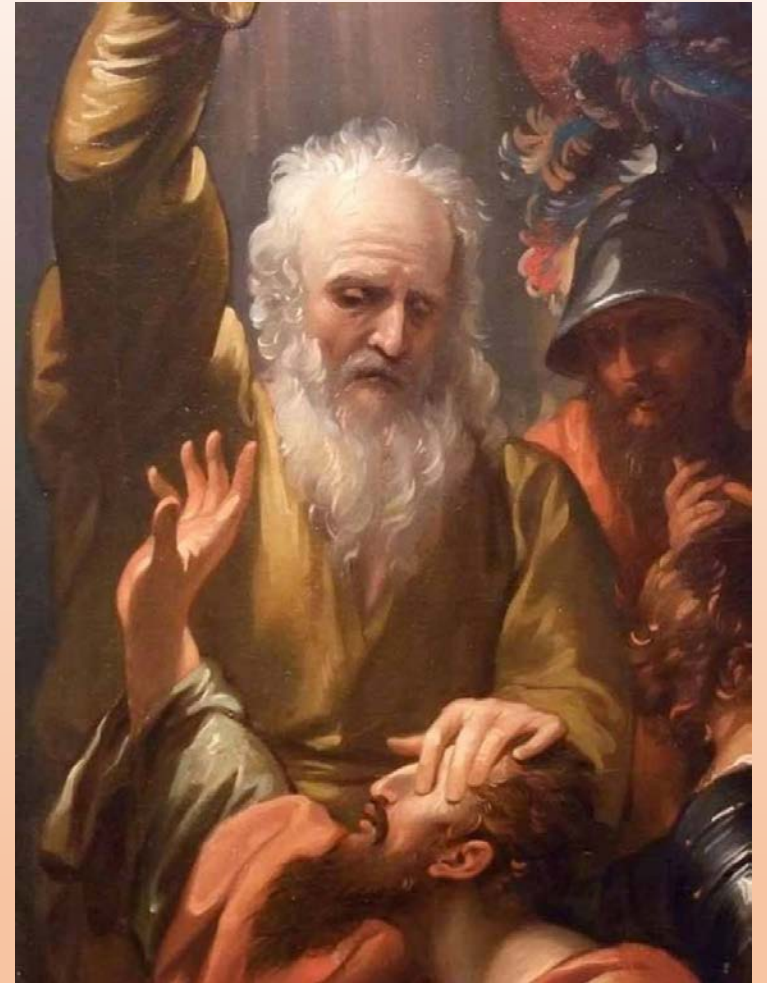


Paul: Background and Call

Acts 9: 15. 16.

