

# Acts Chapter 9 Con't

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Date: 06 December 2011

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 00 ] And we welcome you to our 71st anniversary of Pearl Harbor. 71 years ago today, a day that will live in infamy.

The Empire of Japan unleashed an attack on the naval forces in Hawaii. Can't believe it's been that long ago, but it has.

71 years. Thank you. And as we come near the end of the year, there are some things that I'd like to run by you.

And this is kind of classic. These are four of the year's best comebacks. If you ever testify in court, you might wish you knew this policeman or had him on your side.

This policeman was being cross-examined by a defense attorney, and the lawyer was trying to undermine the policeman's credibility. Officer, did you see my client fleeing the scene?

[ 1 : 18 ] No, sir. But I subsequently observed a personal description of the offender running several blocks away. Well, officer, who provided this description?

Answer, the officer who responded to the scene. You mean a fellow officer provided the description of the one fleeing, and you trust your fellow officers?

Yes, sir. With my life. With your life. Let me ask you this, then. Off-duty, where you change your clothes in preparation for going on duty, do you have a particular room for that?

Yes, sir, we do. And do you have a locker in the room? Yes, I do. And do you have a lock on your locker? Yes, sir.

Well, now, why is it, officer, if you trust your fellow officers with your life, you find it necessary to lock your locker in a room you share with these same officers?

[ 2 : 30 ] Well, you see, sir, we share the building with the court complex, and sometimes lawyers have been known to walk through that room. Oh!

Oh! In a recent interview, General Norman Schwarzkopf was asked if he thought there was room for forgiveness toward the people who have harbored and abetted the terrorists who perpetrated the 9-11 attacks on America.

His answer was classic Schwarzkopf. The general said, I believe that forgiving them is God's function. Our job is to arrange the meeting.

Dana Perino from Fox News was describing an interview she recently had with a Navy SEAL. After discussing all the countries that he had been sent to, she asked if they had to learn several languages. Oh, no, ma'am. We don't go there to talk. And this is a classic one.

[ 3 : 44 ] This comes from the Iranian air defense site. And it says, You are an unknown aircraft in our Iranian airspace.

Identify yourself. The aircraft said, This is a United States aircraft. I am in Iraqi airspace. The air defense site came back and said, You are an Iranian airspace.

If you do not depart our airspace, we will launch interceptor aircraft. The aircraft said, This is a United States Marine Corps F-A-18 fighter.

Send them up. I'll wait. Air defense site, silent. I love that. Send them up.

I'll wait. Anything you'd like to share with the group before we get underway? Thank you all for being here this morning, too.

[ 4 : 53 ] Yes, Scott? Yeah, Sheila and I were over in St. Louis. Her dad was in the hospital. And really, he's been in for about nine days. Congestive heart failure and pneumonia.

Yes. And he's out of the hospital at home and doing better. Wonderful. How did I know that?

Sheila's dad is what, 90 now? He's 92.

92? Yeah. World War II vet and one of the greatest generation. Just a principal guy. Some of you have read his book, Buck and the Buffalo Nickel.

Great book. Dana? I mentioned Hunter Heck before. Yeah. I was hit by a car on Oxford campus. Anyway, he's in Chicago now, but he's still having a lot of difficulties.

He's paralyzed, but he's had a lot of infections. Pneumonia and intestinal infections. So, he needs our prayers just to stabilize. Boy, it seems like everybody that has a serious illness seems to be fighting infection as a number one problem more often than not.

[ 6 : 05 ] Ann? Carolyn Pencil, Jean's wife, is home from the hospital. She had one of her kidneys removed.

There's a spot they're looking at on one of her organs. They're going to treat that with medicinal treatment.

She got up and walked a little bit around the house the other day. So, it looks like, you know, hopefully she continues in that realm. This is Jean Pencil's wife.

Her name is Carolyn. Carolyn Pencil. Okay. Well, let's pray. Father, you've given us another day and another opportunity to be at your disposal, and we trust that that is the heart attitude of each one gathered here.

