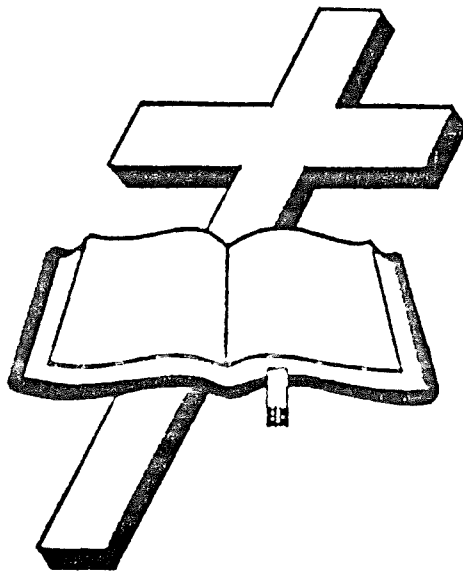


# **“TRIUMPHANT” GRACE**

**(How God Changed Saul From A Madman To A Missionary)  
Acts 9:1-31**



## **Grace Greater Than All Our Sins**

- ◆ Saul's Persecution Of Believers
- ◆ Saul's Prostration Before God
- ◆ Saul's Progress In His Own Life

**“All That Heard Paul Were Amazed, And Said; Is Not This The Man That Destroyed Those  
Who Called On The Name Of Jesus?” (Acts 9:21)**

**Bill Kirk**

# “TRIUMPHANT GRACE”

**Text:** Acts 8:1-30, 9:1-31

**Subject:** “Grace That Is Greater Than All Our Sins”

## Introduction

◆ Thus Far (in recent weeks) The Power Of God In Changing The Human Heart.

- #1. How Jacob was changed one night in prayer. (Genesis 32)
- #2. How David was changed through deep repentance. (Psalm 32)
- #3. How Zaccheus was changed at the Sycamore Tree. (Luke 19)
- #4. How the woman was changed at the well. (John 4)
- #5. How an adulterous woman was changed in the temple. (John 8)
- #6. (Last week) How Isaiah was changed when he saw the Lord. (Isaiah 6)

## (This Morning)

◆ How Saul Of Tarsus was Changed By The Power Of God

## (Questions With Answers)

- #1. Pastor, what was Saul like before his conversion?
- #2. Pastor, why was Saul so angry?
- #3. Pastor, How did the Lord change Saul so dramatically?
- #4. Pastor, how does Saul relate to my life today?
- #5. And pastor, what difference does it make in your life and mine?

## (Why Is Acts 9 So Important Today?)

- #1. Because many are getting saved (like Paul) between 30 and 60 years of age).
- #2. Because many have to deal with long term sin and bad habits.
- #3. Because many wonder if there is power in the gospel to change them from the inside out (after years of chronic sinful behavior).

## (Discover The Process Of Change In The Human Heart)

### I. Saul's Persecution Of Believers (v. 1,2)

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (v. 1)

“Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3)

“And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. (Acts 22:4)

“Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceeding mad against them I persecuted them”. (Acts 26:10,11)

## (Who Is This Madman Named Saul?)

- #1. Saul is first mentioned in Acts 7:58 (we see him as a supporting cast member watching Stephen being stoned to death).

- #2. Saul had debated with Stephen, dragged him before the council and now supports the forum of Jewish execution.
- #3. Saul had one goal in mind (destroy the church) and rid the countryside of all believers).
- #4. Saul is described in Acts 8:3 as one who made havoc of the church.

**Fact:** The word “havoc” (ELUMAINETO) is a word that describes a wild beast mangling its prey.

**Fact:** It’s a word that is a continual action verb (which means Saul began and kept on ravaging, fighting, and doing his best to destroy the church).

**(So Much So)**

- ◆ That in chapter 9:1: Saul went to the high priest.
- ◆ (And) in chapter 9:2: Saul “desired letters to Damascus to enter the synagogues”.

**(In Other Words)**

1. Saul went to the high priest and the Sanhedrin to request authority to pursue the scattered believers.
2. His goal is to arrest the believers and bring them back to Jerusalem to be put on trial.
3. His sole purpose for existence is to stop the work of God that is beginning to catch fire.
4. He lives, breathes and moves to squash the church in its infant stage.

**(Was He Really That Bad Pastor?)**

“And Saul was consenting unto Stephen’s death” (Acts 8:1)

- ◆ The word “consenting” (SUNEUDOKON) means:
  - #1. To willingly approve!                      #3. To delight in!
  - #2. To approve with pleasure!                #4. To applaud what’s taking place!