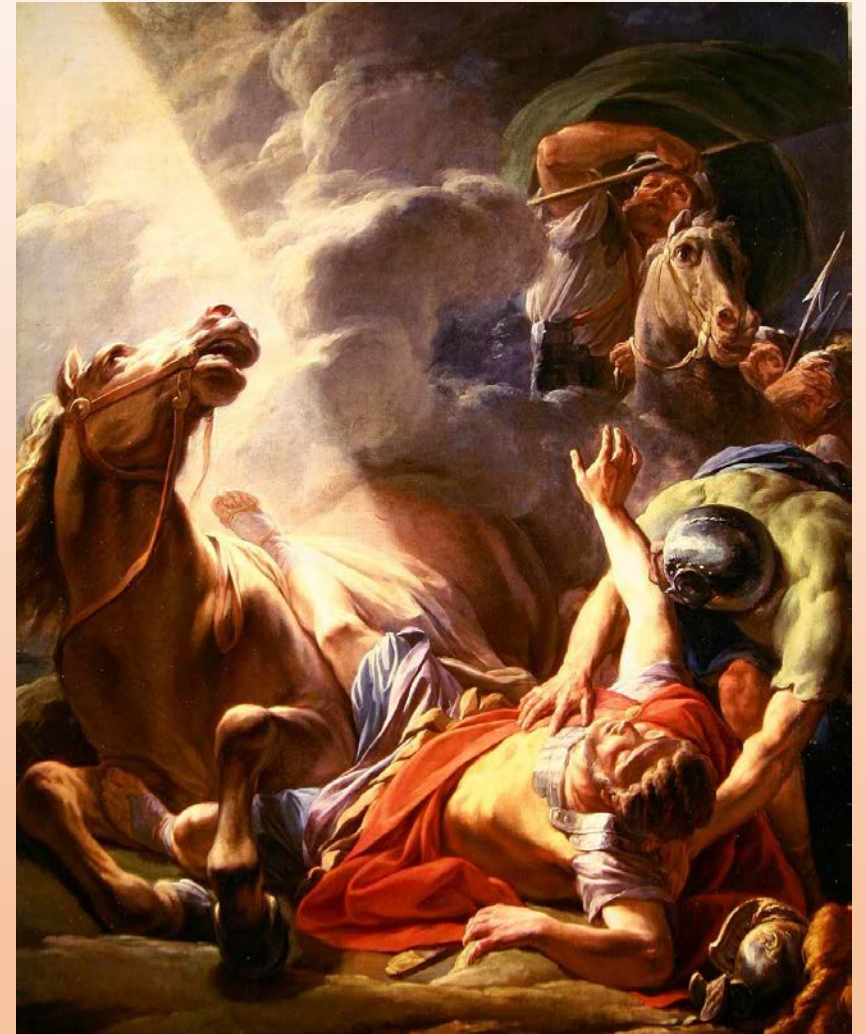


"But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."
Acts 9: 15. 16.



I. Introduction

The apostle Paul, one of the giants of Christian faith, came to know Jesus on the road to Damascus. Since then, he travelled extensively across the Roman Empire, sharing the Good News of salvation in Christ. He impacted the mission of the Church in a tremendous way through his missionary journeys. His commitment is an inspiration for all those who want to reach the world for Jesus.



"Paul had a brilliant mind, a commanding knowledge of philosophy and religion, and could debate with the most educated scholars of his day. At the same time, his clear, understandable explanation of the gospel made his letters to early churches the foundation of Christian theology. Tradition portrays Paul as a physically small man, but he endured enormous physical hardships on his missionary journeys. His perseverance in the face of danger and persecution has inspired countless missionaries since."

Jack Zavada



“Paul was focusing on what was happening in him, not to him. Likewise, we can be sure that when something is happening to us, God is doing something in us, something that will shape us for eternity.”

Chris Hodges, Fresh Air: Trading Stale Spiritual Obligation for a Life-Altering, Energizing, Experience-It-Everyday Relationship with God



"The apostle Paul never seemed to exhaust the topic of grace - what makes us think we can? He just kept coming at it and coming at it from another angle. That's the thing about grace. It's like springtime. You can't put it in a single sentence definition, and you can't exhaust it."

Max Lucado



"The Apostle Paul reminds us that he who would be a Christian must also be a nonconformist. Any Christian who blindly accepts the opinions of the majority and in fear and timidity follows a path of expediency and social approval is a mental and spiritual slave."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

