

# They Led Him By the Hand

By Henry Mahan

**Bible Text:** Acts 9:8

**Henry T. Mahan Tape Library**

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If we are effective in doing what we set out to do then we don't have to tell people what we are doing. But I am going to tell you anyway and then try, by God's grace, to do it. And that is, apply what I read to you a few moments ago from Acts chapter nine to our present religious situation.

I think we need to preach to our day. I think this is one of the failures of ministers today is they are not preaching to their generation. They are not making an application of the Word of God. The Word of God as a history book is not very effective for me, talking about the prayers of Moses and the faith of Abraham and the revelations of the apostles. I need those prayers and that faith and those revelations personally.

Now we run into this man Saul of Tarsus back here in chapter seven at the stoning of Stephen when Stephen had preached in Acts chapter seven, verse 54. Now note this carefully. Acts 7:54, when they heard these things, when they heard what Stephen preached they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost looked up steadfastly in the heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Now, these weren't the rabble, the paupers, the drunks, the dregs of the gutter gnashing their man on this man Stephen because of what he preached. These were religious people, devout, religious Jews.

And he said in verse 56, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

And then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him, stoned him to death. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. There he is.

His path of hatred and persecution continued in chapter eight. Look at verse one of chapter eight. And Saul, this young man, was consenting unto his death. He agreed with the death, the stoning, the horrible death of Stephen. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad

throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.

As for Saul—now, listen—he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and haling men and women committing them to prison.

And then we come to chapter nine, verse one and two, and Saul is shown here in his extreme opposition to this man Jesus Christ. In verse one of Acts chapter nine, and Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord went to the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus. He wanted to go clear out of town and find these people, to the synagogue, that if he found any of this way, of this way, of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now, you were judged by reading if you read only this account right here, if that was all the information you had on Saul of Tarsus you would come to this conclusion, that he was a profane, political, power mad heathen, wouldn't you? But that is not so. In fact, Saul of Tarsus, in his opinion and in the opinion of his associates was a moral, religious, God fearing man. He was an orthodox theologian. He was the star among the Pharisees. He said, "I was born of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee of Pharisees and concerning the law of God I was blameless."

Saul had no quarrel with the creation story. I hear the fundamentalists say today, "We believe in the blessed book." Saul did, too. He had no quarrel whatsoever with the creation story. He would have not been a liberal as far. As far as creation is concerned, he would have been an ultra conservative. He would have accepted, he would have adopted, he would have taught, he did, the creation just like it is taught in Genesis one and two. He knew about the fall. He believed in the fall of Adam. He knew all about it. He was a theologian.

He had no quarrel with verbal inspiration. Saul believed the book from cover to cover. Now, remember the New Testament had not been written. God used him to write most of it, but he believed the Scriptures. He was a student of the Scriptures. In fact, Christ said of these Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures. In them you think you have life." These people believed the Scriptures. They defended the Scriptures. They fought for the Scriptures. Saul would have accepted Jonah's story just like it is written. The flood, no question whatsoever. He had no quarrel with the law of God. He believed there shall be no other God. He believed you were not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. He was a defender of the law. He said, "You take the law of God and stack my life up beside it and I will come out," he said, "blameless." That is exactly what he said. He had no quarrel with the sabbath day. He had no quarrel with worship, none whatsoever. He was an orthodox, religious, moral, zealous, contender for his...for his faith.

Saul's wrath and opposition revolved around one issue, one issue, not the inspiration of the Scripture, not whether there is a heaven or hell, not whether or not the Bible is God's Word, not whether or not God created the world. No, sir. Not whether or not Jonah was really swallowed by a great fish or whether there was an ark and was a flood. He would

have been right on your side. What was the issue that brought forth his wrath and his opposition, his hatred? Who is Jesus Christ? That is what it was all about. Who is he? What did he do? Why did he come into this world? That was the problem.

Saul knew of the birth of Christ. He knew he was born in Bethlehem. He knew he was raised in Nazareth. Saul knew of his followers, sinners, publicans, harlots. Saul knew of his doctrine. He knew what Christ taught. "I and my Father are one. Before Abraham was, I am. The Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost." Yes, sir. He knew what Christ taught. He knew of his power. All of the Pharisees did. Nicodemus, one of their spokesmen said, "No man can do what you do except God be with him."

