

Behold he prayeth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev K.M.Macdonald

[0 : 00] Would you turn with me again to the chapter that was read, Acts chapter 9, and I would like to look for a few moments at those words in verse 11, where God himself says about Paul or Saul, behold he prayeth, behold he prayeth.

In our reading we read of the confession of Saul of Tashas. You know at that time the newborn Christian church was being persecuted by its enemies. They were trying to strangle this newborn church at its very best.

And the most feared and the most vigorous of all the persecutors of this church was this man Saul. And here in this chapter we read of his meeting with Jesus.

In the dust of the Damascus road his whole life was changed. Jesus of Nasa whom he thought was dead, whom he thought was just a disgraced fellow who had been crucified and rightly so at Calvary was now speaking to him from heaven.

Saul had set out from Jerusalem with letters of authority to go to Damascus and to arrest and seek out and imprison all those who followed Jesus of Nasa.

[1 : 27] All those who claimed to be Christians, Saul was given authority to hail them to prison. And he went there as a leader of the persecutors. He went there as a strong man. He went there as a destroyer.

But see the tremendous change that takes place in these few short verses that were read. The tremendous change that takes place in Saul when Jesus meets him. With verse 1 there, Saul yet breathing out threatening some slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. You can see there an aggressive man who was on his way to do the utmost damage to the church of Christ.

And then verse 4, after he had met with Jesus, trembling and astonished said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And in verse 11, behold he prayed. See the change that there is there.

And then Saul had set out from Jerusalem. We read in verse 1 there that he set out from Jerusalem as a Pharisee. That he was a Pharisee persecuting Christians, persecuting believers and persecuting disciples who were disciples of Jesus.

And verse 2, we read men and women bound to Jerusalem. That he was going there to seek men and women. It doesn't matter who they were. It doesn't matter if they were the mother of families or the father of families.

[2 : 50] If they were Christians, they had to be bound and dragged back to face trial in Jerusalem. But in verse 22, we read that he confounds the Jews, proving that Jesus is the very Christ.

You see the change? One moment he's dragging these people who claim that Jesus is king. He's dragging them out of prison. And the next moment he is proving to them that Jesus is the very Christ.

A complete changeover. He set out from Jerusalem a religious fanatic. With eyes burning with passion and hatred against the Christians. But he enters Damascus as a poor blind man being led by the hand by somebody else.

And yet Saul had set out on a fairly short, reasonable journey of 136 miles. But what a tremendous distance he did travel when Jesus took him.

He goes from persecuting to praying. From threatening and slaughter to preaching and proving. From a devour destroyer going in his own strength.

[3 : 57] To a humble man being led blind into Damascus. We think there was experiences like that that made Paul maybe speak later on in his letter to the Corinthians.

Where he says, therefore, if any man be in Christ. He is a new creature. All things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

Paul could say it. Because it happened in his own life. And then we notice in the verse here. That we take our text from. How God has his eye on all things.

That God knows and sees Saul. And he knows the house. He knows the street. He knows exactly what he's doing. The eyes of the Lord are in every place.

Beholding the evil and the good. So it's quite a thought for Christians and for non-Christians. To notice that in the passing. The way that the very house.

[4 : 59] The very street. That Paul was in. That God knew it. Exactly. But it's on this change in Saul's prayer life. That I want to look for a few moments this morning.

And see what we can learn from it. So that we also would be able to pray in such a way. That heaven itself would take notice and say. Behold he prayeth.

Or behold she prayeth. We're not to think that this was the first time that Saul prayed. Not at all. He was a well brought up Pharisee. And he was well educated.

He belonged to the Pharisees. A sect that were much exercised in prayer. It was a commendation for them. If they had very long prayers.

And if they were very good at fasting. So that they were really basing a lot of their religion. On the external and formal duties of religion. And prayer played a very important part.

[6 : 02] Paul himself gave this evidence. My manner of life from my youth. Was after the straightest sect of our religion. I lived a Pharisee. You see he wouldn't accept.

That he wasn't a good Pharisee. As far as Pharisees went. He was the best. He was number one. And he wouldn't accept. That there was anything at all that he missed out. As regards being a Pharisee.

