



A Hebrew of Hebrews

The Salvation of a Pharisee

A Hebrew of Hebrews

- Acts 9:1-5 - “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 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. 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? 5 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”

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- Phil. 3:4-6 - “Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

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- Gal. 1:13-14 - “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”

A Hebrew of Hebrews

- A Pharisee filled with anger and hate, Saul of Tarsus: temple assassin, Pharisee par excellence, model Jew destined to be second only to the high priest in Jerusalem
- Became the apostle Paul: started most of the churches in Europe and Asia Minor at that time, endured torture for the gospel, wrote half of the books in the New Testament, and became second only to Christ in terms of influence in the church

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- Acts 22:14-15 - “Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. 15 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.”
- 1Cor. 15:9-10 - “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

A Hebrew of Hebrews

- The apostle Paul was not always a Christian.
 - Saul of Tarsus was zealous Jew.
 - Saul of Tarsus hated the name of Jesus Christ.
 - Saul of Tarsus hated the Gospel.
 - Saul of Tarsus hated the doctrine of the resurrection of Gentiles.
 - Saul of Tarsus hated the church.
 - Saul of Tarsus was a murderer.
 - Saul of Tarsus was a lost man bound for perdition

A Hebrew of Hebrews

- How many people in the early church believed Saul of Tarsus would hear the gospel and be saved?
- How would they pray about Saul: please protect us from him, or please help him come to the truth?
- How many would have viewed him as an unredeemable reprobate?
- Do you suppose anyone in the early church loved Saul of Tarsus?

A Hebrew of Hebrews

- The account of Saul's life is the greatest testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the power of the Gospel
- There is hope for all of the difficult cases: loved ones, coworkers, neighbors, opponents, political figures
- The Gospel, prayers, and the Providence of God have the same power today that they had on the day Saul of Tarsus was baptized by Ananias

Problems In Saul's Life

- Acts 9:1-2 - "Then 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."

Problems In Saul's Life

- Self-Righteousness - To be a righteous Pharisee, it is mandated that one be self-righteous
 - Acts 23:1 - "...I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"
 - Acts 26:5 - "...according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."
 - 1Tim. 1:13 - "although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man..."

Problems In Saul's Life

- Saul loved the law, studied it in Hebrew college, obeyed it strictly; the law was his life.
- He called on his enemies to verify his righteousness as a Pharisaic Jew
 - Acts 26:4-5 - “My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. 5 They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”

Problems In Saul's Life

- The problem with Saul's relationship with the Law was the fact that he trusted his obedience to the Law to save his soul. Saul believed keeping the Law would buy favor with God, and that God would accept him, and grant him salvation because he earned it.

Problems In Saul's Life

- No one is saved by keeping the law of Moses
 - Rom. 3:20 - “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”
- No one is saved by good works
 - Eph. 2:8-9 - “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Problems In Saul's Life

- No one is saved by righteous deeds
 - Titus 3:5 - “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”
- Anyone basing their hope of heaven on perfectly keeping the Law of God is deceiving themselves
 - James 2:10 - “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”

Problems In Saul's Life

- No New Testament writer addressed the grace and mercy of God, the blood of Jesus Christ, and the power of the gospel more than Paul. Perhaps it is because after trying righteousness by perfect works keeping as a self-righteous Pharisee, he was overwhelmed with joy by the gospel of grace and mercy
 - Rom. 7:24-25 - “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Problems In Saul's Life

- Sinfulness - Saul of Tarsus would have claimed to have lived in all good conscience, but other murderers and blasphemers have said the same thing.
 - 1Tim. 1:13 - “although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man”
 - Acts 9:1 - “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord...”

Problems In Saul's Life

- His conscience might have been clear, but his law-keeping was flawed
 - Ex. 20:13 - “You shall not murder.”
 - Lev. 19:18 - “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”

Problems In Saul's Life

- No matter how hard he worked, no matter how much good he did for the Law of Moses with a clear conscience, no matter how many rules he kept, Saul of Tarsus was still a lost sinner who needed a Savior.

Problems In Saul's Life

- Spite - Saul had heard of the Gospel and wanted no part of it. He refused to believe in Jesus, and he became enraged against those who did. It made him a cruel man
 - Acts 26:11 - “And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

Problems In Saul's Life

- Saul hated Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation through Him
- Saul hated Jesus because He claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah, and the only way to salvation.
- He hated the Gospel because the Gospel claimed that Jesus died for sin on the cross and that He rose from the dead.
- The official story of the Jews was that the disciples stole the dead body of Jesus
 - Matt. 28:13, 15 - “Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' ...and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.”

Problems In Saul's Life

- Consider Saul's reaction to the preaching of the Gospel:
 - Acts 7:58 - He participated in the stoning of Stephen.
 - Acts 8:1 - He took responsibility for Stephen's death
 - Acts 8:3 - He tried to destroy the church
 - Acts 8:3 - He broke into homes and dragged Christians away for trial and execution
 - Acts 9:1 - He publicly threatened believers.

Problems In Saul's Life

- Consider Saul's reaction to the preaching of the Gospel:
 - Acts 9:1 - He murdered believers.
 - Acts 9:1-2 - He solicited warrants from the Jewish authorities to harass and arrest Christians.
 - Acts 26:9 - He did everything he could to oppose Christ.
 - Acts 26:10 - He testified against believers and facilitated their murders.
 - Acts 26:11 - Saul tortured believers until they blasphemed the Lord who saved them

Problems In Saul's Life

- Saul had faith; just in the wrong things
 - He had faith in his own goodness
 - His own righteousness
 - In the Law, and in his ability to keep it.
- Saul was a man much feared by the early church
 - Acts 9:13, 26 - “Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem... 26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.”

Power Of God Over Saul

- How the Lord confronted him - Acts 9:3-4
- How the Lord convicted him - Acts 9:5
- How the Lord converted him - Acts 9:6

Power Of God Over Saul

- Without exception, the Gospel is a teaching religion; one man must teach another. If Saul was to be saved, he must be told by another man and decide for himself
 - Acts 9:6 - “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.”

Power Of God Over Saul

- Acts 9:17-18 - “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. 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.”
- Acts 22:16 - “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Proof Of Saul's Conversion

- Acts 9:8-9 - "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. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank." (Proof of Saul's repentance)
- Acts 9:18-22 - "...he arose and was baptized. 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. 20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ."

Proof Of Saul's Conversion

- Proven by his works
 - John 14:15 - “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”
- Proven by his words
 - Gal. 1:22-24 - “And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. 23 But they were hearing only, He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy. 24 And they glorified God in me.”
- Proven by his walk
 - Gal. 2:20 - “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

When Every Sinner Is Saved, He Experiences The Very Same Changes

- He is born again
 - John 3:3 - “Jesus answered and said to him, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- He is a new creature
 - 2Cor. 5:17 - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”
- He receives a new heart
 - Ez. 36:26 - “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”