

25a ACTS

Let's begin our study of the Word of God, specifically in Acts chapter 9, tonight, by taking a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you for preserving us through another week, for the many graces, both seen and unseen, which we have received. We thank you for your faithfulness and your watch care over us.

We thank you for the course through life that you have charted for each one of us, with its joys and also with its challenges. We know that these are designed for our good. And we thank you for putting us in a place and in a time that gives us the opportunity to fulfill your purpose.

We pray that as we study your Word tonight, that this will contribute to our ability to do that, that we will be equipped and have the ability to think our way through all of the circumstances that will face us in the days ahead so that we can think and decide and live in a way that's pleasing in your sight. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen. Well, here we find ourselves in Acts chapter 9, having seen the generation and the beginnings and the first generation in the church.

It was quite a startling thing. We've been going along now for about 2,000 years with our New Testament and our apostles and our church traditions and so on. You can imagine what would happen if all of a sudden a new thing arose and they said, well, we just got a fresh book from God.

We just got a fresh idea from God. And you need to stop what you're doing and start doing some new things. If we are good and faithful believers in God, we would want to check that out thoroughly and not wind up in Guyana drinking poison Kool-Aid or wind up out in the middle of nowhere as a part of a Koresh group in Waco or something, right? Because this is basically what these men have done.

They've come in and said, well, I've got a new revelation from God, so listen to me and do what I say. And then they went off into some weird tangent and lots of people died. There are many other offshoots that have not been so dramatic and so fatal to the participants, but are equally worthless.

Well, so you can understand that the Jews in Israel in these days, when these men coming out of Judaism, steeped in Judaism, say God has spoken and we're supposed to be doing a new thing. I mean, it's fair to question whether this is so. It's not something God just does every day, right? So it's understandable.

I would need, wouldn't you, some proof? I would need some demonstration that this is from God. Now, if David Koresh had stood up on the top of the compound there and done a few loop-de-loops, unassisted, just flying around, or if there were some corpses laying around down there and he laid a hand on them or prayed over them and they stood up

and walked away and didn't have bullet holes in them anymore, if somebody who had been blinded or withered or deformed drastically from birth was instantaneously and completely healed, I would begin to think, you know, this is also something that doesn't happen every day and I'm thinking that only God can raise people from the dead after they've been dead for three days. I'm not talking about somebody whose heart stopped for a minute or two, but somebody that has been dead and buried for three solid days.

I would think, well, okay. And then, if someone could say, now, not only do you see these spectacular signs and not only is God doing a new thing, but this was foretold. God has spoken of this in the Bible.

Let me show you where. And sit down and show me in the Bible that in the right time and in the right place, God was going to do this new thing because everything we've seen in Christ was spoken of in the Old Testament. It was foretold that Christ would come.

It was foretold that the Jews would be a light to the Gentiles and it's just a matter of when. And they're saying, well, that when is now. So, as a result of this, you have the day of Pentecost, you have the apostles who by many very convincing signs and by the testimony from the Word of God have conclusively demonstrated that this is the real deal.

It's also silly to stick your head in the sand and say, no, nothing has changed since Adam or since Noah and there never was a nation of Israel and there never was a Christ and there never were any apostles. God does, occasionally, change things up quite radically and we know that from looking at the Word so we have to be ready in case He does it again. What is the next big change that's coming up? What should you and I be ready for? I am listening.

It never fails. When I hear some unaccountable noise, the first thing that pops into my head is, well, now, is that the voice? Is that the trump? I mean, I'm not some kind of a wild-eyed fanatic but when I hear a bizarre noise, it's one of several possibilities that immediately comes up to my mind and I say, well, if it is, I'll soon know because pretty soon the dead are going to be rising and I'm going to be joining them. But we need to be ready.

We need to be living in the light of that fact. God has changed things before and people thought, well, but it's normal and it's usual. What I see around me is all there is.

