

25b ACTS

Okay, let's pick up our study in Acts chapter 9 now. We have given ourselves something of an introduction in terms of what the real issue is here. I think it's easy to look at Saul on the Damascus Road and say, well, that's never going to happen to me.

But actually it happens to us all the time because Saul was a believer in God, but he was faced with the need to make a decision about some new information. And we are faced with the need to make a decision about new information all the time. And God holds us accountable for that.

And passing the test, just like we were talking about on the break, you know, the state says if you can absorb a certain level of information and develop a certain level of skill, we will give you a license to drive a car out amongst the rest of us citizens of the state of Texas. But you don't get that privilege unless you demonstrate a minimum level of knowledge, both written and practical. And the same is true in God's plan.

There is information that we are given that's available to us, and if we take it on board and apply it, it qualifies us for things. It enables us for things. That's really what's going on here because Saul has a lot of energy, a lot of knowledge of God's Word as it exists in his day.

He has great potential. He is going to be the greatest spokesman for God in terms of disseminating New Testament truth that anybody could ever live. But right now, he's an enemy.

He's on the wrong side. He's a friend of the bad guys at this point. And so, the Lord Jesus stops him on the road and gives this information to him and says, Look, I'm Jesus whom you're persecuting.

He says, Get up, go into the city, and you'll be told what to do. Saul had a choice of whether or not to get up and go into the city. He could have said, I need to go back and talk to the council and bring more people with me next time so I don't get struck down in the road.

Maybe with a bigger army, this won't happen to me. Once he got to the city, God is going to send someone to him to tell him what to do next. He had a choice of whether or not to listen to that.

You and I receive information in a similar way. God doesn't speak in the night in a vision. He doesn't talk to us in a dream.

He doesn't send us three doves flying south at noon or something. It's in his Word. And when his Word is presented to us, we are now obligated for that information.

What are we going to do with it? God says, On November 21, 2003, fill in your name. Receive the following information. They are now on the hook for that information.

You say, Well, I guess I'll quit going to Bible class and I won't be responsible for anything. Well, now you're responsible for that. November 23, 2003, Bible class was taught in the general area of Dallas, Texas.

So and so could have gone and did not. You're responsible for that. So don't think you can avoid Bible class and get out of responsibility.

It's an opportunity. God isn't trying to find ways to trip us up. He is trying to find ways to fulfill our potential, which is good for us and good for him.

It's a win-win situation. It's astonishing to me that people are not beating down the doors, trying to get in and learn the Word of God and find out what's going on. It is the best thing going.

There is no downside to it. What is the downside? Oh, I can't go commit horrible sins anymore? What's the downside of that? When did that ever do anybody any good? Find somebody who does that all the time and see how happy they are. Look at the creases in their face.

Look at the degeneration that has set in in their soul. Look at the untrustworthy and unreliable and rudderless life that they lead. Ask someone who has been there and done that and see if that's a great road to go down.

It isn't. Anybody will tell you that that is a degenerate, destructive, humiliating, miserable, misery-causing road to go down. And here's this great road that God has given.

And most people are just kind of hopping from one to the other. It's like being halfway between two levels in the store. And you jump to the down escalator and go a little ways.

And you jump to the up escalator and go a little ways. Jump and jump and you never get anywhere and never do anything. God has given us a wonderful message here in His Word.

This is what Saul gets. Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He says, Who are you, sir? The Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. This is the essential fact that Saul has not put together.

When he hounds and harasses and persecutes these people, he is hounding and harassing and persecuting the Lord Jesus who is the Lord. And he's kicking against the painful thorns that God has put there to tell him he's doing the wrong thing. And he is a man of God.

He's a man of the Bible as it existed in that day. He's a Pharisee of the Pharisees and he ought to know better. But that knowledge isn't working.

It's not doing what it's supposed to do. So then he says, Lord, what do you want me to do? Now this is a great response. This is the response we want to have.

Let's say whatever happened in the past has happened. Now we get the Word from the Lord Jesus. And he says, look, you're going the wrong way here.

What should our response be? No, I'm not. That's not the right response. Well, everybody else is.

That's not the right response. But Lord, what about the Sanhedrin? They sent me. Why don't you go talk to them? Not the right response.

He takes responsibility. He is accountable for himself. He stands up like a man.

