

BIBLE INSIGHT

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

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Was Saul Saved On The Road To Damascus? By Donnie V. Rader

(<http://www.elbethelchurchofchrist.com/>)

A very popular concept among religious people is that Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus. The argument is that he was saved by faith on the road before he reached Damascus where he was baptized.

Some of the Arguments

1. *Saul was a brother in Christ before baptism.* One of the arguments that our friends make is that Ananias called Saul "Brother Saul" (Acts 22:13), thus he was a brother in the Lord before he was baptized. However, "brother" does not always mean a brother in Christ, but one who is a kinsman. Peter called murderers "brethren" before they repented (Acts 2:29; 3:14, 17). Stephen called the mob that stoned him "brethren" (Acts 7:2).

2. *Saul was born again out of due time when he saw the Lord (1 Cor. 15:8), thus saved on the road.* Look closely at this text:

"Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."

It doesn't say that he was born again or even that he was born. It says, "as by one born out of due time". The text is not talking about his salvation, but his being a witness of the resurrected Lord. He saw the Lord, as one who was born out of due time.

3. *God would not appear to a sinner calling him to be an apostle and preach.* Hence, the argument says that Saul was saved when God appeared to him.

If this argument proves anything it proves that Saul was saved before faith. For, the Lord appeared to him before he believed on the Lord. It would also prove salvation before and without repentance for he had not repented when the Lord appeared to him. If God could choose Jeremiah before his birth (Jer. 1:5), why not Saul before his spiritual birth?

Other arguments are made that we do not have space to develop and answer. However, in answering any of these arguments, we must remember that whatever conclusion we draw must harmonize with what Acts 9 and other texts say about Saul's conversion (Acts 22; 26).

If Saul Was Saved On the Road to Damascus

If Saul was saved on the road, as the claim is made, the following are consequences of that conclusion.

1. *Sins were not washed away.* For, Ananias said, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He was commanded to be baptized *to wash away his sins*. That was in Damascus. Thus, if he was saved on the road before reaching Damascus, he was saved while still in his sins.
2. *He was the most miserable saved man.* For three days he was blind and didn't eat or drink anything (Acts 9:9). That is a far cry from the story of the Ethiopian treasurer who immediately went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).
3. *The Lord didn't know it.* If he was saved, the Lord didn't know it for he told Saul to go into the city and he would be told what to do (Acts 9:6).
4. *Ananias didn't know it.* If he was saved on the road, Ananias, the preacher that God sent, didn't know it, for he told him to be baptized and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).
5. *Saul didn't know it.* If he was saved on the road, Saul himself didn't know it for he did exactly what Ananias had commanded (Acts 22:16).

Thus, those who *know* that Saul was saved on the road know something that Ananias, Saul and God himself didn't know.

What Did Saul Do To Be Saved?

Saul did what every other convert to the Lord did, or else God would be a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11).

Thus, if others had to repent and be baptized (and they did, Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12, 38) Saul did too.

1. *Believed on the Lord.* The fact that he went into the city as the Lord instructed him (Acts 22:11) tells us that. Furthermore, we find him preaching that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 9:20). Thus, he believed as the Lord commanded in the great commission (Mark 16:16).
2. *Repented of his sins.* This is evidenced by his fasting and prayer when he arrived in Damascus (Acts 9:9, 11).
3. *He was baptized.* He was told to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). He immediately was baptized (Acts 9:9).

Since confession of faith is essential according to Rom 10:9-10, we know he confessed his faith in the Lord as the Eunuch did (Acts 8:37).

Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus

What's Your Excuse? By Allan McNabb (<http://biblestudyguide.org/>)

We generally think of an excuse as a reason whereby we may not be held accountable, or by which we are excused, for our actions. For example: A parent keeps a child from school because of illness - this is an excused absence.

Concerning our relationship with God, we have no excuse for sin. If I steal from my neighbor's garden, there is no excuse for my sin - there is no reason whereby my behavior is justified. There may be a reason for my actions, but my actions are inexcusable.

Jesus teaches concerning the cost of discipleship. In Luke 9:57-62 we read: "Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

The cost of discipleship is that we may offer no excuse for refusing to follow Christ. Thankfully, to follow Christ is to care for our family. But our family cannot stand between us and following Jesus. Nothing excuses us from following Jesus.

But for those who follow Jesus and pay the cost of being His disciple, they are excused from eternal damnation. A synonym for "excuse" is "justify." Those who follow Jesus are justified (excused). We have no excuse for refusing to follow Christ, but Christ's faithful disciples are excused from the penalty of their iniquity.

In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus tells a parable about a wedding feast. A man responds to the second invitation and goes to the wedding feast without making preparation thereby neglecting to wear his wedding garment. Interestingly, the wedding garment was often provided by the king. If this is the case, the action of the man is blatantly inexcusable - all had been prepared for him, he had to expend little effort to cloth himself in a garment previously provided. Jesus says: "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:12-14).

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). And God calls us through the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:14). Some folks desire to attend the feast, but do not desire to make preparation - to these will be eternal damnation. But for those who make preparation by clothing themselves in Christ (putting on Christ, Rom. 13:14), they are given an eternal reward. They are justified through faith in Christ - not because of themselves, but because of Christ who paid the penalty for sin in the flesh (Rom. 3:21-26).

Think about this: Are you ready for the wedding feast? Have you made preparation? Are you wearing your wedding garment? If yes, glorify God with all of your being. If no, today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

“For Your Good” (<http://www.gospel-guide.org/>)

God told the children of Israel that His word was for their good. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today *for your good*? (Deuteronomy 10:12,13).

When the children of Israel obeyed God, they prospered. It was for their good. He would open to them the window of heaven and pour out to them “such blessing that there would not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 2:10). When they were determined to disobey, they invariably suffered the consequences—“the way of the unfaithful is hard” (Proverbs 13:15).

Though we live under the gospel of Christ, and not the Law of Moses, God deals with us by the same principle. Obeying God will always be for man’s good—“in this present time, and in the world to come eternal life.” (Luke 18:30).

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QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

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