We remember this morning Carolyn Pencil, and we're grateful for the relationship that she and Jean have had for these many years. And for that love bond that exists there between husband and wife, and we pray you will use this difficult situation to deepen and strengthen that so that it will be more profound for both of them.

[ 7 : 16 ] Thank you for your meeting with us this morning, and your being wherever a believer is. We do not even need two or three to be gathered together because the Spirit of God indwells each believer, and we are grateful for that truth.

So, as we approach this material that is so important, we pray for an appreciation of the text and understanding of the implications. Thank you for it. Thank you for the remarkable ministry of the man who lived and devoted himself to you 2,000 years ago, and today we're going to see more about him.

Thank you for the ministry and life of the Apostle Paul and for the Christ-centeredness that he exhibited on a regular basis. Except our thanks for the meal we'll be enjoying shortly in Christ's name.

Amen. Well, we're actually going to get into chapter 9, and it's one of the most important chapters in all of the Bible because it has to do with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

And I think it is safe to say that there is no conversion that has ever taken place that has had such dramatic impact or such far-reaching implications as the Apostle Paul.

[ 8 : 36 ] And we've got to keep in mind that this man was a Jew. He prided himself on being a Jew. In Philippians 3, it talks about himself being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, and so on.

And he gives his pedigree there. So, it is important as we continue our study in the book of Acts to remind you that we are dealing with a totally Jewish situation from Acts chapter 1 and verse 1 up through the present time, and it's going to remain that way until we get to Acts chapter 10, and that will be a pivotal passage with the introduction of Cornelius, who is not a Jew, but will be one who is in sympathy, of course, with the Jewish people and their worship of the one true God.

So, as we engage this subject of persecution, be mindful we are talking about persecution that is coming from a Jew upon Jews.

This is Jew on Jew. This time the Jew is not receiving persecution from Gentiles, but from the fellow Jews. And the whole situation, I mean the whole situation, has to do with the identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

There's no question that he was a Jew, and there's no question that the twelve that he chose as his apostles were Jews, and many thousands who embraced Jesus as the Messiah were subjected to John's baptism.

[ 10 : 09 ] They were baptized of John. They believed John's message. John, of course, was a Jew. His mother and father were both Levites of the tribe of Levi. And I cannot tell you, fellas, how important it is to realize the Jewishness of all of this situation.

And one of the things that has led so much of Christendom into error regarding doctrinal issues in these first ten chapters of the book of Acts is we have this tremendous temptation to Christianize everything.

We want to make all of these people Christians. They are not Christians. They don't even know the meaning of the term until you get further along in the book of Acts and will discover that they're called Christians first at Antioch.

These are all Jews. They are all Jews. And if you lose sight of that and try to Christianize the text, you will find yourself with insuperable problems and difficulties that just will not go away.

So, I can assure you that Christianity is not going to be shortchanged by giving adequate recognition to the Jew. Jesus Christ was a Jew.

[ 11 : 27 ] And this just shocks people sometimes when you say, Jesus Christ was not a Christian. He wouldn't qualify to be a Christian. A Christian is somebody who has come to grips with their sin and they have repented of their sin and received Christ as their Savior.

You can't put Jesus Christ in that category. He is above and beyond that. There's nothing Christian about Jesus. He was a Jew. He is a Jew. He'll always be a Jew. He is of the tribe of Judah.

And He's as Jewish as He can be. And it is salvation is through the Jew. John's Gospel, chapter 4, where Christ was talking to the woman at the well.

So, we read in verse 1, Saul, boy, and to think I passed up my coffee this morning because I thought it was causing me problems with my voice, so I didn't have any coffee.

Maybe I should have had the coffee. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.

[ 12 : 34 ] This man was just railing with all kinds of accusations and threats and innuendos and everything else. And the word that is used here in the Greek for breathing out threatenings and slaughter is the same word that is used in the Greek to describe a horse, a steed, in the throes of battle with all of the commotion and activity and everything.

