



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 9:10-19

"Paul, Ananias and Arabia"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of considering the life of this great human witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul. We are so grateful that we're able to read and ponder the things that motivated this man and made him the motivated instrument whereby the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ might be brought to the Gentiles and ultimately to us in the Western World. We know, Lord, that the motivating power and force behind the apostle was the divine power of the Godhead working in him. But we also thank Thee that Thou didst make of him such a faithful and effective witness. And we thank Thee for the constancy of his life, and for the faithfulness of his testimony to the saving ministry of Jesus Christ.

And Lord, we would ask that Thou wouldst be with us through this hour, enable us to truly profit from the teaching that is found in the word of God. May the needs that each of us have be met through the Scriptures. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are looking at the subject of "Paul, Ananias, and Arabia," the next step in the unfolding of the life of the Apostle Paul. And so will you take your New Testaments and turn to Acts chapter 9, verse 10, and let me read a few verses here.

And then we will look at a passage in Galatians chapter 1 also for Scripture reading. Acts chapter 9, verse 10 through verse 19.

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus."

Now, you'll notice that in the Lukan account, after saying, "And when he had received meat, he was strengthened," the next sentence is "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Now, let's turn to Galatians chapter 1, and read verse 15 through verse 17. The apostle is going over, now, in the Epistle to the Galatians, some of the experiences that he had when he was converted. And he is saying that the message that he is proclaiming is a message that he has received by divine revelation. So

after saying that he has profited in the Jews' religion above many of his equals in his own nation, in verse 15 he writes, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen;" or the Gentiles, "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." Now, notice he says that immediately he went into Arabia, but he returned to Damascus.

Now it is not always possible to put together in absolute certainty the texts of the New Testament, because there are many things that are simply not given in the word of God, so we are forced to suppose certain relationships. And it is possible, and it seems evident from reading the history of the early church in the Book of Acts, that Luke, if he knew about the visit to Arabia, did not say a thing about it in Book of the Acts, so naturally we would be interested in answering the question, where should we put that visit that he made into Arabia in the account of the ministry of the Book of Acts. Now, it has been put at different places and in a moment we will talk about it. But as you can see, it's possible that it should be placed right in the midst of that 19th verse, "And when we received meat he was strengthened." And then we read, "Then was Paul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." Or it's possible to put it after that verse before the next one. And he went into Arabia and he came back to Damascus, he said in Galatians, and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues. And in fact, others have put it down between verses 22 and 23. So these two things are events that happened in Paul's life, we're just not absolutely certain of the order of them. But fortunately it doesn't really mean anything so far as the content is concerned.

Last week, when we were looking at the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, we considered his conversion. And tonight we want to move on from there. Acts has been called the book of the activity of the risen Christ. Now, the reason for that is that in the Book of Acts, what we have is the activity of the Lord through his servants, even though

he himself has been resurrected and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. And Luke, the author of the Acts, seems to subscribe to that, because he says in the very first verse of his book, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." So the Gospel of Luke, the work he refers to there is the book in which he gives the things in which Jesus began to do and teach. And the implication born out by the remainder of the Book of the Acts is that these are the things that Jesus continued to do and to teach, continued to do and to teach, of course, because he has been raised from the dead.

Well, the conversion of the Apostle Paul is one of the climaxes of the story set out in the Book of Acts. In fact, it is one of the red letter days in the history of the church. You know, sometimes you get a calendar, and on the calendar you will see various days, and then suddenly there will be a day that will be listed in red like Columbus' birthday, or Easter, or Christmas, or special birthdays. You won't find Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson on those things, but so far as I'm concerned I like to underline those days, and so that's a red letter day, when Stonewall Jackson was born or when Robert E. Lee was, but that's just my Southern outlook on things. But at any rate, this was a red letter day in the church, the conversion of the Apostle Paul. No single event, perhaps, except of course the cross of Jesus Christ, perhaps has been so determinant for the course of Christian history as the conversion of Paul. And we who live in the Western World particularly should be grateful to this, because the Christianity that we have is Christianity that came right from its inception from the hands of the Apostle Paul who was appointed by God as the apostle to the Gentiles. This was his sphere of ministry, the Gentile world. And so when he came over into Europe, and of course we've received our Christianity from Europe largely in the United States, we are indebted to the thing that happened on the Damascus Road when the Apostle Paul, by the intervention of the Lord God was brought face to face with Jesus of Nazareth, now risen and glorified in heaven.