This is a way of thinking that can lead one to some unforeseen surprises. We do not need to be surprised. Paul talks about this in one of his letters and he says, look, we are not of the night, we don't live in the darkness, that we should be overtaken, that this day should overtake us like a thief.

We are of the day. And what's he talking about? We've got the information. They have a bunch that comes around every year and paints your address on the curb.

You drive up and down the street and you see people have got their little four numbers on the curb. Sometimes it has a little fish or sometimes it has an American flag. Well, people come around every year to do that.

Where does that come from? How do you get that done for yourself? Well, they come by a week ahead and they put a rubber banded thing on your doorknob and say, hey, we're the curb painting people. Fill this out and leave it on your door and when we come by we'll paint your curb. Some people, like me, virtually never use the front door.

I go in and out my back door. I've got a carport in the back. Now, if I never go out the front door and I never find the flyer rubber banded to my doorknob, the curb painting people can come and go and I will have missed it.

I was completely unprepared. Maybe I wanted my 3726 out there on the curb. Maybe I wanted a little American flag and a fish.

Maybe I wanted them both. But I missed it. Why? I failed to apprise myself of the available information.

It was there hanging on my doorknob, but unlike most normal Americans, I didn't use my front door and I didn't read it. We have the information about what God is doing right now and what He's getting ready to do in the next phase of His plan. It's written down right here in the Word of God and we all have Bibles.

You can't move in the American landscape without running into a Bible. People will give them to you for free. You can download the text in 16 or 17 different versions right off the internet.

You can read it on your screen. You can go to the public library for free and read the entire Bible on the screen of a computer. There is no reason on God's earth to not know what's in the Bible unless you just aren't interested.

And if you're not interested, that's the old thing hanging on the doorknob and it's going to be a whole lot more serious than not getting your curb painted. It's going to be getting caught flat-footed and unprepared at the return of the Lord. Why is He returning? Just, well, I said I would return, so now I've returned, so there.

Is that all it is? You know, we tend to think of things and then stop. In the Christian world, they think about evangelism. We've got to get everybody saved.

And so they think about that and then stop. And many times you've heard me say, Why stop at evangelism? This is like a military service that stops with recruiting. Mission?

Well, I don't know what our mission is, but I know we've got to get more guys.

I don't really know what we're supposed to do now that we've got a uniform and a Kevlar helmet. It used to be a steel helmet. Boy, I have really got to be careful.

I'm just getting older by the minute. Tomorrow is the 40th anniversary of the Kennedy assassination. And Patty and I were laughing because they stuck a microphone.

Even the reporter, who is younger than me by 10 or 15 years, was talking to a child and saying, Well, do you have any memories of the Kennedy? This is like a 12-year-old child. Do you have any memories of Kennedy? And then she said, Well, or anything that you've heard, because she realized, well, how could she possibly? She herself had not been born. Anyway, the military service has a mission.

The reason they recruit is not an end in itself. It's not like, well, we've got to keep the recruiters busy, so let's go recruit. They've got a mission.

There is a reason for being. The Marine Corps exists to project military force ashore by means of amphibious operations. It's, as much as we don't like to admit it, it is basically a naval force.

The Marines have always existed so that the Navy can project military force ashore. I should go wash my mouth out after having said that. But that's the idea.

So why would we recruit? Does that help us project military force ashore? Yes, but very indirectly, you've got to have somebody to put on the ship and dress up in the clothes and hand the weapons and give the rations and say, Get in the boat. We're paddling you ashore, and you go up there and shoot somebody. The point is to shoot somebody.

All of the recruiting is to shoot somebody and blow their stuff up. That's why the military exists. Right? This is the basic purpose.

It is to wreak havoc on somebody or to threaten havoc on somebody so that they will do what they're supposed to do and not blow up your downtown buildings and not blow up your airliners and not kill your citizens and hold them hostage and blow their brains out and leave them in God-forsaken far-off lands. In order to keep that from happening, you have a military presence that can project force where it is needed, whether it's the Army, the Air Force, the Navy, the Marines. It's not pretty.