Thank you. Thank you so much. And this horse, this horse's nostrils are flaring as it is energized in the heat of combat and battle with all of the ruckus that's going on and everything.

A horse in the middle of the fray. That's the expression that is used of Saul. This was one angry man. He was fit to be tied.

And you must understand that it is all motivated by what he thought was religious fervor in a good sense.

He says, he's going to say when he writes to Timothy, I believe, that he persecuted the church and wasted it. But he did so ignorantly and in unbelief.

[ 13 : 55 ] He was coming from the position of being a believing Jew in accordance with the law of Moses. But of course, he was not one who believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

And he saw Jesus of Nazareth and the people who had flocked to him and put their faith in him. He saw them as anti-Jewish, anti-Israel.

He saw them as traitors to their own country and to their own religion. What's more, he was convinced that these people who have been hoodwinked, people who have been conned by Jesus of Nazareth, people who had been misled and would not turn away from that, these people need to be stamped out.

We need to eliminate them because they constitute a real threat to the law of Moses and to the integrity of the nation of Israel. So you root out these people.

After all, they are heretics. And the law of Moses prescribes death for these people. So all we're doing is carrying out what God has already dictated.

[ 15 : 14 ] And he is persuaded that he is going to be serving God. And remember, we've quoted this passage before. It's in John's Gospel. I think it's the night before the Lord was betrayed. He had his apostles together the night of the Last Supper.

And he said, And you know, this just goes to show how misguided people can be and how they allow their fervor and their emotions to drive them.

And this is true in just about every aspect of life. It has to do with the way we are constructed as human beings. And we need to understand the power of emotion and fervor over logic and reason. Because when emotion comes up against logic and reason, emotion wins almost every time.

Now, it shouldn't be that way. And it isn't that way with everybody because there are those cool heads. Have you ever heard the little expression, when you're just about to fly off the handle, stop and count to ten before you do anything?

[ 16 : 37 ] Do you know why that is? Because the hope is that in deliberately slowing and counting to ten, you will provide time for reason and logic to catch up with the heat and the passion of

emotion.

Sometimes we may need to count to a hundred. But even ten helps. Because the idea is, when we are fueled by passion and emotion, you rush headlong into the thing.

You charge, often without thinking. And this comes about so many times. We see this all the time in combat. And there are medal of honor winners who were just so angry when they saw their buddies dropped or captured or killed that they'd just throw caution to the wind and they'd just run headlong into the enemy and just make themselves almost like a flying object, probably not even expecting to come out of it alive.

But they are just so enraged and so filled with hatred over the loss of their friends, etc. that they just, they throw caution and logic and everything to the wind and they go charging into a hail of machine gun bullets.

And very often they don't survive. But sometimes they do. And this is all acting out of emotion. Now I'm not about to put these people down for what they do in a case like that.

[ 18 : 19 ] But very often, if you understand the way the human psyche is made, we are given brains that are capable of logic and reasoning.

And we are also given the capacity for emotion and passion and feeling. And both of these are really very, very powerful.

You take people who are in love. Unmarried and in love.

And you've been there. Or you guys will be one day. But you know what it's like to be in a situation with that wonderful person and the raging hormones and the feeling and the masculinity and the appeal of femininity and the softness and all of these things come into play.

And the feeling is indescribable. And what we're talking about here is ordinary human passion that often gets out of control.

[ 19 : 37 ] And both the boy and the girl submit to this thing. And it's almost like they're just taken over. And let the devil take tomorrow.

You know, we've got tonight. And this is the way a lot of people get into great difficulty. I speak as a result of one of those.

As a mother and a father who were not married and came to know that my stepfather was not my real father when I was 16 years old.

And I thought he was all along. And my parents really had that passionate time, you know, that would not deny themselves. And what did they do?

They just allowed their feelings and their emotions to dictate rather than their logic and their reason.

[ 20 : 35 ] And, fellas, you're going to have this to contend with your whole life. There is a tendency to feel like you want to do certain things, but there is logic in your mind that tells you, I know this is wrong and I should not do this.

