LESSON 7

ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

Read Acts 9:1-31 & Study Note: Imprisonment in the Scriptures

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Describe what happened on the road to Damascus in **verses 3-5**. Why did Jesus accuse Saul of persecuting Him? Who was it that Saul was persecuting? How does this make you love the Lord Jesus even more?

2. What was the experience on the road to Damascus like for the men traveling with Saul? How did they respond?

3. Why do you think the Lord struck Saul with blindness and how was he healed? Why do you think Ananias was reluctant to go to Saul and how did the Lord comfort his fears? How has God comforted you in your fears **(Psalm 27)**?

LESSON QUESTIONS

4. What message did the Lord give to Ananias about Saul's future ministry for the kingdom of God? What call has the Lord put on your life for ministry?

5. After he regained his sight, Saul spent several days in Damascus. What was his first priority? What was he anxious to share with others and how did the people who heard him react?

6. Read **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**. In Paul's list of sufferings, what does he say about what occurred in Damascus? Why was this considered a great suffering?

HEART APPLICATION QUESTIONS

7. In **verses 10-14**, Ananias struggled to first obey the Lord. What was he focused on? Have you ever been hesitant to obey God, only to realize later that obeying Him would have been the best thing for you?

8. Have you ever felt persecuted for your faith? Has someone close to you, such as a family member, ever questioned or mocked your faith? How did you react?

9. Jesus struck Saul with blindness so he would realize that he had been blind to His truth. Think about when God changed your life or when you first began to recognize Jesus as your Savior. How did Jesus open your eyes to see the truth of the Gospel? Share with your group.

Memory Verse - Ephesians 2:4

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved."

LESSON 7

STUDY NOTES

IMPRISONMENT IN THE SCRIPTURES

How many times do we read in the Scriptures about someone, usually a faithful servant of God, being arrested and imprisoned?

The first person we read about being put in prison is **Joseph**. He was unjustly accused and put in the king's prison. It was there in prison that God continued to refine Joseph to prepare him for what would come next. While in prison Joseph interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and baker and eventually was taken from the prison to the palace where he was exalted to Prime Minister.

In addition to confinement in a prison, there were other innocents in the Scriptures who were held captive in other ways. **Esther** was taken captive when King Xerxes sent out an edict to gather all of the beautiful women in the kingdom in order to find a replacement for Queen Vashti. Esther was not free to come and go any more than if she had been in a prison cell.

The same was true for **Daniel** who was captured and carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar's army. He was placed in a training program for three years after which time he would enter the king's service. We know that he was a prisoner because the chief offcial was appointed to guard Daniel and his friends.

Throughout the Bible we read of godly men imprisoned for various reasons. **Jeremiah** was a political prisoner, because he spoke out against nation's leaders and their policies. They refused to listen to the Prophet Jeremiah and attempted to silence him by putting him in prison, but Jeremiah continued to speak for God even while incarcerated. King Zedekiah failed to heed God's warnings through His faithful prophet, so when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, Zedekiah was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon where he was imprisoned until his death.

King Manasseh was one of the most wicked kings to ever reign over the southern kingdom of Judah. Manasseh, like Zedekiah, refused to listen to the warnings through God's prophets, and eventually, he was captured and imprisoned in Babylon by the Assyrians. They put a ring through his nose, bound him in bronze chains and led him away.

The amazing grace of God was at work in King Manasseh's life, and while he was in prison, Manasseh repented, and God not only orchestrated his release from prison but restored him to his throne and his kingdom.

Another example of God's chastening work through incarceration was Israel's most famous judge, **Samson.** Samson was one of the strongest men that ever lived, but he had a great weakness for beautiful women. Samson was a Nazarite from birth; he was never to cut his hair. When Delilah set out to find the secret of his great strength, she wore him down. Eventually, he gave in and told her the truth. So, while Samson was asleep in her lap, the Philistines came in and shaved his head and immediately his strength was gone.

"The Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again…" When Samson was brought out at a great feast to the Philistine's god, he prayed to the LORD, and was given divine strength for one final judgment on the Philistines. Bracing against the two central pillars of their temple, he pushed with all his might and the temple came down, killing everyone in it, including Samson.

As we look at the New Testament, we read that **John the Baptist** was put in prison by King Herod and eventually beheaded. During John's imprisonment, he sent his disciples to Jesus to learn whether or not He was the One who was to come. John suffered with honest doubts, and the Lord Jesus sent word back through John's disciples to encourage him.

In **Acts 12**, we read the story of **Peter's** miraculous escape from prison, and over and over in the Book of Acts we read of **Paul** being put in prison. One of the most well-known of Paul's imprisonments is found in **Acts 16** when Paul and Silas were put in prison after being stripped and beaten with rods. At midnight when they were singing and praising God, the Lord sent a great earthquake that opened the prison doors. But the greatest miracle that happened that night was the salvation of the jailer and his family.

During one of Paul's incarcerations, the Apostle Paul wrote what are called the prison epistles - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. In each of these letters Paul mentions his imprisonment. Paul's time in captivity was actually a great blessing for all who have ever read these epistles and Paul continued to spread the Gospel despite his confinement.

Throughout the Scriptures, we can see that God used even imprisonment for His great purposes. Sometimes it was for refinement, at other times for chastisement, and in the case of Peter, it was to demonstrate God's great power. With Paul, imprisonment was an opportunity for him to write and encourage the churches of his day as well as to be a blessing for future generations.

According to the 2025 World Watch List, *nearly 5000 Christians* are in prison today because of their faith.

LESSON 7: MESSAGE NOTES

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PRAISES & PRAYER REQUESTS