

**“The Risen Lord Jesus Chooses Us”**  
(Acts 9:1-20 – Easter 3 – May 4, 2025)

Acts 9:1-20 – <sup>1</sup>Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. <sup>4</sup>Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” <sup>5</sup>And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” <sup>6</sup>So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” <sup>7</sup>And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup>Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. <sup>10</sup>Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” <sup>11</sup>So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. <sup>12</sup>And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” <sup>13</sup>Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” <sup>15</sup>But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup>For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” <sup>17</sup>And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>18</sup>Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. <sup>19</sup>So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ, our risen and living Savior:

Sometimes people say, “I decided to follow Jesus. I invited Jesus into my life. I gave my heart to Jesus.” But the Saul we meet in our text would never say this. In his conversion to the faith, the crucified and risen Lord Jesus took him by surprise. When Saul was yet a fierce enemy of Jesus, the Lord chose him and converted him to faith. By grace alone, Saul was chosen as a most unlikely candidate, not only to be a believer in Jesus, but to be one of His greatest witnesses as the man who would be named the apostle Paul. Yet, it was just this focus on salvation as a gift of God’s grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, that made his witness so effective.

The same is true for us: **“The Risen Lord Jesus Chooses Us”**: 1) He converts us to a new life by His grace, 2) He calls us to a new mission to share His grace.

### 1) He converts us to a new life by His grace

When Saul was on the road to Damascus, the last thing he thought of doing was to choose to follow Jesus. As a Pharisee, Saul's life was opposed to all that Jesus taught and stood for. He devoted himself to obeying many religious laws and traditions of the Jews. He believed he was earning God's favor and eternal life by his own righteous life and good works.

By contrast, Jesus taught that it was impossible for anyone to earn salvation by his own good life. Indeed, one's righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees; one must be perfect even as God is perfect (Matthew 5:20, 48)! Yet at the same time Jesus welcomed even the worst of sinners, calling them to repentance and faith in the forgiveness He came to win. Now Jesus' followers were claiming He had risen from the dead. They were preaching repentance and remission of sins in His name, and that salvation is found in no other name (Acts 4:12).

This infuriated Saul. As far as he was concerned, Jesus crucified and dead as a false Messiah. Saul was on a mission to rid the world of Jesus' followers and stamp out His name forever. A great persecution had begun in Jerusalem against Jesus' disciples. Saul was a leader in it, dragging believers off to prison and casting his vote for their deaths (Acts 8:1-3; 26:9-10). Now it says: *"Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem"* (vs. 1-2).

But what a shock he had on the road to Damascus! *"Suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'"* (vs. 3-5). Here, Saul had thought he was doing God a favor. In his zeal, he was just trying to keep the religion of Israel pure. But all along he had been an enemy of the Lord Himself. Jesus took it personally as Saul hurt the members of His Body, His Church of believers!

It was by the grace of God alone that Saul was not condemned, but rather converted. His physical eyes were blinded by the light of the resurrected Jesus' glory. Yet his spiritual eyes were opened in repentance and faith by the Word the Lord. Later, Jesus sent Ananias to lay his hands on Saul. His sight was restored. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 22:16, we read that Ananias said to Saul: *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* So by the grace of God, Saul became a new man in Christ. He was washed of all sins, cleansed by the blood of Jesus. He was made an heir of eternal life through Holy Spirit-given faith in his crucified and risen Lord and Savior.

Saul did not choose Jesus; Jesus chose him and converted him by grace alone. The same is true for us and all who believe. Later as the apostle Paul, he emphasized this in his Holy Spirit inspired writings of Scripture. In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul described our natural condition as those who were spiritually dead toward God in our sins. We were led by the power of Satan in disobedience to God and blindness of unbelief. Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath.

In this condition, what kind of heart could we give to Jesus? Jesus said in Matthew 15:19: *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”* A heart corrupted by sin can only produce sinful thoughts, words, and actions. How many times have we joined Saul in breathing out murder, when in our hearts we have been angry and unforgiving toward someone; for whoever hates his brother is a murderer (1 John 3:15)? How many times have we committed adulteries and fornications from the heart, if only by looking and lusting in forbidden places? How many times have we committed thefts by dishonesty? How many times have we committed false witness by joining the gossip circle?

In all this, like Saul we may not have realized the gravity of our sin against the Lord Himself. We might rather focus on our religious zeal and goodness. Yet the risen Lord Jesus shines the light of His truth on us and confronts us in our way of sin. He asks: *“Why do you hurt Me?”* For He says that whatever way we treat others is the way we treat Him (Matthew 25:40, 45)!

In our fallen condition, dead in our sins, we were not able to choose Jesus. We could not boast in giving our sin-corrupted heart to Him! No, by grace alone Jesus chose us and saved us from our sinful way. As Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ.... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

We can rejoice with the apostle Paul that it is by grace we have been saved. We can be thankful that salvation does not depend on anything we must do for God. He has done it all for us. While we were still guilty sinners, deserving only judgment, in mercy God sent His Son to be punished for us. Jesus went to the cross with all our sin and guilt. He bore as His own burden all the ways we have hurt others and thus hurt Him. *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain”* (Revelation 5:14). Jesus’ sacrifice has turned away the wrath of God from us, once for all. His blood is worthy to cleanse our hearts of all sin and present us holy and without blemish before God (Ephesians 5:27)!

And by grace alone, Jesus has given us the gift of faith by which we receive all that He won for us. In our conversion, the risen Lord Jesus did not appear to us dramatically as He did to Saul. But He who chose us, also converted us using the same powerful means of grace. Jesus revealed Himself to us in His saving glory by the light of His Gospel. He baptized us, pouring out the Holy Spirit on us, opening our eyes in faith. Like Saul, He raised us up as children of God and heirs of eternal life with Him! *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

## **2) He calls us to a new mission to share His grace**

Now, the risen Lord Jesus who has converted us to a new life by His grace, calls us to a new mission to share His grace. Jesus said in John 15:16 *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”* What kind of fruit grows out of a life that is changed by His grace, a heart that rejoices in His salvation?

Just look at how Saul responded to the grace of God in his calling as an apostle. The former persecutor became one of the greatest witnesses of Jesus' gift of grace and salvation for sinners. As Jesus explained to the surprised Ananias: *"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"* (vs. 15-16). Already at Damascus we see Saul joyfully proclaiming the Gospel: *"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God"* (vs. 20). As the apostle Paul, he would go wherever the Lord led him, proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Jesus' name. He began among the Jews, but he would carry the Gospel everywhere in his missionary journeys among the Gentiles. Along the way, he himself would suffer much persecution for the sake of the Gospel.

Yet what motivated Paul? He wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: *"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."* Moved by that love of Christ, he proclaimed the Gospel of grace for sinners: *"that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Like the former Pharisee Saul, converted to the apostle Paul, the living Lord Jesus has called us to a new mission, as ambassadors of His grace. Wherever He leads us in our daily callings, we take our faith with us as we live and serve among others in the home, in the church, in the world. As God's new creation in Christ, we have the same message and motivation as Paul. We want to live our lives for Him who loved us and gave Himself to win our salvation and eternal life. And we want to share His love with others, as we proclaim the Good News that Jesus died and rose again to win forgiveness for even the worst of sinners.

The risen Lord Jesus has chosen us for great things in His Kingdom! He has converted us by His Gospel to faith and eternal life. He has called us to a new mission as we share His Gospel of grace with others – that powerful and effective Gospel by which Jesus continues to call sinners to faith and gather His Church of believers, until He bring us all home to His heavenly Kingdom.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.