But I want to. And you are torn. That's just part of the human condition. And God could have made us in such a way that we were all Dr. Spocks.

You know? All we do is just think logically and forget the passion and forget the emotion and everything, but that's not the way it works.

Emotion and passion are wonderful things. But like everything else, when it's out of control, it can be very destructive. Saul of Tarsus was out of control.

I mean, he was guided by hatred, by venom, by vengeance. He wanted to stamp these people out. And bear in mind, if you will, he was convinced that it was all well motivated and that he was doing God a service.

[ 21 : 49 ] Now, how misguided can you be? And this is the very same kind of an attitude, guys, that prompted those men who flew those planes into the Twin Towers, 9-11.

They were fueled by passion, by emotion, by what they thought was a love for Allah, and serving Allah and a hatred for the infidel.

Because the infidel, they see, an infidel is anyone who is not a Muslim, and they see an infidel as a hater of Allah and as a hater of Allah's ways.

So, they are in the same position in Islam that Saul of Tarsus was in this. And you know something? Christians can do the same thing.

People who call themselves Christians. You know about the Crusades? And how the Pope sent thousands of men into battle to regain Jerusalem?

[ 22 : 56 ] And there is passion, and it was misguided, and it was wrong, but certainly wasn't looked upon as wrong. And then there was even the Children's Crusade, and they became convinced that the reason they were losing so many men, so many Christian men in the Crusades, was because these Christian men were going into battle with sins of their own on their souls, and they weren't surviving.

So, what they needed to do was send people into battle who were not encumbered by those personal sins. Well, where are you going to get them?

From the children. Because the children have an innocence that the adults don't have. So, they had a Children's Crusade, and of course, the end result of that was even worse than the other. It was a slaughter.

But this is what passion and emotion that is not guided by logic and the facts can lead to. And it's very often disastrous.

So, Saul is breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. And he went unto the high priest. Now, bear in mind here, we've got an issue of authority.

[ 24 : 08 ] Who is the high priest? Of course, this is the high priest of Israel. He is a Jew. But all this is taking place in Jerusalem. Aren't the Jews under the authority of the Romans?

Yes. But Saul of Tarsus is not going after Romans. He's not going after Gentiles. He's going after Jews. So, he goes to the high priest.

Because the high priest is the ultimate authority in Judaism. Yes. And he is going to him here in Jerusalem at the temple.

And bear in mind that even though Israel is being occupied by Rome and by Roman soldiers, legions of soldiers, Rome gave Israel a great deal of latitude when it came to judging religious issues within Israel.

Rome tended not to interfere. Rome, of course, was polytheistic. They worshipped many gods. And they even deified the emperor. But they were smart enough to know that if you give the Jews all the latitude you can give them with their religion, they will be more easy to govern.

[ 25 : 34 ] Because religion is often fueled by passion. And people who are fanatical are hard to control.

So, don't make them fanatical. Let them have their religion. Let them have their way. So, that's exactly what was taking place. And when it became an issue of religion, Rome would just back out of it.

Remember when they brought Jesus to Pilate? And what was Pilate's response? Pilate said, well, you have your own laws. Judge him according to your laws. Pilate tried to get out of it.

He didn't want anything to do with it. He says, look, you Jews. You've got your own. You've got your law of Moses and all that stuff. Apply that. I don't have anything to do with this. And then they said, no, no.

Our problem is this, you see. He calls himself a king. And that means that he then is in opposition to Caesar.

[ 26 : 35 ] So, now you've got a political situation. Not a religious situation. And Pilate says, oh, man, what?

And he says to Jews, well, are you a king? Do you call yourself a king? And Jesus said, thou sayest. Are you the king of the Jews?

Yes. Oh, man. And Pilate, now he's got a political situation. And finally, he just caves in and gives in to the Jews. He knows they're using him.

But they're using this political thing, you know. If you let him go, if you let him go, you are not a friend of Caesar. That's what they told Pilate. And Pilate was kind of, oh, okay, okay.