And Paul understands it that way, too, because in his letter to Timothy some years later he says, "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern for them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." So he looks upon himself as a pattern of the mercy of God. And incidentally, when he says that he's the pattern of the mercy of God, he expects that there will be others who will follow that pattern. When we say that something is a pattern, we expect that others will follow in the same way, or may follow in the same way. So the apostle is a pattern of God's longsuffering. And you and I may have an experience very similar to the Apostle Paul when we meet with the risen Christ. We won't meet him on the Damascus Road like he did. That was a point in the development of the historical program of God, but we may have just as surely an encounter with the Lord Jesus as the apostle did, apart from the visible aspects of it. So, have you had that kind of encounter? Do you really know what it is to have relationship with a risen Lord? He's the pattern, and we're to follow in the pattern's steps.

Well, now we follow Paul in his earliest Christian experience, and it's a fascinating study of the marks of a new creature. For example, praise, in fact praying seems to be the mark. "Behold he prayeth." We'll say more about that in a moment. He's filled with the Holy Spirit. That's endued with power for a specific task. That's an important step, too. He is baptized, another important step. All believers are to be baptized in testimony to the fact that they have come to receive the gospel. He has fellowship with other believers. He meets with them. He was with the disciples that were at Damascus, and in the early days they met day after day, even observed the Lord's Supper, it seems, in a daily way. He is a witness. He begins to preach concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and very specifically that he is the Son of God.

I was just showing Mrs. Gray, the church secretary, a letter that I read just when I came in tonight, because it's a letter from someone in Alabama. And since Tom and Emily are from Alabama, and since I breathed my first fresh air in Alabama, I'm an

Alabamian, too. And this is a letter from a lady and she said, "Thank you so much for your tape ministry work. You've aided me for over a year now. And through Dr. Johnson our Father has guided me in thinking my way through many passages of Scripture. In his providence God has moved me from a Bible grounded Calvinist church to a church where all that is preached is witnessing (But I haven't yet heard the message we're supposed to witness to.)" Isn't that interesting? "I haven't yet heard the message that we're supposed to witness to."

Well, the apostle is a definite witness. He is a witness to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He also communes now, we learn that from Galatians. He went out into Arabia, and there evidently he had special commune with the Lord God. We'll say something about that later on. And finally, characteristic of a new creation in Christ is the fact that we must suffer. And so here in Christian 9, verse 23 we read, "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him." And verse 29, " And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him." So when we become a Christian we can expect to have a few difficulties. That's perfectly normal, because as we've said so often the Lord Jesus said, "The servant shall not be above his master."

Before we look at this passage, I'd like to just call to your attention several things that we may have lost in the study of the conversion of Paul that have to do with the significance of the Damascus Road experience. The conversion is important, and it's so important that in the Book of Acts it's described three times. I mentioned that last week. But what did it signify? Of course, there are many things that it signified, and we spoke about some of them last week, but I want to just mention briefly three other things that the conversion of Paul signified.

First of all, it signified that Paul had actually seen the supreme revelation of God, for Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God. In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6 he will later on say that in the face of Jesus Christ one may see the glory of God. The

Damascus Road experience must have had a great deal to do with that. In John 1:18, John the Apostle wrote, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Well, the Damascus Road meant for Paul that Paul beheld the supreme revelation of God that made all of nature's wonders pale. Abraham's sacrifice was a marvelous experience in Genesis 15 when that smoking furnace and the fire came down between the pieces of the sacrifice and Abram was not invited to follow in token of the unconditional covenant. Moses seeing the miracle of the burning bush which was not consumed must have been a marvelous experience for him. And to hear the words of revelation that came, "I am who I am." That was marvelous, too. But no one of those men had any more marvelous experience than the Apostle Paul who met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road. He could say, "I have seen the revelation of God, the glorified Messiah."

