

Acts 9 -- Adventures in Prayer

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest **2** and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. Psalm 55:1 Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; **2** hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught **3** because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger. To be a Christian is an adventure. Murderous threats against you that cause you to go to your knees. The church knew that Saul was coming to arrest them. **3** As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. Psalm 76:1 God is renowned in Judah; in Israel his name is great. **2** His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion. **3** There he broke the flashing arrows, the shields and the swords, the weapons of war. **4** You are radiant with light, more majestic than mountains rich with game. The Lord responded to the prayers. As usual the Lord's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. **4** He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" **5** "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. **6** "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." **Psalm 55:16** As for me, I call to God, and the Lord saves me. **17** Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. **18** He rescues me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me. The Lord stepped in to rescue the church, but also to rescue Saul. **7** The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. **8** Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. **9** For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. **Psalm 76:5** The valiant lie plundered, they sleep their last sleep; not one of the warriors can lift his hands. **6** At your rebuke, God of Jacob, both horse and chariot lie still. **7** It is you alone who are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry? Imagine this, the Jewish leaders had sent their "valiant" to deal with this little sect, but the Lord is toying with them. They try to imprison the apostles and this just causes more to turn to the Lord. They try to forbid them to speak but that simply undermines their authority. They try to condemn Stephen but that gets flipped on them and the trial of Stephen condemns them. When they stone Stephen it causes Jesus to arise. The

preaching of Phillip becomes prevailing. And, now when they lift their hand against the church the Lord totally humiliates them. **10** In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. **11** The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. **12** In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." **13** "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. **14** And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." **15** But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. **16** I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." **Psalm 76:9** when you, God, rose up to judge, to save all the afflicted of the land. **10** Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise, and the survivors of your wrath are restrained. Saul was at the forefront of the persecution of the church and the Lord in a flash of light converted him. Saul becomes Paul and a great gift to the church. **17** Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18** Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, **19** and after taking some food, he regained his strength. **11** Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; let all the neighboring lands bring gifts to the One to be feared. The Jewish leaders' attempt to attack the church became a gift to the Lord. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. **20** At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. **21** All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" **12** He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth. They are being put to an open shame, isn't this the guy they sent to arrest the Christians and now he is preaching Jesus? **22** Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. **Psalm 21:1** The king rejoices in your strength, Lord. How great is his joy in the victories you give! **2** You have granted him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. **3** You came to greet him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head. **4** He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—

length of days, for ever and ever. **5** Through the victories you gave, his glory is great; you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty. **6** Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence. **7** For the king trusts in the Lord; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken. **23** After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, **24** but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. **25** But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. **8** Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; your right hand will seize your foes. **9** When you appear for battle, you will burn them up as in a blazing furnace. The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath, and his fire will consume them. **10** You will destroy their descendants from the earth, their posterity from mankind. **11** Though they plot evil against you and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed. **12** You will make them turn their backs when you aim at them with drawn bow. **13** Be exalted in your strength, Lord; we will sing and praise your might. There is nothing they can do. Arrest, imprison, even kill, whatever they do simply causes more and more to turn to the Lord. They are exposed and God is glorified. If you want to fight spiritual battles and have great adventures it doesn't get any better than this. **26** When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. **27** But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. **Psalms 89:19** Once you spoke in a vision, to your faithful people you said: "I have bestowed strength on a warrior; I have raised up a young man from among the people. **20** I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him. **21** My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him. **22** The enemy will not get the better of him; the wicked will not oppress him. **23** I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries. We need the fellowship of the Body, this battle is a corporate warfare. **28** So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. **Psalms 29:1** Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. What do you think Saul said? He ascribed glory and strength to the Lord. **2** Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. **3** The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord thunders over the

mighty waters. This is the point of speaking in tongues. The voice of the Lord is going out throughout the entire earth. Before we built roads we had the waters as our highway. **4 The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.** This speaking is what is changing the age. Today many are complaining of injustice. I don't want to say that is a joke, but the crucifixion of Jesus where He was arrested in the evening, tried that same night, sentenced to death, and then executed first thing in the morning is the kind of injustice we had at the beginning of this age. **5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.** These rulers and leaders appeared to be so strong, and they have all been broken into pieces. **6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.** **7 The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning.** Saul also shared his personal experience of the voice of the Lord being like a flash of lightning. **8 The voice of the Lord shakes the desert; the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.** No doubt those who heard like Barnabas shared how this speaking was shaking the world. **9 The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.** They also shared how these rulers are being stripped bare as those they send to persecute the church are being converted. **And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"** One of the great adventures in prayer is hearing of answered prayer. The response is always "Glory!" **30 When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.** **31** Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. **Psalm 29:10** The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever. **11** The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. This is how we enjoy peace and are strengthened. We don't run from the battle, we turn to the Lord, pray, trust the Lord and obey the Lord like Ananias did. **32 As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda.** **33** There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. **34** "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up. **35** All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. **Psalm 126:1** When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. **2** Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." **3** The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Right now it seems like our government is paralyzed. They are incapable of acting justly

or judging rightly. This didn't begin 4 years ago, but it has been getting worse and worse ever since JFK was assassinated. **36** In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. **37** About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. **38** Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" **39** Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. **40** Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. **41** He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. **42** This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. **43** Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon. **4** Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. **5** Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. **6** Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. The Lord is going to return just as we saw Him when He went into heaven, but will there be faith on the earth when He returns? Will He find us praying as the early church was praying?