It's not nice. One day it will go away. God will eradicate it.

But until then, Jesus told the disciples, If you don't have a sword, you better go buy one because you're going to need it. And that's what we do. So recruiting has as its goal ultimately accomplishing the mission.

We don't just recruit because it's fun. And in the same way, evangelism has a point. So,

what am I talking about here? Thinking about the return of the Lord.

Being ready for the return of the Lord. Why? So that you can say, Ah, I knew He was coming. Didn't catch me by surprise.

I was watching the signs in the seasons. I knew we were getting close to the end of the 2,000 years and 6,000 years of history and six days of the week and 1,000 years of the seventh day. I had that figured out.

He didn't catch me. What's the point of that? Why should we be ready? Well, as we look at Acts here, we're going to see that God has a reason for doing what He's doing. He runs a particular kind of operation for a while.

He ran the patriarchal age for a while and then He came up with Israel and the sons of Jacob and their descendants. Then He had the nation of Israel for a while and He accomplished a purpose with that. There was a reason for it.

And when that purpose was fulfilled, He said, Alright, phase two is complete here. I'm going to go into phase three of my plan. I'm going to stop the clock on Israel.

It's got seven years left to run, but I'm going to stop their clock and I'm going to start a clock for a whole different group. I'm going to create a group and I'm going to give them as a gift to my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, because He did what I asked Him to do. He was faithful and He saved His people, Israel, and as a reward, I'm going to stop the clock and I'm going to give Him a help meat.

I'm going to give Him a bride. All of the people from now on that believe, I'm going to put them in a special group. They're not Israel.

They're not patriarchs. The Old Testament covenants and promises are not applicable to them. This is a special group.

This is a gift group. This is a group that is going to partake of the things of Christ in a unique way. That's us.

That's us. We are not Israel. We are not Abraham.

We are not Noah. We are not any of the Old Testament people. We are designated.

Remember when it says, elect in Him before the foundation of the world, and people say, oh, see, that means God made you saved before you were ever born, before you ever created the world. What a flattened out, nonsensical way to look at that verse. We are chosen in Him.

We are chosen for this purpose. People who get tangled up in election, all they can think about is salvation. They don't think past it.

Why is God saving people? Just to show that He is merciful? Well, you probably didn't think I could save you, but I can. Watch this. You're saved.

Is that all there is? No. He's got a purpose. He's got a design.

Far beyond most of it, we can't even understand. But a part of it is, He is putting His character on display. I could be the bravest, most fearless, wisest, most intelligent, crafty, wily, sophisticated person that ever walked the face of the earth.

If I sat here in this chair, and you all came in and sat down and got coffee and got snacks and milled around and talked to one another, and I just sat in this chair and never moved, would you have any evidence of that or any knowledge of that, that I was this amazing superhuman person? You wouldn't. I could even tell you. By the way, let me tell you about myself.

Would you believe it? What do we tend to believe? I'm from Missouri. Show me. I'll believe it when I see it.

Are you all hat and no cattle? Let's see you do something. You say you've got all these attributes. Well, this is essentially what God has done.

God is the unique and amazing presence and person in the universe. But if He just sat there and did nothing, how would we know? And if He just wrote words down and said, Oh, by the way, I'm the amazing and incredible person in the universe, just thought you ought to know. Well, show me.

That's exactly what God is doing. In order to do that, God had to allow some things into the universe that are not pleasant. God had to allow, if He was going to have free will and allow people to freely choose, they had to have something to choose as an alternative.

You can't choose between God and God. You have to choose between God and not God. God is righteous.

God is light. So you have to have unrighteousness and darkness if there's going to be a choice. Otherwise, there is no choice.

You're going to just choose the left hand of God and the right hand of God? That's not really a choice. It's still God. It's still righteousness.

It's still holiness. People say, How could there be suffering? How could God let sin and evil? And how could children be abused? You look on your TV this week and abused children hither and yon, babies wrapped up in plastic bags and thrown in dumpsters and suffocated to death at birth. It's horrible.