Saul knew of his death on the cross of Calvary. Saul had heard reports of his resurrection for he said to one great king, "This was not done in a corner. I am persuaded you know about it." He said, "I knew about it. I knew about it."

But there was just no way, no way under God's heaven that Jesus of Nazareth was going to be bowed to by Saul, worshipped by Saul and received by Saul as his Lord and Savior. No way.

Saul was a Jew. He didn't need anyone to reveal God to him. The Jews are all God's children. Does that sound familiar? We don't need a revelation. We don't need a prophet. Are not all men the children of God? That is what Saul thought. We are all sons of Abraham. Abraham is our father. What meaneth this man to say, "Ye don't know God?"

Saul says, "We do know God."

Do we not have our temples and our synagogues? Do we not have our chapels and our cathedrals? Do we not have our churches and our meetings? Do we not have our houses of God? We know God. We are all children of God. What meaneth this man Jesus Christ to say, "Ye are of your father the devil?"

No wonder they got angry. "You don't know God," he said. "You don't know God."

This generation knows God. Everybody knows God. That is what the signs all say. "Smile, God loves you. God is the Father of all men. We are all sons of God. We are all children of God."

"Don't you know about the fatherhood of God, preacher and the brotherhood of man? Everybody is a child of God."

That's what Saul said.

"Why," he said, "I don't need anybody to reveal God to me. I know God. I don't need anybody to bring me back into a relationship with God. I never left God. I don't need anybody to make me a son of God. I am already a son of God."

And then Saul says, "I am a moral man. I am not only a son of God, I am not only a child of God, the father of us all, but I am a moral man. I don't need mercy. Oh, I may need a little help, but I don't need mercy. I may need a little push here and there and something added here and there, but I don't need mercy. I only need to be recognized for what I am, a sincere religious moral man."

Saul would have prayed like that Pharisee in the temple. "God, I thank thee I was born in a Christian home. I thank thee, God, that I have never done what other men have done. I have never said what other men have said. I thank thee, Lord, that I am better than others. I am not an adulterer. I am not an extortioners. I am not unjust. I fast. I tithe. I pray. I give alms to the poor. I go to church. I read my Bible. I don't need mercy. I don't need mercy."

That was his quarrel. "I don't need anyone to make me a son of God. I am already a son of God. I don't need mercy. I need to be recognized, that's all."

And then he was a devoutly religious man, devoted to the traditions handed down to him by the fathers.

You know, my friends, what I fear as much as anything in the world? I fear being bound with out investigation and without revelation to what I have been taught in the past because I know that there is a way that seems right to man and the way is destruction. I know that our thoughts are not God's thoughts. I know what seems logical to us. I know what seems wise to us. I know what seems right to us. I know what seems orthodox to us is not of God. And this...I tremble about this.

You know, that woman, when Christ stood at Jacob's well, and he said, "If you ask me I will give you living water."

She said, listen to her, "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well?"

Saul held on to his tradition. Another one said to him one time, "Why, you are not 50 years old. Have you seen Abraham?"

We have got our customs and our mode of worship and our form of worship and our creeds and our doctrines that have been handed down to us and I am afraid on many occasions have been swallowed without investigation, without searching the Scriptures, without determining: Is this really what God says? We take what we believe, we take what we have been taught, we take what we want to believe and we start searching the Scriptures to prove it. Isn't that right? That is right. We take our doctrines. We take our customs. We take our traditions, whether it is Baptist or Methodism or Presbyterianism or Campbellism or Catholicism or whatever the ism, we take our systematic theology and we take our creed handed down to us by our sainted old grandparents and parents and we try to prove them by God's Word.

And that is what Saul did. He accepted everything that was handed down to him. He was the devoutly religious man, devoted to the traditions of his fathers and the customs of his religion and he wasn't about to change for Jesus Christ or anybody else, no, sir.

He was a righteous man. He needed no mediator. He needed no righteousness fulfilled by another, especially one of free unmerited grace. Grace is for the guilty and he wasn't guilty. Mercy is for the miserable and he wasn't miserable. The most difficult man in this world, the most difficult woman in this world, the most gospel hardened person that ever lived is a person in religion. Now that is so. And we see that right here in the life of this man Saul of Tarsus.