**(In Other Words)**

**Fact:** Saul was enjoying watching Stephen die.

**Fact:** Saul was taking pleasure in hurting people.

**Fact:** Saul was hard and calloused and deposed to put out the flame of the Gospel.

**(His Resume Is Listed In Scripture)**

**Acts 8:3, 9:2, 22:4, 26:10-11**

- #1. He stormed the homes of believers (broke down their doors).
- #2. He arrested all that he could find.
- #3. He dragged the Christians through city streets.
- #4. He arrested men and women without shame.
- #5. He stormed the synagogues and commanded Christians to blaspheme the name of Jesus.
- #6. He hunted them down even into foreign cities.
- #7. He brought many to their death and gave his voice to the death penalty of many others.

**Ask:** Pastor, can God change the value system of a man like this?

**Ask:** Can God undo years of anger and vengeance in the human heart?

**Ask:** Can the Lord thwart my temptation to remain bitter over past injustice?

**Ask:** Can the Holy Spirit penetrate deep enough to remove things that I know are resident in me?

**Ask:** Is it possible (and if it is) how does God go about changing the human heart? (Pg. 2 of 6)

## II. Saul's Prostration Before God (9:3-20)

"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: "And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven". (v. 3)

"And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (v. 4)

"And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus" (v.5)

**Fact:** Saul had received the letters and authority he asked for.

**Fact:** Saul had set off for Damascus to hunt believers.

**Fact:** Saul journeys some five or six days to Damascus (the capital city of Syria)

**Fact:** And (at noon) on the last day of the journey (with Damascus probably in sight),

### (The Unexpected Happens)

#1. In (v.3) There was a light from heaven:

- A. The light appeared suddenly (out of nowhere)
- B. The light was supernatural (from heaven)
- C. The light was great (brighter than the noonday sun. (Acts 26:13)
- D. The light was a revelation (of the very presence of God, II Corinthians 4:6)

"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

### (Whats It Mean, Why The Light Pastor?)

- #1. Light is the first thing experienced in salvation.
- #2. Light is the knowledge, the awareness, the consciousness, the quickening, the understanding that Jesus is the Savior.
- #3. Light came to Paul while he was on his mission to slaughter, kill and destroy believers.

**Question:** Did Paul deserve the light? (no)

**Answer:** Paul deserved judgment, death and the wrath of God.

**Question:** Do we deserve the light? (no)

**Answer:** We deserve judgment, death and the wrath of God.

**Question:** What's the big deal about the bright light?

**Answer:** The big deal is that Saul was so steeped in sin (and yet God was able to penetrate the hardest of hearts.

**Question:** What's the application? (very simply)

**Answer:** That God is able to penetrate, break in, get through, pull down and overcome every excuse that you could ever give Him.

- #1. God's light can penetrate any heart!
- #2. God's light can pierce any darkness!
- #3. God's light can expose anything hidden!
- #4. God's light can come to anyone, at anytime, at any place (without exception)!

(#1. **There was a light unexpectedly**)

#2. There was a voice unexpectedly. (v.14)

"And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

**Question:** What's the big deal about the voice?

**Answer:** The voice of the Lord was a message to Paul?

### (Whats The Message Conveyed?)

#1. It was a **tender voice** (calling Saul's name twice reveals the tenderness, love, concern and appeal the Lord has to want to talk to us).

#2. It was a **convicting voice** (filled with rebuke and passion).

◆ "Why do you persecute me?"      ◆ "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (v.5)

### (Whats It Mean?)

**Fact:** To "kick against the pricks" is a picture of an ox being goaded or pricked with a long stick, to make him respond to the drivers will.

**Fact:** Saul was fighting, struggling, and kicking against the truth.

**Fact:** He was deliberately shutting his ears, his mind and his heart to his own sin and God's will.

**Fact:** But the good news is: The light of God's truth and the voice God's compassion can break through to any human heart!!!

#1. It was a tender voice.

#2. It was a convicting voice.

(But #3) It was an **effective voice:**

(v.6) "And Saul trembling and astonished said, Lord, what do you want me to do?"

**Question:** How was Saul affected by the Lord's appearance?

**Answer:** (v.4) He fell to the earth.

(v.5) He acknowledges the Lord.

(v.6) He is trembling and astonished and broken in utter submission:

### (What Did Saul Discover?)

#1. That his sin was against God.

#2. That Stephen belonged to God.

#3. That the men and women he jailed were Gods.

#4. That those he persecuted belonged to God.

#5. That he was lost and separated from God.

#6. That he was fighting against God.

#7. That he was "kicking against the pricks" (or that he couldn't change the truth but the truth could change him!)

### (In Other Words Saul)

◆ You're wasting your time resisting the Lord, (instead) submission is the pathway to victorious living.