And they say, There can't be a God if this kind of thing goes on. Yes, there can. That's

why there is a choice.

And if you do not choose God, you are throwing in with the people who do that kind of thing. You're throwing in with the Hitlers. You're throwing in with the thugs and the criminals and the mindless, godless, savages of history.

Because there's only two choices. You either choose God and His plan and His way, or you are throwing in with everything that is not God and is not righteous and is not worthwhile. There's only two camps.

You say, Well, God's camp sounds a little better than the other one. How do I do that? Jesus Christ came and died on the cross because we are sinful. We are born into the wrong side.

We are in the kingdom of darkness. We are headed for the destruction that all of that is ultimately going to face from God. How are you rescued from that? God says, You didn't have a choice about being born into it, but you do have a choice on how to get out of it.

You can choose for me. And if you choose me, I will do all of the work to get you out of the kingdom of darkness and put you in the kingdom of light. I will make the sacrifice.

I will send my own Son. Which He did. And the Lord Jesus died on the cross, paid all of our legal penalty, made it possible to be restored to relationship with God.

Everything that we need is found in Christ. So you say, Yes, I want Christ. And you are immediately transferred over here.

Because Christ was willing to do that for us, God said, My Son, I have a unique present for you. I've got a people, Israel, that I'm using as an example to the angels that I have worked with to demonstrate my character. You are my Son.

You are the fullness of deity in bodily form. You are co-equal and co-eternal with me. I'm going to let you reflect your glory and your character and your attributes in and through your group of people just the way I reflect my glory and my character and my attributes in my dealings with the nation of Israel.

That's why we are Christians and not Gadians or Elohimians or something. Why are we Christians? Christ. We partake of Christ.

Did you know that Daniel was not a Christian? Moses, Joseph, all those guys were not Christians? Sounds kind of shocking. John the Baptist was not a Christian. He was an Old Testament prophet, the very last and the very greatest.

But he's an Old Testament guy. He wasn't around on the day of Pentecost. The church had its birth at Pentecost.

Christians began at Pentecost. And within a generation of an Antioch, they're going to be called Christians. And that's us.

We have a unique purpose, a unique destiny. And it doesn't just stop with this life. This is just the beginning.

This is our kindergarten. This is our first grade. This is where we learn our basic skills.

You don't say, well, you know, I learned to count to ten and I learned my ABCs. I guess I'm all done. That's the foundation on which many other things are built.

This life and what we learn in it is the foundation on which many great things are going to be built. We're going to live forever. For crying out loud, you don't think we're just going to sit around thinking back on our days on earth.

There's a civilization. There's progress. God will be doing new things.

And to be prepared for that day. This is what we started out talking about. We're here on this earth.

There is some unknown amount of time between now and the time that we meet Christ. We meet Him one of two ways. We either stay alive until He comes back or we die at which point we are face to face with Him and we meet Him then.

So all of us are either going to die or meet Christ sometime fairly soon. What do we do with that intervening time? Let's get our basics down. Let's learn what we are to do.

Our study tonight is on how God accomplishes that process. Because here's the question for you. Let's say first class condition.

If everything I have said is true, and it is, then wouldn't it be the most efficient way for God to just do like He did in the Bible sometimes and appear to me in a dream. Let's say I go to sleep tonight. I go to sleep late, about 2.30 in the morning.

All of a sudden, a bright light fills my bedroom and a great resonant voice fills my bedroom and says, Samuel. And I say, here am I, Lord. And He says, this is what I want you to do.

And He begins to tell me how I should operate between now and the time the Lord Jesus returns. And tells me a little bit about what's going to happen after the Lord Jesus returns. Did you know the Lord has never done that for me? Not once.

And I seriously doubt that He has done it for anybody that's clothed in their right mind. Why? Why? Well, I ask you. It's a fair question.

Why not? Now, God's done it before. He talked to dozens of people in the Bible. Walked

right up to them and spoke to them.

The angel of the Lord. Voice from heaven. Speaking.