There are advantages to being born to Christian parents and taken to church all your life. There are some advantages. Yes, sir. Paul said, "Timothy, from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures that are able to make thee wise unto salvation." You are not saved already. God has to do a work of grace for you. And too often we get wrapped up in our sprinkling and confirmations and catechisms and teachings and in this rut of religion and we grow up accepting the traditions and we are never born again, we are never regenerated, we are never brought to a living encounter with the Son of God. And when we get wrapped up in this religious background and heritage, it is a false refuge.

You are saved just like the drunkard or you are not saved at all. You are saved just like the harlot or you are not saved at all. You are saved just like the lowest thief that ever lived or you are not saved at all. You come to Christ as empty handed as any sinner than ever came to Christ or you don't come at all and that is what kept Saul away. He could not come that way. He was a righteous man. He was a religious man. He was a devout man. He was a clean man. And he hated Jesus Christ.

Oh how much like present day religion is this example, Saul of Tarsus. And, my friends, there are just two things God can and will do where you are concerned if any of you are here tonight. And that is leave you in your false refuge, leave you there, leave you in your false refuge of religion, leave you to die in your blindness, leave you to die in your tradition, leave you to die in your religious orthodoxy and meet you at the judgment.

And here you say, "Lord, I preached. I did many wonderful works. I built churches. I cast out demons. I did all these things."

"I never knew you. I never knew you. I never knew you."

God almighty can leave you to establish your own righteousness and then when you come to the judgment expose it as filthy rags to you for the first time.

I will tell you this. If your righteousness does not appear unto you as filthy rags here, it will there. And if it does here it won't there. God can leave you in your pride and leave you in your blindness and lead you to defend your religion and your denomination, defend it, defend it to the death, and then judge you and send you away from him forever.

Or, do what he did for Saul of Tarsus. Well, what did he do for him? Well, he broke him. He humbled him. He brought him down. He brought him down. And this is what God is going to do for everyone of his own, every one of them. He is going to bring them to the path of conviction. He is going to bring them through the path of repentance. He is going to bring them down the path of humility. He is going to bring them down the path of subjection and submission. He is going to bring every one of them that way no matter where he finds them, no matter where he finds them.

Old Saul began this journey riding in splendor. Where did he finish it? In the dust. But it is the best thing that could have happened. He began this journey, oh, he left Jerusalem going to Damascus, the important, recognized, outstanding, well known, famous Saul of Tarsus leading his army in a battle against Jesus Christ and these sovereign graces. He started that way and he wound up in the dust. He wound up on the ground. He started the journey calling Jesus Christ an imposter. He wound up calling him Lord.

That's right. That has got to take place.

And someone says, "I have always believed in Jesus."

No, sir. No, sir, that is too long. You might have believed in a god of your imagination, but you haven't always believed in him who is Lord. He has to be revealed. He has to be revealed. If you have never been lost, you have never been found. That is so. I am not asking you to pinpoint a day or an hour or a moment or a place or an event or a feeling or an experience. I am asking you this. Have you ever been lost? If you have never been lost, you have never been found. Have you ever been stripped? Saul had to be stripped. God almighty's children have got to be stripped. They have got to have the fig leaf apron ripped off before they will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They have got to see themselves as they are before they will see him in his glory.

That woman that was down at his feet bathing his feet with tears and drying them with the hair of her head and that religious... Do you see the difference? There she was off the street. Everybody knew her. The men in there knew her.

And there she was bathing his feet and he turned to her and he said, "Woman, your sins are forgiven."

And this Pharisee, Simon, looked at him and said under his breath, probably to somebody else, he said, "Now, if that man were really a prophet, he would know that woman is a sinner and he wouldn't let her touch him."

And Christ knew what he thought. He said, "Simon, let me ask you something."

"Say on, master."

He said, "Simon, if a man...if two men were in debt to the same man and one of them owed him an enormous sum, half a million gold pieces and another owed him 20. Say he

forgave both of them, just canceled both debts. Simon, which one of them is going to love him the most, huh?”

“Well,” Simon said, “The one to whom he forgave the most.”