And then later on he testifies before the high priest. I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. In other words. He wasn't kidding. When he said that he had done his utmost.

To be the best Pharisee of them all. So that we can be absolutely sure. That Saul was a man who was often on his knees. Often prayed. And yet.

God says to Ananias. Behold he prayed. As if this was the very first time. Saul had ever prayed. Saul had prayed from his childhood.

[7 : 00] And yet none of his prayers. Seemed to have been mounted in heaven. None of his prayers have gone beyond the ceiling of wherever he was praying. It's a frightening thought isn't it?

That a man may be praying all his life. And yet his prayers are not heard by God. In fact that his prayers are an abomination before the Lord. So let us look at prayer.

And learn what made Saul's praying acceptable before God. Knowing that God is the searcher of hearts. And that he cannot be kitted on.

Saul's prayer. To begin with here. For the Lord to take note of it. Would be sincere and earnest. Gone would be the self-righteous platitudes of the Pharisee.

Remember the prayer of the Pharisee. Where he thanked the Lord that he wasn't like other men. That he was a step above them. He thanked the Lord for the very fact that he was who he was.

[8 : 03] The formality would be gone with power. The time of day was very important to the Pharisees.

But it would be that Saul was praying all the time to the Lord now. The posture was very important to the Pharisee. The way they stood. The holy way they stood. So that everybody would see them. It was of great importance to the Pharisee. But with Saul now it was more important to what's all. Appearance sake had nothing to do with Saul's prayer. Now. Saul was establishing contact with God for the first time in his life.

And nobody else mattered. You see Saul was frightened. Saul was blind. Saul was in a strange place. He had come through a devastating experience for him. And his prayer would be a sincere cry from the heart.

For the first time in his life. His lips and his heart were in agreement. You see when a little child calls for a drink.

[9 : 06] Or calls for food. It expresses what it really feels. So Saul expressed his prayer.

Scripture refers to praying. As a crying. As a knocking. As a wrestling.

As a laboring. And as a striding. Listen to Daniel. O Lord hear. O Lord forgive. O Lord hearken unto me.

Defer not for thine own sake. O my God. O Lord. He'll be pleading that is there. There are no sort of extra words.

He's demanding as well an answer. And then Jesus himself. Jesus the son of God. God himself. Prays and we're told that he offered up prayer and supplication.

[10:04] With strong crying. And tears. That's in Hebrews 5.7. The Bible tells us constantly. That lukewarm prayer.

Is a mockery. To God. It's a mockery of the glorious privilege of prayer. It's like a sacrifice without a fire. It is an abomination before the Lord.

And what the Bible seems to tell us. And I think I'm right saying this. That it's better not to pray at all. Than to pray in a wrong way. But then we see as well.

That Saul persevered in prayer. He came in meekness and humility. And he came with a cry through the heart and sincere. But he persevered in it as well.

Worried that he was blind for three days. And he didn't eat or drink. During those three days. The Saul saved to believe. Saved to assume.

[11:02] That most of those three days. Would be spent in prayer. Because we know later on in his letters to the different churches. That he encourages constant prayer.

Continue prayer he says to the Colossians. Pray without ceasing. He says to the Thessalonians. Now he doesn't mean to say here. That we should be on our knees all day.

And all night. But he does mean. That prayer should be persevered in. Every single day. Speak with God in the morning.

Before we meet with the world. Speak with God in the evening. When you're finished. With the world. When you're done with the world.

You bring all your thoughts to the Lord. And then next morning again. Before you go to meet with the world again. You speak with them again. And you join those times at both ends of the day.

[12:02] With short prayers. Brief calls to heaven. As Nehemiah did. Remember how Nehemiah was in the presence of the king. At the Cerses.

And he presented his request. He told them what was wrong. And the king says. For what dost thou make request? Even in the presence of the king.

Nehemiah offered a prayer. He says before he replied. So I called to the God of heaven. Probably the king never noticed. That there was a slight delay. Between his asking the question.

And the reply coming. But there had been a quick call to heaven. Amen. The thing that Paul and Saul is teaching. And the Bible teaches.