And he's not standing actually. But mentally he stands up like a man and he says, Lord, what do you want me to do? How can I fix this? That's the attitude that we should have when the Word of God speaks to us. No crying in our beer over the past.

And oh, woe is me. And I'm riddled with guilt. And oh, it's hopeless.

I'm too far gone. Saul's been doing this for quite some time. And he doesn't say, but Lord, I am of slow speech and a slow tongue.

But Lord, there's so many people who... What does he say? What should I do? Just tell me what to do. And the Lord says, get up. Go in the city.

You'll be told what to do. People around him stood speechless, hearing a noise, a voice, but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground.

He opened his eyes, but he couldn't see anyone. They led him by the hand. They brought him into Damascus.

He was three days without sight. He neither ate nor drank. Didn't distract himself with conversation or food.

He sat there, and I'm sure he was in prayer. And he was reviewing in his mind, saying, I better go give this another look. You know, he didn't need his eyesight to review the Word of God, because he had huge portions of it memorized in his soul.

What do you do when you're not distracting yourself with eating and drinking? You sit there and say, well, now, what did that Isaiah 53 say? What was that prophecy back in Isaiah 14? What was that passage in Ezekiel about the new covenant? And what were all of these different passages? What is it in Joel 2, 23, and 24? And he brought those

scriptures to mind. He said, this individual that spoke to me on the road identified himself as Jesus, and he is clearly represented as being the Messiah in whom all these people are trusting that I've been persecuting. Maybe I got it wrong.

And so he's going back for these three days, thinking his way through, adjusting his understanding of the scriptures and saying, wow, that really fits. In the meantime, there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. What I find interesting is, think about this.

Sometimes we don't know why we are where we are. Why am I in this place? I wanted to be over there, and instead, I'm over here. This was not my plan.

Ananias used to live in Jerusalem. Ananias got run out of town. Ananias lost property.

Ananias lost social standing. Ananias lost friends. Ananias lost a lot, because he was driven out of Jerusalem, and he had to go live in Damascus as a stranger.

And he's been there for some time, asking himself, why did the God of Heaven, in whom I trust, why did the Lord Jesus, in whom I rest my faith for salvation, let this happen to me? I seem to be nothing but down at this point. I'm down property. I'm down friends.

I'm down opportunities. Stuck over here in a pagan town of Damascus. There's a few other people over here that are in the same boat that I am.

We're all cast out. Why am I here? But he kept his faith. He kept his trust in God, and he just waited.

I would imagine that Ananias told himself, well, whatever it is, God will work it together for good. I don't know why I'm here. I don't see the upside to this, but there has to be one.

Maybe I'll see it sometime in the future. And so he's sticking it out, and he's waiting. He's being faithful, and he's doing what he's supposed to do.

He's worshiping with other believers over there, getting together for Bible class, and just toughing it out over in Damascus. Now, Ananias is going to have one of the greatest privileges that anybody has had in the last 2,000 years. Because Ananias is going to be the man to set the Apostle Paul on the road.

Without Ananias, you don't have an Apostle Paul. God is going to use Ananias to pick Saul up and turn him into Paul. It is going to be, look at this.

The Lord says to him, Ananias. He says, Here I am, Lord. Notice he only has to say his name once.

He doesn't have to get his attention. He's already got Ananias' attention. He doesn't

have to say, Moses, Moses.

Or Martha, Martha. Or Saul, Saul. Who's the other one? Who'd I leave out? Abraham, Abraham.

Stop that knife before you plunge it into your son. He just says, Ananias. The Lord says, Here I am, Lord.

The Lord said, Arise. Go to the street called Straight. Inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus.

He's over there praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight. Ananias answered, Lord, this guy's a bad man.

The Lord said, Go. He is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. I will show him what he must suffer for my name's sake.

Notice in verse 17, Ananias went his way and entered the house and laying his hands on him. Now, the Lord already told him, up in verse 12, Saul has seen a vision, Ananias coming and putting his hand on him. Now Ananias comes and lays his hands on him and says, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales. And he received his sight at once, and he arose and was baptized. When he received food, he was strengthened.

Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. I want to focus on this laying on of hands. Because we've seen this now.