“Simon, you have spoken the truth. Even the natural man has got that much sense. And, Simon, I say this to you. I came in your house and you didn’t even give me any water to wash my feet. And this woman has bathed my feet with tears. And, Simon, I came in your house and you didn’t give me a kiss of greeting. And this woman kissed my feet. And, Simon, when I came in your house you ignored me completely. You didn’t give me any ointment for my head and this woman has anointed my feet with precious ointment. Simon, I say to you, her sins which are many are all forgiven.”

He didn’t finish the statement, but you can finish it. “And, Simon, you sit up there in your religion and in your piety and in your self righteousness and in your smug traditions of religion and perish and go to hell. The publicans and the harlots enter heaven before you. You are going to find them in heaven and yourself shut out because you have never been broken.”

Yes, sir. God will only...he will do one of two things. He has to. Christ Jesus in glory has to be the theme of our song. All the crowns have to be laid at his feet. He will not share his glory. Every voice has got to say, “Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sin.” They have got to. But before they ever sing that song there, they have got to learn it down here. This is where you learn it. And God almighty... Every one of us are religious by nature, every one of us. And if God almighty leaves you in the tradition you were raised in and the custom you were brought up in and the false refuge in which you hid yourself and the cover is too short and the bed is too narrow, he can leave you there or he can operate on you. And if he operates on you, he has got to cut your foundations out from under you. He has got to expose you. He has got to humble you. If you won’t be exposed and be humbled to yourself. That is who he deals with, yourself.

Saul started out the journey riding in splendor and wound up on the ground, wallowing in the dust. Saul started out calling Jesus Christ an imposter. He wound up calling him Lord. He started out seeing all things and he wound up seeing nothing.

Now there is something else God does for the people he saves. That’s right. You say, “I will take all these things I have learned from my youth up.”

You ain’t learned nothing until you meet Christ. You have got to start all over. That’s right. You have got to start all over. You don’t know anything.

“Preacher, you mean to tell me if I meet Christ, if I come to a real vital, living relationship with him that I can’t use what I have learned?”

That is exactly what I am saying because you have learned wrong. Saul of Tarsus was blinded. He started out seeing everything and wound up seeing nothing. And God

almighty, before he let him preach, he sent him off into Arabia for three and a half years to start all over.

You see, the Bible is not a book that a natural man can memorize and rationalize and learn. It has to be revealed. And everything in this book has to be learned in its relationship to Christ. A person who does not know Christ does not know the Scriptures. I don't care how much he can quote. I don't care how much doctrine he knows. I don't care how orthodox he is, if he doesn't know Christ, he doesn't know the Word of God. That is so. Christ is the Word of God.

He told those Pharisees, "You err. You don't know the Scriptures because you don't know the power of God."

He took his disciples and he took the Scriptures and showed them the things concerning him. "Moses wrote of me. So how can you understand Moses if you don't know me?"

Do you see that?

Isaiah is the gospel of the Old Testament. How can you understand Isaiah if you don't know Christ?

So this is what God will do for you. And I will tell you it is the best thing that will ever happen to you to lose all your religious knowledge and all your religious tradition and all your religious custom and fall down at the feet of Christ and say, "I am blind. I am in darkness. I am a child. I am ignorant. Lord, start me out right. Start me out at the cross and I will go from there."

You don't arrive at Christ through doctrine. You started wrong. You are going to teach your children. You are wasting your time. You have got to start at the cross. Teach them Christ. That's right. You arrive at doctrine through Christ. You start at the cross and go from there. You don't start out here and go to the cross.

Preach Christ to them.

Paul, Saul of Tarsus began the journey a leader and, you know, I was looking at this verse the other day. Somebody was in the study talking to me and I read this Scripture. And Saul, verse eight of Acts nine, arose from the earth...oh what a humbling experience. Right in the full view of all those men, here he is down there on the ground blind. The great leader, the great opponent, the great Pharisee, the righteous man on his expedition, you know, to do away with this name of Jesus Christ and carry on the religion that he had been taught by his fathers. And God almighty was pleased in his grace to strike him down. And here he is down in the dust. And he got up and he dusted himself off and wiped off his eyes and opened them and he couldn't see.

And this great man who started the journey as a leader said, "And they led him by the hand."

