history. But Jesus reached through to him

ACTS 22:10 "And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." "What shall I do, Lord?" Here is a believer speaking. Between verses 8 and 10 Paul had been converted. The word for "do" is "Poieo". It is an aorist--active--subjunctive. Aorist tense refers to the point of time when he was converted, the active voice means that Paul realized he had to do certain things after his conversion, and the subjunctive mood means that whether he ever got with it or not depended on his own volitional decision. So whether Paul ever got with it or not

depended on his learning Bible doctrine. One of the greatest tragedies in American churches today is this--they get entertainment, they get excitement, they get a program, but so often they don't get Bible doctrine. This is the only thing that will carry a young person through college. So look at this--Paul for many years had been going against the Lord and now he wanted to do something for the Lord. "What shall I do?" That will be placed in abeyance for several years until Paul could learn some Bible doctrine. (If it had been left to us, we would have had him up giving a testimony the next Sunday). Please notice--no testimony was given. So what was he to do? NOTHING! He was to shut his mouth until he could be taught so his testimony would be accurate. You have to learn what it is all about before you can give an accurate testimony. So, close your mouth and open your ears. Remember, when you open your mouth and talk, your ears are closed and you can't hear. You can't talk and hear at the same time. That's what is wrong with a lot of Christians today. They talk when they should be listening. Remember, Paul was a VIP and we would have had him bringing a testimony before the week was over. But Paul started with a shut mouth and shut eyes and Ananias would be his first instructor. So it all depends on how you get started. You can't listen when you are talking. Our trouble is that we want to do it all ourselves and we are not willing to wait on the Lord and listen to the Lord for instruction.

Now how do you go from the worst sinner to the greatest believer? SHUT YOUR MOUTH AND OPEN YOUR EARS AND YOUR MIND. The Lord didn't say to Paul "Go to Damascus and give your testimony". He said, "Go into Damascus and it shall be told thee". That is why Paul became one of the greatest doctrinal men of all times. It shall be told thee is from "Laleo" a future, passive, indicative. In those future years, God would speak to Paul, the passive voice means that Paul would receive this teaching from God, and the indicative mood means the reality of God's dealing with him. So you start by hearing and not by doing. Most Christian systems have a "Do-system" or a "Don't-do system". The most important thing is to DO NOTHING and open your ears and learn something. God had a man in Damascus, a born-again believer--an ordinary person, who knew some doctrine. Ananias knew doctrine, was a spirit controlled man and for several days God will use him to instruct this new convert.

"It shall be communicated to you" and this is the dative of advantage, and means that the instruction will be for Paul's advantage. Then notice "All things". In other words, God had a plan for Paul's life. God had a plan from that moment until the last moment--"All things".

Now remember, you too are important to God. He has "All things" for you to do. The question is, are you willing to listen? He designed a plan for you in eternity past, but you can never understand these "All things" unless you learn Bible doctrine. Money, success, or the details of life--none of these things is important. If you have doctrine in your mind, then everything else falls into place. You will have misery unless you know Bible doctrine. The "All things" for you right now is learning Bible doctrine. One way to enjoy life and people is through knowing Bible doctrine. Only doctrine can carry you. Paul began to learn in that moment, and in three years intensive study in Arabia and in many years back in Tarsus, God schooled him for his great worldwide task.

The word "Appointed" used here means to organize, to arrange. Millions of years ago in eternity past God planned everything you need. You simply receive it from God. He had planned the things Paul would do. But Paul had to get ready before he could perform. Knowledge comes before production. You have to know it before you can do it.

ACTS 22:11 "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus."

Now meet Ananias. He was a Mr. Nobody. It says of Paul that, "He could not see". The word for "see" is "Emblepo" and means he could not see clearly. He could distinguish between light and dark but couldn't see clearly. He couldn't see well enough to walk by himself. He had to be led.

ACTS 22:12 "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there" Here we meet Ananias. Ananias means "One protected by the Lord". He is an ordinary believer in Damascus. But he was an ordinary believer in the right place, at the right time. So this is the dynamics of an ordinary life. Here was a very delicate assignment, and it required courage and faith and trust. But Ananias was a prepared man.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ORDINARY LIFE

1. The ordinary believer is also in full-time Christian service under two appointments--
 - a. Ambassador--he represents the absent Christ.
 - b. Priest--he represents himself before God.

2. The ordinary life has occupational hazards.
 - a. Boredom. This comes from a failure to orient to the grace of God and the plan of God. Boredom comes to people when they think they have something more important than Bible doctrine. When they are not occupied with Christ, boredom comes in and they become filled with approbation lust, or from not being recognized, or from lack of not being entertained or stimulated by human activity.
 - b. Entertainment. It becomes an occupational hazard only when Bible doctrine is not first in a person's life. When people neglect Bible doctrine, they always have a substitute from some kind of entertainment.
 - c. Apostasy. This is some form of social action or liberalism either socially or politically. Such as--"We don't need doctrine. All we need is to win people to Christ."

3. The ordinary life is the most difficult life for it has the least outward stimulants. So the ordinary life requires a steadier and deeper faith. Therefore, God has designed the ordinary life to be the recipient of Bible doctrine. So the ordinary life becomes the extraordinary life through the appropriation of Bible doctrine.

4. We have a tendency to underestimate the so-called common place. But the common place fills up the gaps in the ordinary life.

What do we mean by the common place?

 - a. Learning doctrine
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Witnessing
 - d. Worship

This is the natural order. If you learn doctrine, then you will see the need for prayer, for witnessing, for worship. The ordinary life must be motivated by Bible doctrine. This must be a motivation that will carry us through tragedy, catastrophe, and calamity. The ordinary life must be spiritually self-sustaining.

5. The obscure and wonderful service Paul received from Ananias had worldwide repercussion. This ordinary life had worldwide influence which at the moment can't be seen. But they are real just the same. Ananias had no way of knowing that Paul would become the greatest believer of all times. Ananias had to be faithful for the moment and trust God for the results. Ananias, Mr. Ordinary Christian, did not let us down and his action brought a blessing to all mankind, including every person in this room.

6. To the believer who experiences frustrations and disappointments because their lives are not filled with great exciting spiritual adventures, Ananias is a pattern of what it is all about. Just because your life has not been characterized by great exciting spiritual experiences it does not mean you are not important as a Christian.
(Remember--the man who scores the touchdown would never have gotten there if the blocker had not gone before him and eliminated the opposition.)
7. Ananias was an ordinary believer, but then again he wasn't--for he was a doctrine man, and he was a grace man, and that made the difference.
8. Under operation grace there is no such thing as an ordinary life. Even though that life is filled with details which are common place, if the mind is filled with Bible doctrine everything is lifted out of the common place.
9. Ananias demonstrated the importance of faithfulness in little things, leading up to that flash of glory which influenced the whole world. Because of Ananias, Paul got started in the Christian life in the right direction.
ZECHARIAH 4:10 "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

Next time we will study the dangers of the ordinary life.