We talked about it with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Why did God send Philip instead of just sending an angel to the eunuch? Why is it that it seems it's the laying on of the apostles' hands and when that happens, that is when people begin to get their manifestations of the Holy Spirit? Well, if you go back a little bit in the pages of Scripture, you find that so far the supernatural manifestations, speaking in tongues and this sort of thing, has taken place, which of course is speaking other known languages. This would be speaking Swahili or speaking some Spanish or Latin or some language that people didn't know.

It wasn't babbling. It wasn't incoherent nonsense. Because, as Jared pointed out last time, people heard them in their own language.

But this was a supernatural ability that came at the point of the laying on of hands. And we have other places where this is also the case. Go forward to Acts chapter 11.

Just turn a few pages over. This is Peter. It's one of the last things we're going to see

happen with Peter.

And he recounts this story. We'll be getting to this, but we need to cover it now because we're on the laying on of hands. Peter is telling them what happened when he was in Joppa in verse 4. And he sees this great sheet and the animals that are in it.

And the Lord says, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. And yet there are non-kosher animals in there. So now, look at verse 11.

At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. The Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Six brethren accompanied me.

We entered the man's house. They had seen a vision, sent to Joppa. Here comes Peter.

Then, look at verse 16. Here's the point. Acts 11, 16.

I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? Because these Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, and there was no laying on of hands involved. And it's the only other time in Acts.

There's only two times in Acts where you have someone receiving a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This is not Him coming at the point of salvation. This is the supernatural sign-gift presence of the Spirit.

You know, this happened to the apostles more than once. Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit back when they went forth to heal and to preach, before He left, on two different occasions. Once with the Twelve, once with the Seventy.

Breathed the Spirit on them again in the period between His resurrection and His ascension. And then it came on them again at Pentecost. Now, they didn't get saved every single time, did they? So, what is that? That is a special presence of the Spirit for a specific purpose.

And the purpose was to authenticate the message, to authenticate what God was doing. We talked about that. If somebody came along, like a Jim Jones or a David Koresh, how could we tell if they actually were from God, which they manifestly were not? They would need some credentials.

You show me something that only God can do. They, of course, did not do that, and they weren't from God. But these apostles could and did, because they were from God.

So, you have the dead being raised. You have horribly mutilated and afflicted people being instantaneously healed. Blind from birth.

Can see clear as a bell. Never spoken in His life. Can speak volumes.

This is from God. This is the kind of thing that is happening. Now, there is one time when it does not, and this is right here in Acts chapter 11.

Why? Because, again, it is a sign. If a Jew had to touch every Gentile before he could get the supernatural manifestation of the Spirit, this would send a message. But when the Gentiles had their own Pentecost, where God sends the Spirit without any of them touching.

See, somebody could come back and say, well, Peter, you whipped them into a froth. You got them excited, and they just seemed to have the Spirit. But Peter comes back and says, look, I never laid a hand on them.

God gave them the Spirit all by Himself. Nobody can argue with God's choice of the Gentiles. Peter says, I had the vision.

They say, well, Peter, maybe you ate something that did not agree with you. But no one can argue with the fact that these Gentiles were given the Spirit just like the Jews were. They are on an equal par.

They are not subordinate. They are not an outgrowth or a secondary, slightly less good choice. God gave them the Spirit without the laying on of hands, just like He did at Pentecost.

Now, the other case is there is a laying on of hands. At baptism, of course, Philip laid hands on the eunuch. Ananias is going to lay hands on the apostle Paul.

Stephen lays hands on people. Philip goes up to Samaria and lays hands on people. You can look all these up.

So, why do we sometimes have this laying on of hands? What does it mean? Well, the laying on of hands is a symbol that goes back to Old Testament days. We don't have time to go to all the passages. I'll tell you about this, and you can look the passages up.

Go to the concordance and look up hands. You'll find it. But in the sacrificial system in Leviticus, you know what they did? Let's say you just pretend you're an Israelite.

Your name is Nebat, and you're an Israelite, and you just committed some various sins. You say, well, I better go down there and offer a sacrifice. So, you go down to the flock or the herd, and you get an ox or a goat, and he's a good one.

He has no blemishes. You've got some limp ones and some crippled ones. You've got some with some scars, and here's one with a floppy ear.

You can't use him. You've got to take some of the best of the flock. So, you get one of

your best bulls or your best goat, and you lead him out.

You put a rope around his neck, and you take him down to the tabernacle or later to the temple. You show him to the priest. The priest checks him over and makes sure that he's free of any blemish.