Don't you know the humility there? Don't you...can't you just see the...can't you see the humility? Here this man... these fellows wasn't anything to him. They were just his instruments of wrath. These soldiers that were with him, these paid hirelings, these people that were beneath his dignity to associate with or have anything to do with. These people that had not climbed his ladder of knowledge and his ladder of accomplishment and his ladder of righteousness. They took him by the hand. And that is what God will do. He sure will.

He will take an instrument that you hold in utter contempt and he will lead you by that instrument. He sure will.

Our Lord said in Matthew 18, turn over here a minute, Mathew chapter 18 and verse one. Our Lord took at the same time the disciples asked the Lord Jesus saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And the master called a little child and the Scripture says he set them right in the middle, set that little child right in the middle of them. And he said, "I am going to tell you something you doctors of divinity. Let me tell you something you masters of divinity. Let me tell you something, you orthodox theologians. I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." That is something, isn't it?

Yes, sir. If a man won't be humbled, he will be judged. If a man won't be broken, he will be damned. If a man won't be brought down low...Old Naaman, Naaman had the leprosy, you know, and he came to the prophet of God and he said, "I have come for you to heal me."

And the prophet of God looked out there, "There is that general. There he is with his gold braids, you know, and his fine uniform and all these hirelings behind him and standing there with his medals clinking and clanging on his chest and his sword by his side." And the prophet of God said to his servant, he said, "Go out there and tell him...go out there and tell him to go down to the Jordan River and dip seven times."

And, boy, Naaman got angry. He stomped his feet. He went off in a rage, the Scripture said, a rage. "Who does he think he is? Who does he think he is? Why," he said, "The rivers in Damascus, they are far better than the rivers down here, this muddy Jordan. Who does he think he is?"

But I tell you this. Before he was cleansed he went down. The way up is down. The way up is not up. The way up in this world is up. But the way up in God's world is down. That's right. God will break you. God will break you. God savest such as be of a broken heart. God is nigh unto them of a broken heart. God saveth them that be of a contrite spirit. God resisteth the proud. God giveth grace to the humble.

Before God almighty will save a man, religious or otherwise, or a woman, he will break him. That way he gets the glory.

Now, this is the key note. This is the vital area. This is the missing note in present day preaching. Now, I don't know everything, but I know this. I know this is the missing note. People are being saved today who have never been lost. I am not saying...as I said a moment ago, I am not saying you have got to pinpoint a day or an hour. I am afraid of that, too. I am afraid of extreme. I am afraid of people who...they can take you back to the place and the day and the hour...what scares me is they put too much emphasis on that place and not enough on Christ. They put too much emphasis on that experience and not on him who saved them.

Now, some might...Saul could take you to the place, but not many of us have that type of experience. But I am saying this. If you have never been lost, if you have never been a sinner, if you have never been broken, if you have never been without hope, if you have never been without God, if you have never been stripped, you have never been saved.

Christ has never become your hope. Christ has never become your refuge. If you have never seen your false refuge how can you flee to a real refuge? If you have never been a man slayer how can you flee to the city of refuge? If you have never been stripped and the search light of God's law gazing down upon your nakedness, how can you wrap yourself in the covering of Christ?

Men are being...people are being pronounced saved who have never been lost. And preachers wonder, "Why aren't my people...why aren't our people faithful to the services? Why don't our people give? Why don't our people love each other? Why don't our people love Christ? Why don't our people worship Christ? Why don't our people seek Christ?"

They have never been down there where that harlot was. That's right. They have never been there. If they was ever there, if they was ever there, they would love him. If God ever canceled their debt, if they ever saw their debt, if they ever saw themselves mired up, head over heels, bankrupt and God came in mercy and said, "My son, I pardon thee."

Boy, they would love him. You couldn't run them off. You couldn't run them off. If they ever saw... you have never been in a pig pen, have you? The prodigal son was. You have never been broke. You have never had to eat the husks that the swine rejected, have you? The prodigal son, did.

And I tell you. When he came home broke, hungry and homesick and his daddy put his arms around him and said, "You are my son and everything I got is yours." You couldn't run him off that place. He knew what he was and he knew what he deserved. He knew what his father gave him and he lived his life in deep thanksgiving and appreciation.