Is that prayer must take an important part. In your daily life. Don't offer God or prayer.

[12:58] The scraps and the leavings of the day. Give it a place of importance. So often family worship is relegated. To the moments that we have to spare.

Either in the morning as we rush off. Or late in the evening. When we are tired out. It is not right. Saul's prayer as well would be reverent and humble. Gone would be the brash boldness of the Pharisee. Remember Paul says himself that he is an heaver of the Hebrews.

Confident in his own works. He was doing what he thought was right. He was persecuting heretics. But he didn't know God. He didn't know Jesus at all.

Because when he met with Jesus he says. Who art thou Lord? And Jesus says. I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Well again we see that with his face in the dust of the Damascus road.

[14:03] Paul had been brought to see who Jesus really was. That he saw that this was the Jesus who was united to his church at Calvary.

And he saw that the persecution of everybody else. Maybe they were pretty sort of unimportant to Saul. That it was persecution against Jesus himself.

Paul was now like the publican. Remember again. Who was standing beside the Pharisee. And the publican prayed. And he didn't even lift his eyes.

Because he felt himself so unworthy. But he beat upon his breast. And he says Lord immeasurable. To mean a sinner. Now that was Saul now. He would see his own insignificance.

As compared to God's glory. And never again. Would he rush into God's presence. With carelessness and pride. Oh my friends.

[15:03] Let us say to ourselves. Whenever we come to the Lord in prayer. You see the very accessibility of the Lord. Makes us treated with.

A sort of formality. As if. As if. As if. As if. As if. As if. Of no importance at all. But let us. Every time we come in prayer. Come. With the knowledge. Saying to ourselves.

I am on holy ground. This is the gate of heaven. My prayers are to be heard. At the throne of grace. Let us come with reverence.

And humility. Saul's prayer as well. Will be full of thankfulness. Because his letters later on are just absolutely sprinkled.

Full of thankfulness. In the letter to the Philippians. He says. By prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known unto God. And in the letter to the Colossians.

[15:59] Continue in prayer. And watch in the same with thanksgiving. Saul you see. Could see. God's mercy. Before his prayer began.

He was filled with a sense of the mercy of God. And you could see that it was God's mercy that spared him. He had been an active enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet he spared him.

And he took time to show him how wrong he was. And when he went wrong. And he took time to use him. And Saul was aware of this. This mercy. Saul himself had shown no mercy after now.

He didn't know what mercy was. He had no mercy for Stephen. He kept the young men's cloaks and coats. And he voted against him. And he told that he was consenting unto his death. He voted for the death penalty for Stephen.

And when that was done. When the death penalty was carried out. He didn't sort of take a rest. He set off to cause further havoc in the church. Going into houses and dragging men and women to prison and death.

[17:03] Paul didn't know the meaning of the word mercy. And yet this gentle voice of love spoke to him from heaven. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And Saul was brought to his knees. By the sheer mercy of a God who loved him. And who sought him out.

Despite all that he had done against him. Do we see the mercy of God in our own lives? Do we go on day to day thinking that everything is coming to us just because we are who we are.

And it happens to be in this country and things are alright. And the government is ever dodgy. But everything else seems to be alright. Do we go on day to day thinking not realizing the mercy that God is bestowing upon us?

It is his mercy that raises the sun every day. It is his mercy that comes every day. You see just because it has been coming so often for thousands of years.

[18:02] Man seems to think that it is a law of nature. That it cannot be broken. God could change his mind tomorrow about it if he was so inclined. The very mercies that fall down upon us dull our appreciation of them.

Do you at any moment realize that it is because of God's mercy that we are not at this very moment suffering the enemies of hell?

Yes, at this very moment. It's of his mercy that we are here this morning. Having an opportunity to worship him.

Having an opportunity to glorify him. By hearing his voice again speaking in love and in mercy. Calling us to himself. Through the greatest act of mercy of all.

The giving of his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely when we come in prayer, our prayer should be full of praise and thanksgiving.

[19:05] Also we know that Saul's prayer would be specific and particular. He wouldn't ramble about a point now because the Pharisees, it was all going ramblings. Saul would concentrate and hone in on his fears and troubles.