And then they prepare the animal. And you go in there, and the priest ties the feet of the animal, and they hoist him up. These priests were big guys.

They hoist the animal up onto the altar, and the animal's laying there, probably struggling a little against its bonds, maybe mooing or bleating, whatever noise that particular animal makes. And the priest stands there, and he's got the sacrificial knife. But you know what he does before he slits the animal's throat? He says, come here, knee bat.

And so, you come over there, and he takes your hand, and he puts your hand on the head of the animal. The person offering the sacrifice lays hands on the animal. This is the laying on of hands.

Now, is there very much difficulty figuring out what that stands for? What does it mean when you lay on hands? This is identification. It is as though you are transferring your sins. The responsibility for your sins physically travels from you to the animal.

You lay hands on that animal, and you commission that animal as your representative. You say, you are acting on my behalf. Now, why didn't they say, turn around, knee bat, I'm going to take this animal and put its hoof on your shoulder, and let the animal put its hoof on the person, and have sin transferred that way? No.

You initiate. You lay your hand. What do the hands symbolize? This is what I do.

These are my actions. This is what I accomplish. That's why the priests had their hands sanctified with a daubing of blood.

They had their ears sanctified, their hands sanctified, and their foot sanctified. Why? Because they represent things. What do you take in? What do you listen to? What do you heed? What do you do? And how do you walk in your life? What is your lifestyle? So those were all supposed to be sanctified.

So here, when you are guilty, and you deserve a punishment, but instead this animal is going to get punished and lose its life, what do you do? You have to reach out and place your hand on the head of the animal, and you say, I commission you to be my substitute. I authorize you. I identify with you.

You're going to be my proxy. Sometimes organizations have a vote, and people go to a stockholder meeting or a shareholder meeting, and everybody can't be there. So what

they do, they sign a piece of paper and say, Joe Schnutz over here is going to go to the meeting, and he will be my proxy.

He will vote my shares. He will stand in for me. And you've essentially laid hands on him and said, you act on my behalf.

You act instead of me. Now this can be for good or for ill. For the sacrifice, you're transferring your wrongdoing.

It's sort of after the fact. You're authorizing the animal, and then you stand back, and the animal's throat is cut, and the animal's blood gushes forth, and the animal dies. I wish every one of us, there is a part of me that wishes, that every one of us could see a full-blown animal sacrifice from beginning to end, and understand what it is that the Jews saw every day at the tabernacle and at the temple, because that's what God wanted them to see.

That's how he taught them. That's how he tried to shock them into faith and obedience. He said, look at the price that is paid when you fail.

Look at the price that has to be paid to redeem you, to keep you in relationship with me, because that is the price that Christ paid for us. And when we come and make the decision at hearing the gospel, where we understand that we're sinners and that we deserve horrible punishment, but Christ has taken it on our behalf, and we hear that, we're faced with a choice. Well, do I want to bear responsibility or am I going to lay my hands on Christ and authorize Him to be my substitute? And all of the preaching and all of the gospel and walking the aisles and pray to Jesus and everything else you hear has nothing to do with salvation.

Salvation is your decision before God to say, I want to lay my hand on Christ and I want Him to be the sacrifice for me. And when the end comes and I stand at the great judgment and you ask me, why should I not throw you in the lake of fire? Why should I not punish you for your sins and your corruption? I'm going to say, because the Lord Jesus Christ took my penalty and took my place. He is my Redeemer and I am trusting Him for my authorization to live forever with God.

And that is good enough. In you go. Because your faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the gospel and that's salvation. And that's the laying on of hands. So now, how about in the New Testament? You go over to Hebrews chapter 6 and it says in the first few verses there that there is a foundation of knowledge that we need about changing our mind away from dead works.

Stuff that does nobody any good. It's just dead. It's a waste.

And faith in God. That does count. That does accomplish things that go into eternity.

That's part of the foundation. That's how we make our life count for something. You think about your life today and today is Friday.

How about this past Tuesday? I can hardly even remember back that far. You go back to Tuesday. We spent a 12 or 14 hour day probably on Tuesday.

Burnt that time. It will never come again. What has that Tuesday done? What's it good for? What do you have? Maybe you earned a little money on Tuesday.

Maybe you got a load of laundry done on Tuesday. Maybe you filled up the tank in the car. Maybe you got the lawn mowed.