Yeah, people are accepting Christ as their Savior from hell. Watch this, now. This is so. People today are being saved who have never been lost. People today are accepting Christ as their Savior who never have bowed to him as their Lord.

Now, Saul of Tarsus, one word popped out of his mouth first. “Who art thou, Lord? Who art thou, Lord?” And then, “Lord, what...?”

I know Christ is our Savior. His life and his obedience is our righteousness. His cross is our justification. His resurrection is our assurance. His intercession enables us to be accepted by the Father. I know that. He is our Savior, our only Savior. His blood cleanseth us from all sin. His blood makes atonement. But I am telling you this. If Christ is not your Lord, he is not your Savior. He is Lord of creation. He is lord of providence. He is Lord of salvation. He is Lord of life and death.

“All authority is given to me in heaven and earth. All power over all flesh is mine,” he says.

If you have never bowed to Jesus Christ as your Lord and your sovereign king you never met the Christ of the Bible. That is so. He is Lord.

“It is the Lord,” Eli said, “Let him do what he will.”

“The Lord,” Job said, “Giveth and the Lord taken away.”

The Lord of glory. Bow to him as Lord. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Let me tell you something. This Bible knows nothing of a doormat named Jesus. This Bible knows nothing of a poor, weak, failure, a defeated reformer named Jesus, nothing. It knows something about Jesus the Lord who for a season was humiliated, who for a season was in subjection even to his parents, who for a season was bowed down under temptation and trial, who for a season was in subjection to the law and fully obeyed it. But he did that for his people. And when he died on that cross he said, “It is finished.” And he went back to the father’s right hand where he reigns until his enemies become his footstool.

And I am telling you this. Now, listen to me. I wouldn’t shock you. But this is what God’s Word teaches. The Lord Jesus Christ is not trying to do anything. Now, you think about that a little while. If he is trying to do anything which he can’t do, he is not Lord and he does not have all authority over all flesh. If he can be defeated, if he can be resisted, if he can be frustrated in anything he sets out to do, in anything he wills to accomplish he is not the Lord. He is what this generation says he is. He is God’s messenger boy and he came down here and tried to save people and they wouldn’t let him. He is up there in heaven crying his eyes out because folks won’t let him have his way. He is that little old silly superstar they sing about who didn’t know where he came from or why he came or where he was going or what he did. That is not the Christ of the Bible.

The Christ of the Bible is the one who stands on the bow of the ship and says to the raging, foaming waters, “Lie down.” And it does.

The Christ of the Bible is the one who said to Peter when Peter said, “How are we going to pay our taxes?” He said, “Just go down there and throw your line in the water and pull out a fish and you will find a coin in the fish’s mouth and go pay your taxes.”

The Christ of the Bible is the one who stands outside Lazarus’ tomb, dead for four days, decaying, stinking and says, “Lazarus, come out of there.” And he gets up and walks out. That is the Christ of the Bible.

The Christ of the Bible is the one who even while he was hanging on that cross in submission to men’s hatred and the devil’s attack and God’s wrath said to a thief, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” How can that be? “Because I am Lord of paradise and I will take in whom I will. I got the keys of hell and death.” That is what he said. “I got the keys of hell and death.”

The Jesus of the Bible, the Lord of the Bible is the one who says, “The Son quickeneth whom he will.” That’s him.

And I am telling you this. That is who Saul met on the road to Damascus. He heard about that little peanut Jesus, you know. He didn’t have any use for him. He was an imposter. He was a failure. He died on a cross. He didn’t care what they said about the resurrection. He was going to put him out of business. But he met the Lord. And God put him out of business. He went plumb out of business. He fell on his face and he looked up with sightless eyes and he said, “Lord, what do you want me to do? What do you want?”

He became a slave. That is when he became a slave.

And before God saves you, you will become a slave. That’s right. You will come down off your high horse. God will bring you down. God doesn’t need your help. Is this too hard? It is so. God couldn’t save Saul of Tarsus, but he could save that broken mass of flesh lying in the blind darkness of the dust. He could save him.

God has got to break you. The Lord Jesus is not going to ride that wild ass’s colt until he breaks him. And when he breaks him that colt will walk up to him and say, “Put your yoke on me, Lord. Put your yoke on me.”