We just saw last time. Saul. The great persecutor of the church.

Bebopping down the road to... Well, he wasn't bebopping. He was traveling down the road to Damascus with his retinue of soldiers and temple guards and things that were going to arrest Christians and bring them back. Thunder, lightning thrown to the ground.

And he hears the voice. Well? Did God lose His voice? Can He not do that anymore? Why does He not do it anymore? Well, this is the question we're going to answer tonight. So look at this.

Look now at Acts chapter 9. You remember this story. Saul was breathing threats and murder. He's on the road to Damascus in verse 3. Suddenly, a light shone around him from heaven.

Maybe it wasn't lightning. I said lightning. It doesn't say lightning.

It says a light shone around him from heaven. He fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He said, who are you, sir? The Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

Now, some manuscripts leave out it is hard for you to kick against the goads. If you have a New King James, it will have a text note to that effect that tells you that the NU, which is the Nestle, Allen, UBS. Nestle and Allen were two... Kurt Allen and I forget Nestle's first name.

They were great Greek scholars that had a very unique Greek text that was based on some manuscripts they found down in Alexandria, Egypt. And many of these manuscripts leave out it is hard for you to kick against the goads. So, when you come on something like this where the evidence is split, some manuscripts have it and some don't, how do we know which way it is? Like you close the door in a dark room and see which manuscript glows a little more and that's the one? What is the process by which we decide what's in and what's out? If you have a New American Standard or an NIV, I think they leave this out and maybe put a note saying that some text is included.

Well, how do we know? One of the ways that we analyze things like this is to ask ourselves this question. Is it easier to explain it being added in by someone who thought they could help the Bible out a little bit or is it easier to explain someone taking it out because they thought they could help the Bible a little bit? In other words, would this be more likely to be excluded by someone because it was present or would it be more likely to be added in because it was not present and was needed? So, you ask yourself this question. If I leave this out, is the text unclear in some way? We have many, many cases

throughout the Bible where the text as it stands seems incomplete or seems to lack something and then you suddenly have people adding something in to try to help it, to try to smooth it out.

This is what happens at the end of the Gospel of Mark. Whole last 15 or 16 verses of Mark, somebody added them in because they thought, well, it can't end this abruptly. So, that's what we have going on here.

I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. So, he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what do you want me to do? Does this feel like something is missing when you read it that way? It really doesn't. Why would someone add in especially something so obscure? It is hard for you to kick against the goats.

What is the kicking? What are the goats? It would seem more like if somebody was going to add something here, they would say, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. You have been running my church people into prison or if you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me or some such thing. If someone was going to add something in here and it wasn't original, this would be a very strange thing to think up and add, wouldn't it? But if it was present, because it is kind of obscure and hard to understand, what does he mean, kick against the goats? Kick against the sharp points? Somebody could say, this is really kind of confusing.

I wonder if maybe you shouldn't be here and just kind of quietly slide it out so that the text would read more smoothly. And on this basis, I believe that this is original. I think Jesus said to Paul, it is hard for you to kick against the goats.

And it is important because it explains the fact that this is not the first time Saul's conscience had been troubled by what he was doing. He has been getting some feedback from his action as he tries to kick the people of God around, he winds up getting pain in the foot as though he was kicking a cactus or kicking goats. And Jesus says, why do you continue to persecute me? You have been getting some signs before now that you are doing the wrong thing.

It is hard for you to kick against the goats. And so I think this is a helpful and necessary piece of information, but it isn't put there in the kind of language that a human being would have added it in. Someone would have put something much more tame.

So I think it is original. We are going to leave it in. It is hard for you to kick against the goats.

And you will notice that if you are a child of God, if you belong to God, and you try to go down a wrong road, you can succeed in going down the wrong road if you want to, but there is always going to be a part of you that says, what are you doing this for? Why are you doing this? This is not good. You ought to do something different. And it is never

going to turn loose of you.