Maybe you got some chores done. Maybe you accomplished a few lessons in school or whatever. How much of that is really going to matter a year from now, or five years from now, or ten years from now? But you know what? If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if this past Tuesday, if you trusted Him, if you did what you did before Him, you have redeemed that time.

That time is in God's ledger books. That time has built something in your soul that can never be taken away. That time counts.

You have redeemed the time. You've taken something temporary and ephemeral and turned it into something permanent and eternal. That's the gift that God gives us after we're saved.

But we've got to listen to what He says. So, laying on of hands. What does it mean in the New Testament? In Hebrews chapter 6, this foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God, it goes on and talks about some other things.

And it says one of these basic things is the laying on of hands. Well now, have you ever had hands laid on you in this sense? I've had hands laid on me for all kinds of things. My dad used to regularly lay hands on me for discipline.

But what does this mean in the spiritual realm? What does it mean, laying on of hands? Well, in the New Testament, I wish we had time to turn there, but we don't. They commissioned the apostles. They commissioned the deacons back there.

Remember Acts chapter 6, wasn't it? Where they had the men who were going to help the widows? They laid hands on them. They're going to send forth Paul and Barnabas here in another chapter or two. Acts 12.

They're going to lay hands on Paul and Barnabas and send them forth. What does it mean when they lay hands on them? It's the same kind of thing. They are identifying.

They're authorizing. They're saying, act on my behalf. We are a church here in Jerusalem.

We can't be everywhere at once. We've got our full plate here in Jerusalem. You go act on our behalf.

You are our representative. You are our proxy to do good things. And that's what the Lord Jesus does with us.

The presence of the Holy Spirit that you have and that I have, you know why it's there? It's to remind us that we are the Lord Jesus' proxy. We are here to act in His behalf. That's why you pray in Jesus' name.

When we ask God for things, we're calling back to the rear for supplies. And we're saying, I need supply. I need support.

I need provision. Why? Because I'm acting on Jesus' behalf. I'm out here representing the Lord Jesus and I need some stuff.

I need some help. I need some support. I need some things to happen so that I can continue to represent the Lord Jesus.

I make these requests to you, God, the Father, in the name of Jesus. Because hands have been laid on me and I am His proxy. I am supposed to be acting on His behalf.

This is the right thinking behind the whole thing. Remember the WWJD, what would Jesus do? That has kind of been strangely perverted in ways. But there is a grain of truth in it.

If Jesus were here, what would He be doing? What would the real Jesus really be doing? People have an idea of what their fantasy Jesus would be doing. And when they wear the bracelet, they say, what would Jesus do? Well, Jesus would walk through the daisies holding little children by the hand. They have no concept because they don't know Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is a warrior. The Lord Jesus is tough. The Lord Jesus has a mission and He will accomplish it no matter what.

He is also compassionate. He is also self-sacrificial. But He is nobody's fool and He's not a pantywaist and He's not a pansy and He's not a milquetoast and He's not the things that people have made Him out to be.

They get these blood-drained actors to portray Him on television and you think He doesn't have the energy to stand up. That is not the Lord Jesus. So, you and I are the proxy.

Hands have been laid on us. Anytime in Acts, when you see the laying on of hands, you know what it means? These people have been commissioned. You know why there was a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit? We don't have to speak in tongues and heal people now because it's already been done.

The message has been sent. The purpose has been demonstrated. And God doesn't have to repeat Himself just like He doesn't have to keep parting the Red Sea every other week.

It's to tell us something. We have been given the authority of God's Spirit. We have been given the power of God's Spirit.

We have been given the responsibility that goes with having God's Spirit. You know who the Spirit was given to in the Old Testament? Each of you in this room ought to be able to name a function in the Old Testament for which God the Holy Spirit was specifically given because we've been studying it every Tuesday night. What's David going to do? He's going to be the king.

And this past Tuesday night, Samuel laid hands on him and anointed him. And what happened? The Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Why? So that he could do a weird dance and wave his hands and speak in tongues? No.

It's authority. It's support. It's power.

It is commission. He is going to be God's proxy to do God's will on earth for the nation of Israel. You've got the very same Holy Spirit and so do I. And we're supposed to be doing the very same thing.

Now that kind of puts a different cast on the day, doesn't it? We can still do our earthly tasks. We have responsibilities. We have jobs and things that need doing.