Well, would you know the Lord? Would you like to know him? Well, study our Lord. Study our Lord as he is found in the word of God. This lady who wrote became a Bible teacher in that church that she was talking about, and she's been teaching the Epistle to the Romans. And in the course of her teaching, she talks about the following of the tape ministry here at the chapel. And near the end she has something which just warmed my heart. I want to see her. She not only says, "I love you Dr. Johnson," that's not really the point, but this is what she said. She said, "You're right Dr. Johnson, if people would read the Scripture and think," and she has that underlined, "and think, we would all believe the same things." That's really nice, because that really is, I think, true. If we read the Scriptures and if we thought, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we would come to a conviction that the word of God teaches one line of truth. Well, if you want to understand our Lord, read and study as he is found in the word of God.

Now, a second thing that the experience meant for Paul is that he beheld the real nature of the war against the religion of Jesus. In other words, on the Damascus Road he learned the true warfare that is going on, all the time, and had been going on ever since

the Garden of Eden. One can read the Old Testament and notice the warfare between Satan and heaven, and coming on into the New Testament; one can read the same kind of story of the warfare between Satan and his henchmen and heaven. And one can also learn a great deal about those who belong to each one of these armies, those who belong to the armies of the Lord, and those who belong to the armies of Satan. And sometimes we're inclined to think those who belong to the armies of the Lord are those who profess Christianity and those who stand in pulpits and those who say that they are the administrators of the truth of Jehovah or the truth of Jesus Christ. But the apostle learned on the Damascus Road that it's not as simple as that. He learned that he, who was the dispenser of religious things for all of his lifetime to that point, was actually in the wrong army. He actually learned that the army of the Lord is the gathering of the people around the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that those who are not gathered around him and his work are not in his army, but are in the wrong army and are actually attacking the army of the Lord. So he learned the true nature of the war against the truth as it is in Christ.

In chapter 26 he says that he understood before this time that it was his responsibility to war against the faith as it is in Christ. Listen to what he says, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to him." So he was very earnest and very sincere, and very sincerely wrong. He learned a great deal on the Damascus Road about that. He learned that every blow that he struck against the Christians was a blow that lacerated the Messiah that he was supposed to be supporting by his activities. In other words, his religion brought him into collision with God, and that is true so often. Religion, contrary to the word of God brings us into collision with the God of the Scriptures. Again, how important it is to follow the teaching of the word of God.



Now, one third thing, he saw the inadequacy of his own religious life. Jesus said, "Paul why are you kicking against the goads?" So evidently he had had some second thoughts about things up to this point. And he now knew something of the meaning of these goads. And he awoke to the fact that the Lord God had purchased him in his work on the cross and also that he had predestinated him in his life and ministry to be his servant, to suffer for him, and to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. That was an amazing turn around for the apostle.

Now, coming to our passage here in verse 10 through verse 19, two men in two different bedrooms have complimentary visions. The apostle is staying in the house of one Judas, and there is Ananias in his own house. And Paul receives a vision in his bedroom, and Ananias receives a vision in his bedroom, but they compliment one another. So the Lord said to Ananias, "Ananias."

Now the conversation that Ananias had with the Lord is far different from the seven hours of conversation that Oral Roberts claims that he's just had with the Lord Jesus. I don't know whether you know this or not, but Roberts contended a couple of years ago that he had seen a nine hundred foot vision of the Lord and sent out a letter and received six million dollars in response. Well in today's *Christianity Today* that came to me, he's now sending out letters that he had a seven hour talk with the Lord. And this talk is continuing, and in this particular letter that he is sending out he is saying that the Lord has told him that all of those who receive the letter, I didn't receive the letter [Laughter], all that receive the letter are to give two hundred and forty dollars to the tower that he has built in Tulsa, but which has not been fitted out so it cannot be operating. He says also that the Lord has given him assurance of a cure for cancer along a different line from that followed up to this point. But the Lord is very merciful and gracious because if you cannot pay the two hundred and forty dollars immediately, it will be all right to pay twenty dollars a month for the next year.