That is God's Spirit. People say all kinds of strange things about the Spirit of God and making people act in strange ways. The presence of the Spirit of God is just like everything else God does.

It has a concrete, practical purpose. And one of those purposes is to help us have a better conscience than what we were born with. And God's Holy Spirit tells us when we are doing wrong.

And you can't get away from it. It is there. Now, you can ignore it.

You can spit in its face. And you will answer for that on the day of judgment. I sent my Spirit.

I told you what you were doing wrong. And you spit in its face and went and did it anyway. Well, if you want to talk to God about ignoring His Spirit on the day of judgment, that is your choice.

But all of us would be wise to try to avoid that eventuality. This is part of being prepared for that day. If you want to be prepared for the return of the Lord, we've got to be prepared to answer for our response.

God has done a lot of work on our behalf. He has sacrificed for us. That's what love is all about.

Sacrificing on behalf of someone else. God has done that with His Son, and He's done it with His Spirit. And if we do despot to the Spirit of Grace, as it says... Turn with me real quick to Hebrews 10.

Just so we know what we're talking about here. Because this is what Saul is facing right here on the road. Hebrews 10, verse 26.

Hebrews 10, verse 26. If we... Who is we here? Well, think about it. We're in chapter 10.

Count them. Ten chapters. Anybody that's read this far is a believer, right? God's not going to say something to an unbeliever and bury it ten chapters down in a book.

Whoever is still reading at this point is saved. They're Christians. So when He says, if we sin willfully, He's saying if we Christians sin willfully.

If we continue to sin on purpose, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. Now what does a sacrifice for sins do? It does not save you. It restores you to fellowship and to function.

When Israelites sinned in Israel, they didn't become hellbound, godless, pagan, hopeless

cases. They were disqualified from worship. They were disqualified.

They couldn't approach God. And the picture there is when we sin and when we defile ourselves, we walk away from God. And we sin against God.

We offend Him. To be restored, to have the offense taken away, we need to be cleansed. We need to have the work of Christ applied for us.

And that's what 1 John 1.9 says. If we acknowledge that we've sinned, if we go to God and we say, Lord, I had a burst of anger there and that was sinful. I was impatient.

I talked bad about that person. I gossiped and maligned and cut that person down in my conversation and that was wrong. That was sinful.

And I go to God and say, Lord, I committed this sin. And I'm claiming your promise in 1 John that if I acknowledge what I've done wrong, you will cleanse me. You will forgive me and you will restore me.

And that's what God does. That's what the sacrifice pictured in the Old Testament. You know what it says here? If you sin willfully, you know better and you just do it anyway because you just darn well feel like it.

And it just feels kind of good. And yeah, I know I'm not supposed to, but you know what? I'm just going to do it anyway, so shut up. This is the attitude that we can develop.

And that's what this verse talks about. If you sin willfully, after receiving knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin. You know what this means? 1 John 1.9 is off the table.

God says you can confess all you want. If your attitude is I'm going to do what I want to do when I want to do it and I'll review the consequences later, then 1 John 1.9 is not going to apply. And you know what that means? It means that the cleansing does not take place, which means that you will now carry the penalty, the judgment that goes with that sin, rather than having it be taken away.

This is not the work of Christ on the cross. This is not the penalty of death. These are the consequences in time and the consequences in eternity.

This means that your inheritance in the eternal future is now at risk. This means that blessing and provision and the protection and the guidance of God in this life is going to be lifted. Look at the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

When they went their own way and God sent prophets and they stoned the prophets and said get out of town, we're tired of listening to you, we want to do our own thing, what did God do? God removed their wall of protection. He let enemies come in and invade and take all of their stuff and enslave them and kill them. And the equivalent of that will

happen to us.

God is for us. He's our Heavenly Father. He wants to bless us.

He wants to protect us. He wants to give us happy, fruitful, productive lives. But if we spit in His face over and over again, He's going to say, you know what? If you want to do some spitting, go spit in the wind.

I'm going to take away my wall of protection. And you think you've got everything figured out? Well, you just go figure it out. And I promise you this.

