

# Acts 9:19b-31: Has God's Voice Ever Changed Your Life...on the Spot?

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA January 15, 2017

## I. Introduction

If God says that He's our Father and loves us and that His Son's death on our behalf is proof that He will always be there for us, why doesn't His voice have a stronger impact when He speaks to us? Shouldn't it build us up, shouldn't it fill us with strength, energy, and confidence to take on the world regardless of the challenge? Can you see God's voice...do you hear it?

## II. Acts 9:19b-31: Has God's Voice Ever Changed Your Life Dramatically, If Not, Why Not?

**9:19b-22**, Saul goes from Judas' house, an unbeliever, to the house of believers, from a house that would've been used as a command post to kill Christians to the house of Christians! And Saul immediately begins preaching Christ, that He's the Son of God, in order to convert his fellow Jews. What's their response? The Jewish non-Christian community is beside itself. They cannot believe their eyes: the one who severely persecuted Christians in Jerusalem and had come to do the same in Damascus, under the authority of the Sanhedrin no less, is now converting fellow Jews to Christ?! It would be like the leader of ISIS coming to America with this message, "The infidels must be saved! The infidels must be saved!"

As Saul continued pursuing his fellow Israelites, he grew in strength more and more. What gave Saul his strength as he went about doing his work? God's Spirit! (9:17—this is what Jesus promised and delivered: Acts 1:8; 3:6-12; 4:29-33; 6:5, 8; 10:38). The result of Saul being filled with the Holy Spirit is that the unbelieving Jews in Damascus can't stop him. In fact, they're absolutely confounded by what Paul is able to do from their own Scriptures. Saul's expertise and training in the Scriptures as a Pharisee is now put to use by God to bring His people Israel to faith in His Son Jesus Christ! Before, all Saul of Tarsus saw in God's Word was an unbending Law and an unyielding Judge, which drove him to persecute Jesus/Christians. But now he saw a Loving Father who sent His only Son to die for the sin of the world. Thus, as Saul coalesced all the Scriptures pertaining to Messiah, instead of seeing a Suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53) and a Conquering Messiah (Psalm 2) as the ancient Rabbis saw, he now saw only one Messiah who was God's Son (1 Samuel 7:12-16), destined to die, but destined to rise again in triumph and bring salvation to the nations (Psalm 22). Thus, Saul was able to prove to his brethren that *this* Jesus, the one despised and murdered by the Sanhedrin, was indeed the Christ, the Son of God! Jesus was Israel' long awaited Messiah!

Have you ever been so affected by God's voice as Saul was here? He went from Christian-killer to Christ advocate immediately! When was the last time God's voice so affected you?

**9:23-25**, there's an event not mentioned here. While Paul was in Damascus, he left for Arabia (not modern-day Saudi Arabia, but Syria). We know this from Galatians 1:15-18. Between his time in Damascus and Arabia it was a period of 3 years. Towards the end of his stay in Damascus, unbelieving Jews plot to kill him but he discovers their plot. And it wasn't just an unorganized ragtag group of individuals. The plot had official sanction and support: the governor of Damascus was involved. But even though the city gates were under 24-hour watch, Paul was able to escape when the disciples let him down in a basket through the window of a house in the city wall (2 Corinthians 11:32-33, cf. Joshua 2:15).

**9:26-30**, having escaped Damascus, Saul goes to Jerusalem. But the disciples in Jerusalem are so afraid of him that they don't believe he really converted. They're probably thinking that it's a ruse to persecute more Christians. But someone intervenes for Saul: Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement." He fulfills the meaning of his name by bringing Saul to the apostles and testifying on his behalf (the apostles were Peter, the leader of the apostles, and James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, Galatians 1:18-19). Barnabas tells them that Saul is not the Christian-killer he used to be. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared to him and spoke with him. And after the Lord converted him, Saul preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus. This testimony convinced them and then Peter actually invited Saul to stay in his house (Galatians 1:18). And as Saul did in Damascus, so he did in Jerusalem. He preached boldly in the name of the Lord disputing with the Jewish unbelievers, this time the Hellenists, who are fiercely opposed to him as they were to Stephen (6:8-15). And they respond in the same way, they want his death so they try to kill him. But apparently the Lord warned Saul about it and instructed him to leave Jerusalem (22:17-21). When the brethren found out about it, they escorted Saul down to Caesarea where they put him on a boat sailing to Tarsus, Saul's home town. The ones who feared Saul are now giving him a personal escort!

**9:31**, after this incident, it says that the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified; they were being built up, strengthened. Where was the peace and strength coming from? How were they able to stand strong whereas before they feared persecution? It says that instead of fear of persecution, they were walking in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit. What changed? They saw how Jesus took the #1 Christian persecutor and turned him into the #1 Christian advocate. They saw God's voice in these events; they heard His voice loud and clear. Thus, they had a fear, an awe and reverence for the Lord. They realized that nothing could stop Him and so they rested in the comfort of His Holy Spirit. They walked with the Lord as Saul did and they felt and were strengthened by His power. All this drove the church to increase greatly in number.....have you looked at the works of Jesus in your life and thereby heard His voice and thus been strengthened?

**God's voice will change your life, if you seek it?** I've decided to step away from counseling in January and February. Why? Because I heard God's voice regarding my wife and marriage. When I was 5 years old because of what I was told about my mother, I made a vow to never let anyone get close to me again. From that day on, I was true to my word: no one ever got in emotionally, including my wife. Our marriage has not been the blessing it should've been. And God made it crystal clear that it was time to let go of this vow. I began by confessing my fears of not hearing His voice, "Father, I fear I won't hear Your voice and I don't know why. I hear it when I ask about others that I counsel. I love to help people; I love serving You that way. But why can't I hear You concerning me?" He said, "You love Me as a servant, but not as a son. You're My son, not My servant. That vow you made also applied to Me. You can't hear Me because you won't let Me in. You let Me in for 5 minutes or even 5 weeks, remember those 5 weeks in Kiev, Ukraine? But then you shut Me out. You need to let go of that vow and let Me in permanently." I then asked Him my name, something I'd asked before but this time I heard Him. He said, "Shepherd." (Romans 8:32)

### III. Conclusion

*Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*