That’s right. That’s the reason folks... Preachers can’t demand that or they wouldn’t get folks walking down the aisle and raising their hand and joining the church and being baptized and kissing them goodbye next week.

This is what I want to see. I want to see God do for me and for you what he did for Saul, what no human power can do, what no power of persuasion can do, what no logic can do, what no doctrine can do, what only Christ can do. And that is break a proud heart.

And when you break it, you don’t have to break it again. And I will tell you something else. Men are professing faith in Christ who are not in love with Christ. Now, he said

this. Turn to 1 Corinthians 13. And this is almost unbelievable. If the Lord didn't say it I wouldn't believe it. But this is what it says over here in 1 Corinthians 13.

You say, "I have spoken in tongues. I know I am saved."

Listen to 1 Corinthians 13:1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love I am a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

"I know I am saved. I have got the gift of prophecy. I understand mysteries. I have faith."

Listen to verse two. Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand mysteries and all knowledge and have faith so that I can remove mountains and have not love, nothing.

"But I tell you, I have given thousands of dollars to the Church. I have stripped myself and my family to take care of the poor. I have even taken persecution where I work for what I believe."

Well, read the next verse. Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and give my body to be burned and have not love it profiteth me nothing, nothing.

Love for Christ. It is a whole lot more than speaking in tongues. It is a whole lot more than being able to preach. It is a whole lot more than memorizing doctrine. It is a whole lot more than giving your tithes and offerings. It is a whole lot more than that. It is a living, vital, all consuming, personal union with a person, Jesus Christ.

When he becomes your mother and father and brother and sister and husband and wife and friend, he becomes your life, your ambition, your occupation and everything. He becomes the very beat of your heart, the thought of your mind, the compassion of your soul first. And he said, "If you can't come to that place, you can't be my disciple." That is what he said, Charlie. And that may be hard for this generation. But I am telling you this. God hasn't changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. And he hasn't changed his way of saving sinners yet. And that is why he brought Saul.

And Saul said, "I am a pattern to them to them who shall hereafter believe."

And God almighty put him in the dust. God almighty put him in darkness. God almighty put him in the hands of simple men. And they led him off. But thank God the Lord taught him.

And then, this. This is what troubles me. People are being saved who have never been lost. People are accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior from hell and refusing, refusing to bow to him as the Lord of their lives. People are professing to be saved who do not love Christ. They demonstrate that by their actions they don't love Christ. Their families are first. Their jobs are first. Their homes are first. Their ambitions are first. Their pleasures

are first. Their social life is first. Anything is first. God will squeeze his way in there somehow it will be all right, if you have got time for him.

And then, last of all, people are professing the presence of the Spirit of Christ who do not manifest the fruit of the Spirit of Christ. If any man be in Christ this Bible says he is a new creature. And the fruit of the Spirit...did you ever notice...turn to Galatians chapter five just a moment.

Have you ever noticed when it talks about the fruit of the Spirit it does not say the fruits of the Spirit? Have you ever noticed that in Galatians five, verse 22? Look at it. But the fruit of the Spirit. It doesn't say, "Fruits." It says, "Fruit." It is like the five links in the chain of redemption. Who he foreknew he predestinated. And whom he predestinated he called. Whom he called he justified. Whom he justified he glorified. You can't have one without the other.

And the fruit of the Spirit, not fruits of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and patience and gentleness and goodness and faith and meekness and temperance. This is the...not fruits of the Spirit, this is the fruit of the Spirit.

One of the chief evidences of a saving union with Christ, now listen to me, other than faith, do you know what they are? There are three of them. There are chief evidences of a saving union with Jesus Christ. The first one is this. Now, I mean other than faith, other than a confidence in Christ.

The first is an interest and a concern for divine things, an interest and a concern for...I mean a real interest. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst. They shall be filled. That is what it says. You have not because you ask not. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. These things will be added. Seek and ye shall find. Ask and it shall be given. Knock and it shall be opened, an interest and concern for divine things.

Just ask yourself tonight. What are you interested in? What are you concerned about? What is your primary concern and your primary interest and your primary consideration? What is it? Is it Christ and his kingdom?