You do not want to live in this world without divine blessing and without divine protection and without divine guidance and without the opportunity to fulfill our potential for the eternal future because it costs us now and it costs us in the Kingdom of Christ and it will cost us in the eternal future. This is a mistake we will pay for forever. And forever is a long, long time.

You think about this. I had a teacher in junior high and high school who taught me all the math and science I learned before I went to college. He was a teenager like some of you all are.

He was out hauling hay, which most of us did up in Oklahoma in the summertime. One moment of inattention, he jumped off a truck, jumped off a hay truck. But he was wearing a cheap dime store ring on his finger.

And that ring caught on the wire that holds together the bale of hay. And the bale was secured inside the truck and would not move. And so when he jumped down, it yanked his finger off.

Off. And he didn't feel it right away. But his hand started kind of stinging and burning and he looked down and his finger was gone.

And so, of course, many years later, he was telling us this as he stood there with nine fingers. And that moment, that decision he made to jump down carelessly, he was supposed to be wearing gloves and was not. He was supposed to be looking at what he was doing and didn't.

He was just hot shot. And he thought he'd hot shot off the truck as it was rolling to a stop. And he wanted to impress the guys that were standing in the barn.

And he said, hey, I'm going to show them something. And so he leaped off the truck while it was still moving and snagged his hand and yanked his finger off. Well, it was a one moment decision.

But it had an effect that lasted the rest of his life. He's still up there in Rogers County, Oklahoma with nine fingers. And he's 60-something years old now.

The decisions that we make in this life have long-lasting consequences. If somebody came up and told you, hey, you're going to lose your finger tonight if you go hauling hay, well, you wouldn't even go. But you don't get that opportunity.

You've got to make your decisions as they come. And you've got to analyze them and say, am I ready for the return of the Lord? If we sin willfully after we have been given the knowledge of the truth, there is no longer a sacrifice for sins. But, verse 27, a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

It's a horrible thing to be saved by Christ and belong to Him and yet be His adversary. This is like having a traitor in your own country. Having an American citizen who turns traitor.

This is like having someone in your own family. In Nazi Germany in World War II, people inside a family would turn their family members in. And you think, boy, that is just the lowest form of treason to be disloyal to your own flesh and blood, to be disloyal to your own country, the country that gives you freedom.

But, that is what we do if we sin willfully after we've received the knowledge of the truth, after Christ has saved us, after He died on the cross for us, gave us an eternal future and a relationship with God. If we don't care enough to pay attention when He speaks, like He's speaking to Saul on the Damascus Road, and we just continue on our own way. Look at verse 27.

There is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation. Now, you think you've seen people throw a fit. You think you've seen people be angry.

You think you've seen people tear some stuff up. You wait until you see God angry. We'll get to see it at the end of this age.

At the Battle of Armageddon, you've heard of a little thing called Armageddon. You've heard of blood running as high as the horse's bridles. You've heard of devastation and destruction throughout the earth and it's going to take them seven months to bury the dead.

That's the fiery indignation of God. You've heard of the lake of fire that burns forever and ever. Their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

That's the indignation of God. I personally would rather be observing that go some other direction than be observing it come in my direction. We have been told, we have been given the knowledge of the truth.

This example of Saul on the Damascus Road, that's what's happening to us. God is speaking to us saying, Wake up. You've only got a little time left and we're going into the next phase.

Things are about to change. Are you ready for the change? Do you recognize that the change is coming? This is the decision that is facing Saul as he lies face down in the dust on that road hearing this voice. And it's the decision that faces us and it's an important one.

And I would be remiss if I did not emphasize it to you with all the power that is within me because there is no more important decision than the one we make about the things of God. Everything hinges on it. Our life and the eternal future.

When we come back from our break, we're going to move forward and look specifically at why God sends Ananias to Saul. This is going to answer a question that's been riding for a couple of weeks and it's going to help us understand something called the laying on of hands. And that's what we'll look at when we come back.