Obligations to fulfill. But we are commissioned by the Lord to do them in a way that is pleasing to Him with integrity, with faithfulness, with self-sacrificial love toward others. Not blind, stupid love, but intelligent, operating love that says, if I have to put myself out for this person, I will because that's what Christ would do.

And He wouldn't do it foolishly. He wouldn't do it stupidly. But He would do it when it's appropriate.

That's what He did when He was here. And that's what I should do. I need to be smart and I need to be thinking about what God would have me do because hands have been laid on me.

That's why the angel, that's why the Lord Jesus Himself doesn't do anything on the road. Because this laying on of hands is now communicated through a human chain. The Lord Jesus didn't come lay hands on me and He's not going to come lay hands on you.

How do we get this information? Human beings communicate one to another. Ananias is going to come tell Saul because that is the way information flows now. Jesus isn't walking around laying hands on people.

So Ananias lays his hands on him and tells him the message that he was given. And that is the same thing that happens for us. We have been given the message.

What are we supposed to be doing? Tomorrow is a Saturday. What are we going to do? Well, there's lots of things we can do. We can enjoy entertainments.

We can enjoy recreation. We can get our tasks done. The one thing we have to remember is we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He bought us with His blood. He deserves some respect. He deserves being taken into account when we live our day.

At the very least, He deserves that much. Through the Holy Spirit, He has laid hands on us and He has said, I'm not on the earth walking around anymore. You are.

You are my representative. You are commissioned to represent me. And when people look at you, hopefully they will see me in the same way that when they looked at me they saw my Father in Heaven.

This is what Jesus has asked of us. Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify God, that they will see Christ in us. Christ formed in us is the hope of glory.

This same man Saul is going to write as the Apostle Paul. Christ in you is the hope of glory. You don't have to be a martyr.

You don't have to be Billy Graham. We just have to live our daily life acknowledging God, walking in that light, not taking part in the irretrievably hopeless works of darkness, the unfruitful things that lead to death that are part of the kingdom of darkness. Let God work out His plan.

Let God work out His will. That's why we're here. It is ordinary people doing ordinary things that produces extraordinary fruit in God's plan.

And that's one of the best kept secrets in the world. It isn't going to Borneo and winning the natives. It isn't going off on a big evangelistic crusade.

It is doing daily things for God because we belong to God and we acknowledge our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us enough to die for us. Do we not love Him enough to live for Him? It's not a big strain. We are not asked to die.

We're not asked to get thrown to the lions. We're not imprisoned. We're not persecuted.

The shining path is not after us like they are the people down in Peru. The communists and the Khmer Rouge are not after us like they are the people in Cambodia. All we're asked to do is just dedicate our day to live in a way that pleases God.

And it's so absurdly simple that people just miss it. We have the information. We've been struck down in the road.

We know better. So let's take our laying on of hands seriously and take advantage of this great opportunity not only to please God but to have our lives have meaning and purpose, blessing both for ourselves and to be a channel of blessing for others. You'll notice that every single one of these people who has hands laid on them are blessed.

Remember when people were trying to bring children to the Lord Jesus? And the disciples said, get away, don't bother the Master. And Jesus said, suffer the little children to come unto Me. Look that passage up.

You know what Jesus was doing when they did come to Him? He was laying hands on them and blessing them. Having the hands of the Lord laid on you is not a burden. It is not a bad thing.

It's a good thing. It's a blessing. Who would not want to be the child blessed by the Lord Jesus? That's exactly what we are.

We are the child blessed by the Lord Jesus. We have had hands laid on us just as they did. Well, we'll pause here and take our break when we come back next time.

We're going to see in the early days of Saul's career as a Christian that there is a real problem with acceptance. And it's the same kind of problem that we have. So, next time when we come back and get into the last part of chapter 9 and chapter 10, we're going to see the challenge that the rest of the Christians have, coming to grips with somebody that has been an enemy and now claims to be a friend.

But let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for making Your plan for us and Your purpose for us so clear in Your Word. We thank You for the faithfulness of men like the Apostle Paul and those who have preserved Your Word down through the centuries and have even given their lives to ensure that we can have a copy of it for ourselves.

We pray that we will take this Word to heart. God the Holy Spirit will impress it on us and remind us day by day of our great privilege and our great opportunity to live for You, to operate as those who have had hands laid on in order to represent the Lord Jesus here before men. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.