I know we have to live in this world. I know we have to support our families. I know we have to pay taxes. I know we have to do these things. We have to cultivate friendships. But what is your chief concern? What is your chief interest? That is an evidence of a saving union with Christ.

I tell you. When a fellow really falls in love with a woman and wants to marry her, she becomes the thought of his heart. He wants to be with her. When he is at work he is thinking of her. When he is out on the golf course he is thinking of her. When he is down at the ball game he is thinking of her. He is always thinking of her. Writes little notes. Calls on the phone, picks up little presents, all these things. He has one object. And that is to win her love. He doesn't resign from life, but she is his chief thought.

And I am saying this. If a person is brought to love Christ, to be vitally united with Christ in a saving union, you don't have to go knock on his door on Monday and ask him why he wasn't in church on Sunday. You don't have to sit down with him and prove to him that he ought to support the kingdom of God and preach sermons on giving. You don't have to.

That is like telling that boy, "You ought to take that girl a box of candy."

"Well, why?"

"You ought to take her one. That is the thing to do."

"Is it the thing to do?"

Not if he loves her. You don't have to tell him. You don't have to beg him to read her letters, huh?

"Here is a letter from your girl."

"Well, if I get the time I will look it over."

He will read it five times before he lays it down the first time.

And that is when a person loves Christ. He loves his Word. See, you know something? You know how I can make your eyes light up? Do you know how I can make your eyes light up? Just talk to you about your children and your eyes just light up.

I don't blame you. You love them, don't you? And you know how to make a child of God's eyes light up. Talk to him about his Lord. Yeah, boy, he don't get tired of that. He doesn't get tired of that.

"Oh, tell me some more. What did you say about him? Tell me some more. How great he is, how good he is, how merciful he is?"

He would walk a mile to hear somebody preach about Christ. I wouldn't walk two feet to hear most sermons I hear today. But I sure would walk a mile to hear a man preach about my Lord.

Another evidence of a saving union is a growth in grace. He who groweth not, knoweth not God.

And I will tell you the third convincing evidence of a saving grace, a saving relationship with Christ is continuing in Christ.

Now I am telling you this. Now, you listen to me. I may not get to preach to you again. Who knows? But I am going to tell you the truth. If somebody offers you a little money and it comes between you and Christ, you love that money more than you love Christ.

I have had people sit here in this church and say they love the gospel and somebody came along with another job offer in another town with a little bit more money and they packed up and left and do you know what I said in my heart? They love that job and they love that money and they love that prestige more than they love the Lord. And they talk about they live in a town where they can't find anybody to preach the gospel. We are still preaching it here. Come on back home. That's right. Come on back home.

Whatever you love most is your god. That's right, whatever it is. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. That is your God. That is your God.

If a man loves Christ he will continue to love him. He will grow in grace.

John said, "If they had been of us they would have stayed around. But it is evident they weren't off us."

Why do say that, John?

"Because they left, they left."

I am not saying you have to stay here. But I am telling you this. You will find where the gospel is preached. I would rather live on \$50 a week than live in a home that you could pick up the cat by the tail and throw it in any direction it would go through a crack and hear the gospel and fellowship with God's people and then dry up on the vine somewhere in a \$100,000 mansion and wind up in hell.

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? You have to hear preaching. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That's how people grow, the milk of the Word, the milk of God's Word.

It ought...the whole thing boils down to this. It is: Who is your Lord? I know everybody is accepting Jesus as Savior. I know they are not...they say...they believe he died on the cross and was buried and rose again. And the yare all fixed up and they are going to heaven when they die. They have made their peace with God, but somebody is your Lord. Somebody ...it may be money, it may be pleasure, it may be self righteousness, it may be your family, it may be your children. I don't know. Somebody is your Lord. Somebody dictates who you are and what you are and what you do. And whoever that is, that is your Lord. Whoever runs your place is your Lord. Whoever is on the throne is your Lord. Whoever comes first is your Lord. That is who your Lord is and whoever your Lord is, is the one you are going to spend eternity with.

If it is Christ you will spend eternity to be with Christ. That is what the Word teaches. And that is the reason our Lord said, "When you go out and preach, you tell people to sit down and count the cost. They may not want this gospel. They may not want it."

And they led him by the hand. Have you ever done that? They led him by the hand.