And that's the example that is set throughout the whole Bible. Genesis 39. We read about Jacob. When he was frightened of his brother Esau. Frightened of when he was going to meet Esau.

That's exactly what he told God. He told God that he was frightened of his brother Esau. And this is exactly what Saul himself did in later life. When we're told that he had a thorn in the flesh.

He besought the Lord about this thorn in the flesh. He brought the problem absolutely before the Lord. And this displays a faith and confidence in a God before whom nothing is too small or nothing too great.

Let us hide no seekers from him. Let us tell him all our hearts. Don't pick and choose the things you bring before God. He knows them.

[20:10] He wants you to speak to him about them. And then we know that Saul's prayer would also be full of intercession. Saul by this time would remember the persecuted church of Christ.

And he'd also remember the persecutors. His own mates that were helping him before this. He'd remember them. He'd remember the families. Of those that he had dragged away into prison. He'd remember the sons and the daughters and the fathers and the mothers. Who would be bereaved because of his actions. He'd remember Stephen's family. If he had a family we don't know.

So that we do know that Saul would be bowed down. By the damage that he had caused to others. And that he would be praying for those who were left.

Do we remember others who were prayers? There is a tendency in every one of us. To concentrate on our own lives.

[21 : 11] On our little bits of the world. On our souls. The number of Christians who are concerned about their own state of soul.

And you never hear them worrying about the state of souls of somebody else. Our spiritual conflict. That's what we tied up in. Our depression. Our progress. On the state of Christ's church worldwide. The vision of Christians all over the world. The prayer meetings that meet in situations that are desperate. The church takes a back seat to us often.

Because we are so taken up with ourselves. But we must remember that the wheels of the machinery that brings people into the kingdom of Christ. They are by prayers.

[22 : 14] By your prayers and my prayers. By prayers of all the men, women and children. It affects the machinery that brings people into the kingdom of Christ. Remember that. And don't forget other people.

In your prayers. He loves me best. Who loves me in prayer. Well these are just a few thoughts on Saul's prayers.

But in conclusion I want to just speak for a few moments about prayer and the other. I want to say that if you are serious about your soul's salvation. If you really are serious about being saved.

If you are seriously seeking that your eternity will be saved in heaven. Then let me tell you that prayer is the most important thing you do.

Prayer is number one. If you are serious about going to heaven. Yes, reading the Bible. Going to church.

[23 : 13] Going to the Lord's table. All of these are very important. But not as important as prayer. We cannot know God in Christ unless we speak to him.

And the thing is that we must apply in passion for salvation. Other people's prayers are good as we've just said.

But for salvation there must be a personal application. You must ask. You cannot come unless you ask.

So what we're saying is that to be prayerless is to be without God. To be without God is to be without hope. To be without hope when Christ is on the road to hell.

You say you don't know how to pray. You can speak to God. There's no education necessary.

Prayer is the most important part of your whole salvation.

[24 : 23] Prayer is the simplest thing of all. It's the simplest act of religion. You say you've got no place to pray.

When we're in the Bible that Peter prayed on a housetop. Isaac prayed in a field. Jonah prayed in a whale's belly. No excuse.

You've no time to pray. Well if you're too busy to pray then you're too busy. Daniel had the responsibility of a whole kingdom. Yet he prayed, he was told, three times a day.

And he said only the recorded prayer. David was the ruler of a nation. Yet we read in Psalm 55, Evening and morning and at noon will I pray.

He said, yeah I don't really have the inclination to pray. I don't see why I should pray. Well all I can say is, Will you not cry out to the Lord to give you that inclination to pray?

[25 : 27] Will you not cry out for mercy? Do you not need mercy? Have you nothing at all to pray for?

It's amazing to me the number of people who don't come to a prayer. Meeting. As if they say it's for a certain class of passion. As if they say, You know all right, We've got nothing to pray for.

It's a big sinner that should be in there. Not the members. And the prayer that it should be clothed by the people who have not. Not by the people who are already members and who are on their way to heaven.

Yes they should be there as well. But surely the ones on the outside. These are the ones that should be flocking in to the prayer meetings. These are the ones that have so much to bring. To plead with God. Have you made peace? Maybe a pact with death?