Now, the kind of talk that the apostle had with the Lord and the kind of talk that Ananias had with the Lord is quite a bit different. You notice the collection plate's not mentioned at all. But Ananias heard in a vision the Lord saying to him, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, I'm here Lord." And the Lord said, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth." And Saul has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. You don't read too much about Ananias. He's a very obscure kind of person, but how useful he was to the Lord God. You know, we don't have to be great to be useful to the Lord. Look back in Christian history. Look at Wesley's conversion. An anonymous person, reading the introduction to Luther's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans and the great Wesleyan evangelist felt his heart strangely warmed. Or to take Augustine, Augustine heard a little child saying, "Take up and read. Take up and read." *Tale lege. Tale lege.* He didn't understand exactly what it meant, but he opened up the Scriptures and turned to chapter 13 of the Epistle to the Romans and read a text there that had tremendous influence on him, and through Augustine influence on Luther and Calvin and others.

Moody was brought to the knowledge of the Lord, so he said, through a Sunday School teacher. Very few people know of the Sunday School teacher's name. We only know because it was in relatively modern times, and so we know his name, but that's all we know about him. And then Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he traces his conversion to the fact that he was in a snow storm one night and went into a little chapel, and there heard a working man preach. He wasn't even ordained, like Paul and the apostles. He wasn't ordained, but it was through that message that he came to the knowledge of the Lord, just a simple service seems so insignificant.

And here is a man named Ananias. So far as we know he was not an apostle. He was not a deacon. He was not an elder. We don't know anything much about him. The Lord's not dependent on human ordination. From Saul to Calvin, Calvin was not ordained

either by the way, to Bunyan, to Moody, H.A. Ironside in more modern times. All of these individuals didn't have empty hands laid on their empty heads, as someone has called ordination. [Laughter] They were just servants of the Lord. But did you notice that the way in which he is to be sure that he has his right man is that the Lord said, "Behold he prayeth."

That, to me, is a very interesting comment. It's almost the hallmark of genuine conversion. The person who prays. It isn't so much what we say, the witnessing that we do, the words that we put together in ordinary conversation. But it's the fact that the apostle now is really praying. In fact, it's almost as if the way it's put here, "Behold he prayeth," it's almost as if there's a suggestion that he never prayed before. But here is a man who was a Jewish man. He prayed regularly. He prayed three times a day, and if he was a Pharisee, usually that lasted about three hours. So here is a man who often prayed nine hours a day, but for the first time he's really praying, because he's now in contact with the true God. He doesn't say, "Behold he singeth songs. Behold he listeneth to taped music. Behold he is observing the mass. Or Behold he is playing the organ. Or Behold he is singing in the choir with three other fellows who are with him on the row." Nothing like that, but "Behold he prayeth." I think that's very meaningful, too. What about the prayer life? Is that really part of our daily life? Is there a time when we get down on our knees by ourselves and have some personal words with the Lord? That's very important. That's like reading the Bible. It's the exercise of the things that we learn from the study of Scripture. The insight that you obtain from the word of God comes from the study of the word, and then usually from the prayer over the word. In fact, there's no better way to pray than to get down on your knees and open up the Bible on your bed or chair or wherever you like to pray, and read and pray as you read, asking God to unfold those things that are found in the word of God to you.

