

The Awakening Always Moves from the Inside Out

Acts 9:17–19

INTRO.

This morning – we will conclude our journey through Acts chapter nine ... In this series – we have watched the Spirit dismantle egos – awaken identity – and form the inner man for Kingdom life ... When we start the New Year – we will begin a new series which will go even deeper into Kingdom transformation and developing a Kingdom movement ... Through this mini-series – the Lord has shown me so much deeper truth that I am truly looking forward to sharing it in the new year.

But today we return to where we left off ... Ananias has been prepared to now meet Saul ... A man who has been shattered – blinded – and stripped of everything he once trusted ... Saul has been waiting – praying – seeing things in the spirit – that have not yet appeared in the natural ... And Ananias has been formed by the Spirit – to finally step into the assignment placed before him ... Please – don't just brush over what has already happened – as we – as the church – have totally blown this part ... I won't rehash what I said last week – but to be honest – this was a real eye-opener for me.

What happens next – may seem a bit anti-climactic – compared to the engagement Saul had on the road to Damascus ... Remember – the more dramatic the event – doesn't make it more spiritual ... There are some extremely deep truths to be discovered – so let's jump in.

Acts 9:17-19 Amplified Bible

So Ananias left and entered the house, and he laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came [to Damascus], has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit [in order to proclaim Christ to both Jews and Gentiles].” ... 18 Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he

regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized; ... 19 and he took some food and was strengthened. For several days [afterward], Saul remained with the disciples who were at Damascus.

God Confirms in the Natural - What He Shows you in the Spirit

Acts 9:17a - - - So Ananias left and entered the house, and he laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came [to Damascus], has sent me so that you may regain your sight

The first thing we witness is not simply the restoration of Saul’s sight ... It is the confirmation of what God already showed him in the spirit ... Remember in verse twelve the Lord said – “I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming to lay hands on him so he can see again” ... Saul saw this moment before it ever arrived – and now the very scene he saw inwardly – is unfolding right in front of him ... This is more than just the regaining of his sight – this is God validating the vision ... God confirming that what Saul saw in the spirit was real – trustworthy – and from Him.

But here is a warning – wrapped inside of the wonder ... A confirmation is never meant to replace our faith ... A confirmation is God encouraging you – that you did see or hear – was actually from Him ... It is God saying – trust what I reveal to your spirit – even if you haven’t seen it yet – in the natural realm ... Now catch this – you need to understand that a confirmation is for those who are spiritually immature ... Saul was not even close – to being spiritually mature at this point of his journey – yet God was instructing him – as to how the Kingdom realm operates ... I don’t want to be offensive as my intent is to clarify this truth ... Don’t be asking God for a sign nor confirmation – as that is the behavior of an immature believer ... A mature believer has moved past the confirmation stage as he understands this stage is to simply encourage him – that he is truly hearing or seeing in the spirit ... Scripture is clear – the Holy Spirit is our Guide – not “signs or confirmations”

Remember – Saul’s restored sight was not the entire point of the visit ... The point was that God validated what He showed to Saul in a vision – three days earlier ... This was the natural manifestation – which verified his spiritual encounter ... This is how the Kingdom works ... The Kingdom is within you ... In order to understand and see the kingdom – you must get used to seeing things from your inner man – not by outward circumstances or confirmations

Our Awakening Happens in Stages ... and Spirit Baptism Is Part of that Journey

Acts 9:17b - - - “and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Saul did not fully awaken in a single moment ... He awakened in stages ... There was the collision ... Then he surrenders to that event ... He then had a vision from the Lord ... There was a period waiting that included fasting ... Now we just witnessed the confirmation ... And here we see the impartation of the Holy Spirit ... He was awakened by a divine process that unfolded over days – not in seconds – by an altar call with a magic prayer.

I know many people who have sought the Baptism of the Spirit for years ... Some received instantly ... some received through the laying on of hands ... some alone in their bedrooms ... some while praying in their cars ... The method is never the point ... the awakening is the point.

The question is not how you received the Holy Spirit ... The question is whether you have awakened to your need for Him ... Spirit Baptism is not an optional add-on ... It is the engine of transformation – the power that forms our inner man – the breath that awakens our true identity – the fire that dissolves ego and empowers the real you.

So, if you haven’t received the Baptism yet – I declare the Lord will bring a holy collision into your life this week – that will awaken you – to your need for the Fullness of His Spirit ... When this moment happens – surrender your ego – as that is what is holding you back – open your heart – and invite the Spirit to enter in all His Fullness.

Your Awakening will Produce Visible Evidence

Acts 9:18-19 - - - Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight ... Then he got up and was baptized. ... 19 Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength ... Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days.