**Question:** Why the light?

**Answer:** To reveal to us the Lord Jesus!

**Question:** Why is the light brighter than the sun at noon?

**Answer:** To reveal to us that God can penetrate every heart and any condition that needs Him. (His light is greater than any darkness opposed to Him)

**Question:** Why the voice of God speaking to us?

**Answer:** To reveal the tenderness of Jesus.

To reveal the conviction of Jesus.

To reveal the effectiveness of Jesus (causing us to tremble in astonishment that we are wasting our time whenever we resist His advances).

**Question:** What did Jesus say to Saul? (He said)

**Answer:** "What do you think you are doing Saul?"

**Question:** What was the ultimate purpose for Jesus speaking to Saul?

**Answer:** The ultimate purpose was to change Saul and commission Saul.

### (In Other Words)

- #1. God has something to say to us (He wants our attention).
- #2. God has something to reveal to us (He has a job for you and me to do).
- #3. God has an encouraging work for you and for your unsaved (hard hearted) husband, wife, son, daughter, mother, father, brother and sister.

#1. Saul's persecution of believers.

#2. Saul's prostration before God.

### III. Saul's Progress In His Own Life

**Fact:** For 3 days Saul was without his sight.

**Fact:** For 3 days he would consider his past life.

**Fact:** For 3 days darkness reminded him of his soul's need for God.

**Fact:** For 3 days he searches his heart in prayer and fasting.

**Fact:** For 3 days an inner transformation takes place.

**Fact:** For 3 days he wonders if God will hold his past against him (or totally forgive him of every past misdeed and sin).

(And In V. 10-16)

- ◆ The Lord sends Ananias to the house of Judas. (v. 11)
- ◆ He tells Ananias that Saul will be there praying.
- ◆ And when Ananias arrives, what a revelation of grace that is greater than all our sins.

**Question:** What happens to Saul in just 3 short days?

**Question:** What happens to one who hated Christ's church?

**Question:** What ministry takes place (then and now) for those willing to obey the Lord?

**Question:** What happens to this angry, bitter, mad man, God hater when he least expected it?

**(What Happened In Damascus Still Happens In Binghamton)**

#### #1. Saul Was Saved By The Grace Of God

(v. 17) "And Ananias went his way, entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul"

- ◆ Saul was transformed from a sinner to a brother.

#### #2. Saul Was Healed By The Power Of God

(v. 18) "He received his sight forthwith and arose"

- ◆ Saul was healed in answer to Ananias' prayer.

#### #3. Saul Was Filled With The Holy Spirit

(v. 17) "Receive your sight and be filled with the Spirit"

- ◆ Paul testified of his infilling in I Corinthians 14:18.

#### #4. Saul Was Baptized In Water

(v. 18) "He arose and was baptized"

- ◆ Saul was obedient to be baptized in water.

#### #5. Saul Was Strengthened In The Lord

(v. 22) "But Saul increased the more in strength".

- ◆ The words “increased the more in strength” mean:
  1. Paul grew spiritually
  2. Paul became strong within
  3. Paul gained inner strength
  4. Paul studied the Word and grew accordingly

#6. Saul Was Delivered From Death Plots

(v. 24 & 25) “The disciples let him down (to escape) through a window in a basket”.

- ◆ Some believers lowered Saul to safety just in time. (God is still in control)

#7. Saul Was Ordained To Preach A Message

**Ask:** What was the message?

**Answer:** Acts 26:14-18 (all read)

(v. 18) “To turn people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins”.

**Conclusion**

**Ask:** Pastor, did the Gospel work for Paul?

**Ask:** Did the Lord confirm His Word with signs following?

**Ask:** Will God’s Grace change me like it did Saul of Tarsus?

**(Hear Paul’s Testimony)**

- ◆ (Romans 5:20) “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”
- ◆ (Romans 6:14) “For sin shall not have dominion over you”
- ◆ (Romans 7:6) “We should serve in newness of spirit”
- ◆ (Romans 8:1) “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”
- ◆ (Romans 10:13) “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”
- ◆ (II Cor. 5:17) “If anyone be in Christ, they are a new creation, old things are passed away and all things are brand new”
- ◆ (II Tim. 4:17) “Paul’s final letter written: “The Lord stood with me and strengthened me”

**(Altar Call)**

**Question:** Is there any darkness where light needs to come in and overcome sin in your life?

**Question:** Do you feel like you don’t deserve God’s Grace that is greater than your sin?

**Question:** Are you willing to obey the voice of God and cooperate with truth?

**Question:** Will you believe Paul’s message and receive forgiveness of sins?

**Question:** Will you prostrate yourself before God in response to the light from the Holy Spirit?

**AMEN!**

Bill Kirk, Pastor