It implies that it's almost remarkable for a man like this to pray. Notice the way it's put. Behold, look he's praying. Not he prays, but look he's praying. It's a miracle of

grace for a proud Pharisee to plead like a penitent publican. Someone might say, well he was always a righteous man. No, no he was not. He was a self-righteous man. There is a whole lot of difference between a self-righteous man and a righteous man. One might say of so many people today, "He's a Christian because he was baptized." Or he's a Christian because his parents were Christian and he was taught by his parents. But he prays. It also suggests that his prayer is answered to. "Behold he prayeth," he's really praying and the Lord's hearing his prayers, too. So I suggest to you, try it, you'll find it very useful and rewarding to pray, and God will accept your prayers when you come to him through Jesus Christ.

Well, let's notice the things that are said to him. So he comes to Ananias, well Ananias has a little difficult first. He said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." How did he know that? Had he found those letters from the high priest to those in Damascus? Christians have a way of finding out things. So evidently he had come to know that. And the Lord answered Ananias and said, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." That's an expression; it means "to carry my name." And it's to bear my name in shame, or whatever it might entail. It's the same word that was used of our Lord carrying his cross. And so it's almost as if the Apostle Paul is an individual in whom you will see visibly the carrying of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, later on he says, "he bears in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus." Maybe that's the anticipation of that.

And he says "Before the Gentiles." In chapter 28 in verse 21 he says, "Before all men." "Before the Gentiles," not everybody without exception, but all kinds of men, Gentiles, kings, and Jews as well, but Gentiles preeminently in the life of the Apostle Paul. This was his life's goal, and right from the beginning he is pointed that way. Now, when he comes in the house he says, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my

name's sake." And Ananias went his way and entered into the house of Judas, evidently they knew each other, and putting his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul." Now, that's an interesting statement.

Somebody in the congregation about two weeks asked, indirectly, me to explain why Ananias baptized the Paul, and why it is said that when he was baptized his sins were forgiven. So I'm going to explain it. But I look out over the audience and see, of course, that they are not here tonight, so all of you will have to be prepared to tell them. So when Merle and Roberta, for they are the ones that asked me, indirectly through another friend who said, "Be sure and explain that when you get there." You explain it to them, and you can look smug too, when you explain it to them.

But over in chapter 22, in verse 16 Paul tells us something else that happened. He says that God has given him this understanding of what he was to do. And verse 16 of chapter 22, we read, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." "Arise, be baptized, and way away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This text is a text that has often been used by those who believe that we cannot have the forgiveness of sins unless we are baptized in water. Now, if this text were translated perfectly in the Authorized Version, that might be the case, but, it's not necessarily the correct translation. In the first place the comma after sins should be eliminated in the Authorized Version. It says, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." If you have an Authorized Version eliminate the comma and add the little word "by." Now, this is perfectly true to the Greek text, because the Greek text here is participial and refers to the means by which the other is accomplished. And so, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins by calling on the name of the Lord." So it is the calling on the name of the Lord that is the means by which the sins are washed away. "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins by calling on the name of the Lord."

Now, over in Romans chapter 10, there is another text in which that same verb "calling on the name of the Lord," is found. And I want to read it, because it bears on the interpretation of Acts 22:16. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," Paul says. Now, he is the one who was given the message, "Arise, get yourself baptized, and get your sins washed away," these are middle voices to be rendered that way, "and get your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord." And later on, the apostle, writing the Epistle to the Romans says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." We're not saved by baptism. Baptism is the testimony to our salvation. We're saved by calling on the name of the Lord, which is simply we are saved by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Incidentally, you'll notice that before he was baptized how did Ananias address him? What did he say? Brother Saul, did you notice that? Brother Saul, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." So the work of salvation had begun in the apostle, "Brother Saul." And he was baptized, and then he met with the disciples.