And he signed the decree for his execution. But this is the situation. It doesn't involve Rome at all. And Paul would have no jurisdiction and no authority over anyone who was not a Jew.

[ 27 : 41 ] This is strictly a Jewish situation. So he goes to the high priest in the temple. And we are told that he desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues.

What are the synagogues in Damascus? They are Jewish synagogues. It's the only kind of synagogue there is. And if he found any of this way, and this way, of course, refers to the way of Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah.

Whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound, bring them in chains as prisoners back to Jerusalem to stand trial.

And, of course, it would be a mock trial. It would be a farce like the trial they gave to Stephen back in Acts chapter 7. So here he is going up there. This is above and beyond the call of duty. You realize he is in Jerusalem and Damascus is clear out of the country. Damascus is in Syria, a foreign country.

[ 28 : 49 ] And Damascus, by the way, is in the question today and in the news today. And I would remind you that Damascus is the oldest continually inhabited city in the world.

It is over 3,000 years old. It is older than Jerusalem. And many of these Jews who had embraced Jesus as their Messiah in Jerusalem and the environs felt the pressure and the heat of persecution. And they simply lit out, got out of town. And they headed for Damascus, Syria. Large area, population, good place to get lost.

And he is going there to find them. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus. We don't know exactly how near. It could have been just within a mile or so.

And suddenly, there shined round about him a light from heaven. And I think this light was a dazzling, bright light.

[ 29 : 53 ] We're told that it's a brightness above the brightness of the noonday sun. It's a flashing, brilliant light.

What this light is, I think, is the Shekinah. This is the glory of God. When Samuel dedicated the temple in the Old Testament, the first temple that was built, we are told that the glory of God filled the temple.

And it was just a brilliant white presence of the Lord. This is the same, I think it's the same thing that appeared to Moses when Moses went into the mount.

And you'll recall that he came down after being in the mount with God. And his face was still glowing and shining. And he didn't even know it. But the people could see that his face was shining. What is this with Moses?

You know, it looks like his face was. And when our Lord went into the mount of transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, and we're told that he was transfigured before them, and his countenance was as white as that noonday sun, his garments were whiter than any fuller soap could whiten it, and it was just this brilliant, dazzling white light that was just so bright you couldn't look.

[ 31 : 20 ] It's like looking at the sun. You just couldn't bear to look at it. This is the light that appeared to Saul of Tarsus. In fact, it's going to be so bright and so dazzling that he will be temporarily blinded by that light.

And he fell to the earth. We don't know if he was on horseback, but it's very possible. He could have been on foot, but he could have also been on horseback. And we don't know how many people were traveling with him, but we know he was not alone.

And it was not unusual to travel in a caravan then. And they did this for security reasons because there were always robbers on the way trying to waylay people and relieve them of whatever wealth they had.

And the only real security you could have would be to travel in numbers. And there may have been a half dozen. There may have been 20 or 30 people. We don't know.

We aren't given any particular numbers, but we are told that he fell to the ground and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

[ 32 : 32 ] And he said, who art thou, Lord? Goodspeed renders it. Who are you, sir? And I think that's probably a better rendering because when he uses the word Lord, he is not using the word Lord as he is going to refer to Christ after he knows him as his Lord.

He doesn't know who this person is that has provided the light and has asked the question, why are you persecuting me? He doesn't know who this is, but he knows one thing.

Whoever this is, he outranks me. He's somebody above and beyond me. And I think that's why he uses the word Lord here.

He's not using it in the sense of Lord Jesus Christ as we refer to him or as he is going to refer to him later. And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. What does that mean? That's a curious Jewish expression.

[ 33 : 45 ] It's an oriental idiom. And it has to do with knowing a little bit about the good and the animal kicking against the pricks. But let me create a little scene for you if I can and try to illustrate this.

The ox cart was a very common way to travel in this day. There may have even been ox carts in Paul's company here. We don't know. But the ox cart would usually carry maybe just two or three people.