What God does inside of you – will eventually become evident – outside of you ... What am I saying? ... Inner transformation will always manifest itself – in this natural realm ... Look at how this manifested in Saul's life ... We see three physical signs that mirror his inward transformation ... **First – the scales fall off** ... This demonstrated that his natural eye sight was finally aligning with his spiritual sight ... When your spiritual eyes are opened – it always brings a new clarity to your natural eyes.

Second – he is baptized ... Water baptism is the public sign of an inward identity change ... Saul is no longer identifying with his former life ... He is stepping into the kainos reality that has begun to form inside him.

Third – he ate and was strengthened ... This is more than physical nourishment ... This is the first outward sign that the Spirit has awakened his inner man ... When the Spirit fills you – the outer man begins to move with a different strength – a different energy – a different vitality ... What was once weakness becomes strong and steady ... What was empty becomes full ... What was exhausted becomes empowered ... This is the Kingdom rhythm – the inner life-giving strength to your physical being ... Awakening on the inside always produces empowerment on the outside.

A Couple of Observations

Before we close – there are a few things that I see from this text that we simply cannot ignore – especially in light of what we often see in modern-day Christianity ... These observations are not meant to stir debate – they are meant to awaken us to the depth of what salvation truly is.

First – the question often comes up – “So when was Saul actually saved?” ... I contend that what we just witnessed – is his salvation experience ... But unfortunately – we have been conditioned to think of salvation as a formula which includes – a magic prayer – along with a scripted response ... Yet through this entire encounter between Ananias and Saul – Saul never says a word ... Ananias never asks him if he wants to go to heaven ... Never asks him to repeat the magic prayer ... Never asks Saul if he wants to invite Jesus in his heart ... None of the language we have been taught to use or expect to hear is present during their encounter ... Rather than questioning the methodology we inherited – many conclude Saul must have been saved before this moment ... When in reality – it may be our methodology – that needs to be reexamined ... I will leave this here for now – as we will dig deeper into this issue in the new year.

Next – notice that Ananias lays hands on Saul and says – “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” ... Here we confront another modern-day misconception – I have already briefly touched upon ... We have treated Spirit Baptism as a bonus experience – an optional add-on – something separate and disconnected from salvation ... Yet in Saul’s experience – the filling of the Spirit is woven directly into the moment – his eyes open and his identity shifts ... We clearly see – this is not an – add-on experience – that he was to pray for at a later time.

One last observation ... A true salvation experience always produces a visible change for all to witness ... Saul’s inward awakening immediately manifests outwardly – he sees – he is baptized – he eats – he is strengthened – and he begins to connect with the believers in Damascus ... And if we read one verse further – he begins to preach the very Jesus he once persecuted ... Because when the inner man awakens – becomes born-again – the outer life can never remain the same.

TAKEAWAY

I have a deep concern – which I have shared before – and can’t seem to shake ... When I look at Saul’s awakening and then look at much of what we call salvation today – I see a massive difference ... And it brings me to a sobering question ... Have we reshaped salvation into

something far less than what we see in the Scriptures? ... Are people walking around convinced they are saved – believing in a methodology – yet in reality they were never touched – they are still unchanged – and unawakened to spiritual truth?

And what troubles me even more is – when you asked one of these folks to share their salvation experience – they get extremely offended and defensive ... Honestly – I get extremely excited when someone asks me to share my salvation experience ... Scripture encourages us to share our testimony with all who will listen ... But scripture also admonishes us to examine ourselves – to see if we are in the faith ... What does that mean? ... Are your outward works – a reflection of an inward change – if not – fix it.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Passion Translation

“Now your souls must be awakened to the reality of your faith ... Test yourselves to make sure you are truly living in the faith – for do you not realize that Jesus Christ is birthed within you?”

2 Corinthians 5:17 Passion Translation

“Now if anyone is enfolded into Christ – he has become an entirely new creation – all that is related to the old order has vanished – behold – everything is fresh and new.”

1 John 3:14 Mirror Translation

“Our love for the family of faith is the unmistakable evidence that we have passed out of death into life.”

These are not verses of condemnation – they are invitations to awakening ... Invitations to examine whether the inner man has truly been touched by the Spirit of God ... We clearly see from our text – that when the Spirit awakens the inner man – the outer life cannot remain the same.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord – we have discovered so much – deep truth – from this portion of Scripture ... By Your Spirit – remove the scales from our eyes – so that we may see clearly Fill us a fresh and anew with Your Spirit that we may be strengthened like never before ... May we manifest our salvation – in a manner where we may be – pure salt and light to our generation – In Jesus name
- Amen