Now I'd like to ask you to turn with me to Galatians chapter 1, as we conclude our study tonight. We talked about where Galatians chapter 1, verse 15 through verse 17 may be placed. This is Paul's conversion according to the epistles. I thought that one night I would like to give a message on Paul's conversion according to the epistles. But I don't think that's really necessary. This is one of the texts, there are five or six in which he makes reference to what happened on the Damascus Road in his letters. But this is one of the larger comments, and he says, as he was telling the Galatians how he had profited in the Jews' religion above his equals in his own nation. He says, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred

not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

Now, the apostle says in effect that he came to Damascus with the officers from the city of Jerusalem with horses and with servants, so he entered, as he looked and saw Damascus as he was drawing near to Damascus he looked like a prince that was coming with his horses and his servants, and he leaves the city of Damascus after this experience like Jacob with a staff in his hand. But we don't judge by the outward, because the Apostle Paul now carries within him Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Whitefield, and all of the other great servants of the Lord who would be blessed through the ministry of this marvelous man. As someone has said, "He left Jerusalem with Moses and the Psalms in his knapsack. But he returned with Romans, 1 Corinthians and the rest of his epistles in his heart."

Now, when he went into Arabia, we don't know exactly what he did. Some of the church fathers said he went out there flaming with zeal to preach the gospel. Well, it's possible that he did. Others say that he went out in order to be alone. It's a difficult thing, because it may be one or the other. In fact, it's possible that he did both. But we do note that he says in verse 16, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." In other words, for Paul the fundamental source of his thinking was not what other people said. That's strange. That's hard for people to understand. That's particularly hard for young preachers to understand, because they tend to think that the way you come to know God is through four years of high school, four years of college, three years of seminary, advanced studies elsewhere, and then you will come to understand the Lord God. He said, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." God is the source of Paul's theology, not his culture, not his college, not his books. It's God who made him what he was.

And you'll notice, too, that communion precedes the conquest of the Gentiles that would take place through him. It's like Moses who had those three periods in his life.

And how important it was for Moses to get on the backside of the desert for forty years. In my notes here, I have a reference to some Bible teacher who said something about Moses. I'm not sure I can even find it on the spur of the moment. But it's a statement to the effect that God can do certain things with an individual who is willing to let himself be moved by the Lord God. And the first forty years is an illustration of what God cannot do with a man who thinks he doesn't need God. But then the forty years that Moses spent in the desert, Moses learned about God. And then coming back and having forty years of ministry we learn what a man can do when he is submissive to the Lord God.

Now, it says here that he had been given his gospel by revelation and he went into Arabia. And I say, did he got to preach or was it for personal intimate study of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. F.B Myer has a little chapter on this and he says that the apostle, "Graduated backwards from Moses to Abraham." And what he means by that is here is a man who thought that Moses and Moses' writings were the important things in the word of God, but by getting off in the desert and listening to the Lord God as he taught him through the Spirit, he comes to understand that God's dealings with Abraham are more significant than his dealings with Moses. Because it's through Abraham that the principles of grace are most fully unfolded.

In the Abrahamic covenant, in that unconditional covenant, and the fact that he was justified by faith, and the fact that he was given the promises by which the remainder of the Bible is structured. And the Mosaic Law, while it consumes a large part of the Old Testament, was ultimately designed to be simply an illustration of what would transpire by virtue of the Abrahamic covenant, and also to prepare us and others morally for the reception of the gracious promises of the Abrahamic covenant by showing us what sinners we are. So he did graduate from Moses to Abraham, backwards. And when he came back to Damascus we read, "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." And if you read on down in the passage it says that his hearers were amazed and confounded, because the apostle evidently had learned to put things



together in the word of God. He had learned to read the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament.

And so I'd like to challenge you. It's so important that you confer not with flesh and blood, but make it a habit to get off by yourself, and to study the word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Be taught by the Lord God, and then perhaps he will have some usefulness for you like he had for Ananias, that will really count in the light of eternity. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are so thankful to Thee for the life of the Apostle Paul and the things that we can learn from his experiences. And Lord, we would not leave the contemplation of these things without the request that we too may learn what it is to truly pray, to truly feed upon the word of God, and to grow in the knowledge of the word of God. Oh God, give us greater illumination and understanding of the Scripture, and make us, if it should please Thee, useful servants of the great triune God. How grateful we are that Thou didst interrupt our lives one day...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**