Had big wheels on it, sides on it. And the tongue, of course, that would go out. And the oxen would be one on either side of that tongue.

And they would have the paraphernalia, the gear that would be needed for harnessing the oxen.

And down below, sticking out from the cart, there was a sharp goad.

It was a projectile. It was a projecting element that had a sharp point on the end of it. And when the ox cart driver would use his pole to prod the oxen to get it to move further on, you know, he would gouge the oxen in the back.

[ 35 : 02 ] And many times, the ox would kick back because, you know, it would be a reflex. And he would be angry at being goaded.

And he would kick back. And when he kicked back, he'd kick his haunts right into that prick that was there. And after he did that a couple times, it would teach him the benefit of being obedient and going on with the goad when he was goaded on and not kicking back.

So, obviously, there were things taking place in Saul's life that constituted the prick that he would be constantly kicking back against.

And we're not told this in the text, and maybe I'm reading something into it, but I think the stoning of Stephen was a major event that might have been a real prick for him as he kicked back against that. But I think as he stood there and held the garments of those who stoned Stephen, heard the accusations made and everything, I wonder if he was in on that and knew that the witnesses had been all trumped up and paid off.

[ 36 : 12 ] I wonder if he knew that. I don't know. But he may have. But at any rate, I think that that stoning of Stephen really troubled him. I think it created problems for him.

It didn't convince him that Stephen was wrong, but I suspect that he was very uncomfortable about the whole thing and the way it went down. And there were instances that God seemed to put up in front of Saul of Tarsus that caused him to pause and wonder and question himself.

And I think that's what the meaning is that is given here. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. And he says, verse 6, And he, trembling...

Well, the reason he was trembling is because he was scared witless. He's in shock. Look, this is Jesus of Nazareth?

But he's dead. They said that he was resurrected from the dead, but I never believed that. And none of my friends ever believed that.

[ 37 : 23 ] We believe that his disciples came and stole the body away while the guards were sleeping. But now all of that is contradicted because here is this risen Lord beyond this brilliant light that is telling Saul of Tarsus, He is indeed Jesus of Nazareth.

And he is stunned. Yes? Question. It says down at the bottom of that page that the last clause of verse 5, the first clause of verse 6 were not in the original manuscripts.

If they weren't there, why did they put a manuscript? Well, simply because they're in some of the manuscripts. Yeah, they said it's in that point too, but why did they put it there?

I mean, what was the reason for that? Well, the reason is the translators, the translators, I think if you ask them, they would probably say, well, we would rather err on the side of safety because the texts are questionable.

We cannot say that they do not belong. All we can say is they may not belong. So we're trying to warn people that they may not have authenticity, but we don't feel that we have the authority to just omit them.

[ 38 : 36 ] This is a real problem, and it's one that surfaces time and again as you go through the scriptures because some manuscripts contain texts that others do not.

And it is a very tedious and painstaking job to go over these manuscripts and make the comparisons and everything. And sometimes in the copying process, and by the way, you've got to remember, all these copies were done by hand.

It was very tedious, very laborious, and there were mistakes made. There were provisions that were made to counter mistakes and to minimize mistakes, but the human error element still crept in.

And sometimes these verses are in question. And what they are doing in many of these instances, they're saying, we don't think these texts belong.

At least they do not appear in these manuscripts. But we cannot say with finality and with authority that they definitely should be omitted, so we feel compelled to include them.

[ 39 : 43 ] And I think that's exactly why they did. It's probably erring on the side of safety. So in verse 6, he's trembling and astonished, and he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

I get the impression that right off the bat, he comes to the immediate conclusion that this person is now in charge of this situation.

I'm not. I came up here with authority. I was the person under authority. I was the one who was in charge. I was going to Damascus. I was going to... Now that's all changed.

Now there is a new superior being in control here, and I have to take orders from him. And he said, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said, arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless. They are stunned as he is stunned. Well, we'll continue this next week.

[ 40 : 49 ] Thank you again for being here.