[26 : 28] Have you made a pact with hell? Is there something at them that's going to sort of get wrong? Oh, that we're talking about love the Bible tells us. Do you not fear eternal torment?

Do you not fear hell? Is there a flicker of fear saying, What if the preacher is right? What if the Bible is right? Then what happens? What then with the last day?

Do you not have a sort of living worry in your mind about it? What if you have, my friend, It's been put there by the Holy Spirit And he wants you to pray and to speak to find out more about it.

And are you not attracted by heaven? Have you never read the book of Revelation? Where there's no more trouble, No more sorrow, No more sighing, No more tears, Where everything is pure bliss forever and ever.

Are you not attracted to heaven? Is there not just a faint yearning in your heart To have the peace that comes From the sure knowledge That when you die, You'll be carried by angels into heaven?

[27 : 31] Is there not a sort of yearning in your heart for that? Well, if there's not, Pray that that might come. And if there is, Then thank the Lord for his mercy That he has put that yearning in And continue in prayer.

Because, With all the love Which Jesus has put in my heart for you, I plead with you to awaken And to call upon God, Wait for nothing Before you call on God.

Waiting is from the devil. Just as you are. Call upon Jesus. Don't say that you go away Until you've been to church quite a few more times Until things become clearer Because that's from the devil.

But to those who do already pray, Those who think That their prayer life Is pretty good. May I have a warning? Remember that prayer Is where your spiritual life begins, But it's also where your spiritual life Begins to end.

Prayer is where If the decay First sets in. If prayer is neglected, Then your spiritual health suffers.

[28 : 51] It doesn't matter about The number of sermons you hear, The number of books, The number of fellowship meetings you attend. These are all good, But they are no substitute for prayer. They will never, never, never make up For the neglect Of private prayer.

So be on your guard In your private prayer life. For backsliding Begins there. We echo Paul's own desire In his letter to Timothy Where he says, I will therefore That men Pray Ever when.

What wonderful times We'd see In our church here And through Scotland If everyone Prayed earnestly And sincerely So that the angels In heaven itself Would be able to take note And say Behold He prayeth Behold She prayeth And God himself Would look down Upon us here And say Behold They pray We know that Though the answer May be delayed We know that Though Saul Was here In three days In darkness Continuing in prayer Not knowing how long He was going to stay there We know that Even in the midst Of his darkness God was getting Ananias ready To go to see him Saul didn't know When the answer Was going to come But God was already Preparing the answer So we know that

No matter how long We have to wait The answer Will surely come When the time Is right So please remember Prayer Number one Priority It is a Glorious Blessed Privilege And we mustn't Misuse it Amen Let us pray Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen O Lord God We give thee Thanks That thou hast established A link with us Through the Lord Jesus Christ That any time of the day or night We are able to call upon thee And that any time of the day or night Thou dost hear us We praise thee That no matter how poor Our prayers may be To ourselves And to others All the deficiencies in them Are made up By the Lord Jesus Christ So help us

We pray thee To Accept the glorious privilege of prayer To give thee thanks for it And to use it In speaking constantly to thee We ask that those who haven't yet prayed here Will begin doing so now And we give thee thanks That we are able to assure them That they dost not hold grudges Against anybody That when they do come Then their prayers will be heard By thyself As if there was nobody else To be dealt with In the whole wide world But themselves That they are assured Of individual attention From thee So help us to pray Teach us to pray Give our hearts Desires and petitions So that what we ask From what we seek Will be well pleasing To thee So that thou Look down upon us And say Behold

[32 : 28] He prayeth For Jesus' sake We ask it Amen Let us close by singing To the Lord's Prayer In Psalm 55 And we sing verse 6 And then verses 16 and 17 The two lines mark 6 In Psalm 55 The

tune of St. Andrew From verse 6

For that I Like a dove had wings Said I Then would I flee St. Andrew G'dwis Uh space when leave
and can work very■■ and would die but and order to bring to his life and to I hope, I hope, I will be
saved.

I hope, I will be saved.

I hope, I will be saved.

I hope, I will be saved.