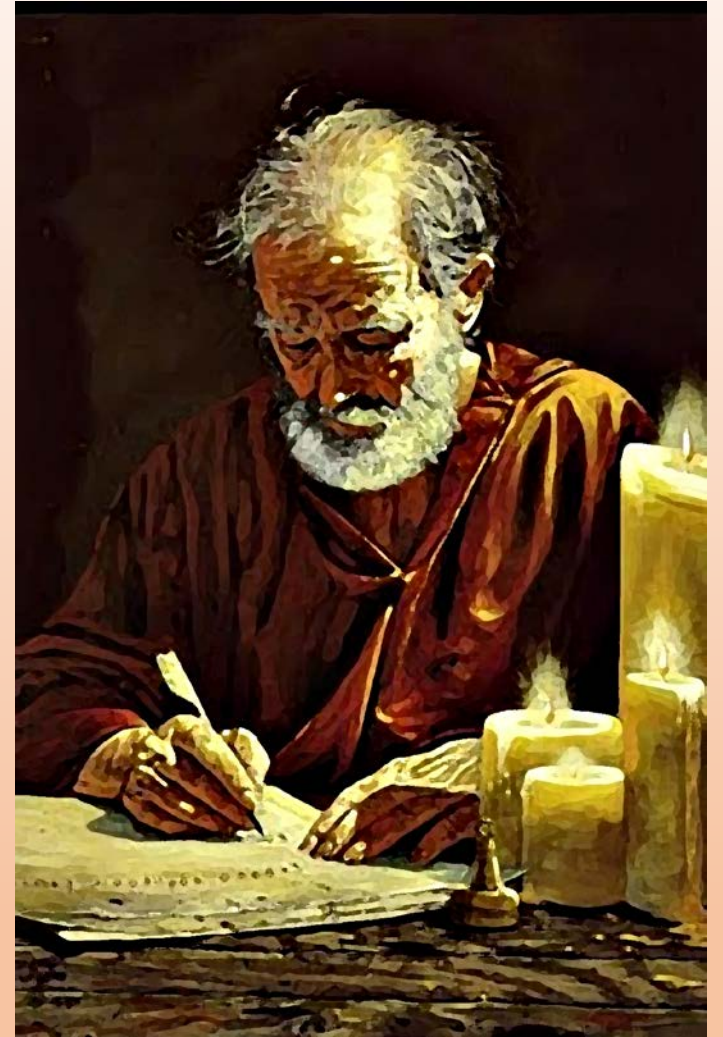


“Realizing the overwhelming magnitude of the work, Paul exclaimed, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Who is able to preach Christ in such a way that His enemies shall have no just cause to despise the messenger or the message that he bears? Paul desired to impress upon believers the solemn responsibility of the gospel ministry. Faithfulness in preaching the word, united with a pure, consistent life, can alone make the efforts of ministers acceptable to God and profitable to souls. Ministers of our day, burdened with a sense of the greatness of the work, may well exclaim with the apostle, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

The conversion of sinners and their sanctification through the truth is the strongest proof a minister can have that God has called him to the ministry. The evidence of his apostleship is written upon the hearts of those converted, and is witnessed to by their renewed lives. Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. A minister is greatly strengthened by these seals of his ministry.

Ellen G. White, Acts of Apostles, p. 327. 328.

"The apostle Paul speaks often of a bodily weakness, and men have been at pains to name it, attributing to him everything from lameness to lung sickness. But I think the clue lies in his experience on the road to Damascus. Tell me, do you see a great light?"
Norah Lofts, Bless This House



"For when he [Apostle Paul] who had been a fierce and savage beast, was changed into a Pastor, Christ gave a remarkable display of his grace, from which all might be led to entertain a firm belief that no sinner, how heinous and aggravated so ever might be his transgressions, had the gate of salvation shut against him."

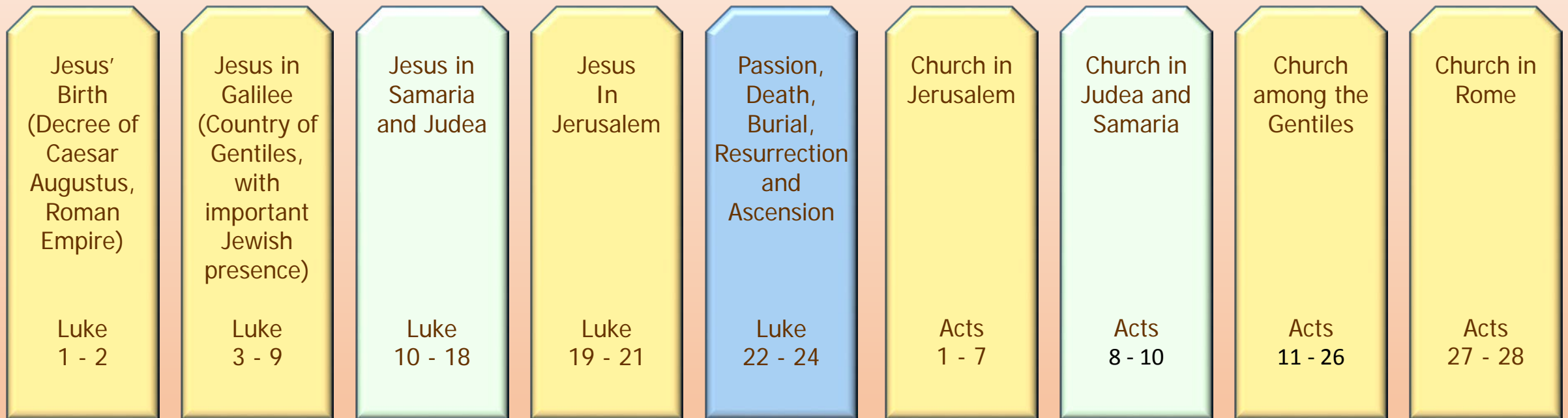
John Calvin, Commentary on 1 Timothy, (I Tim. 1:15)



II. Context



The Narrative of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts

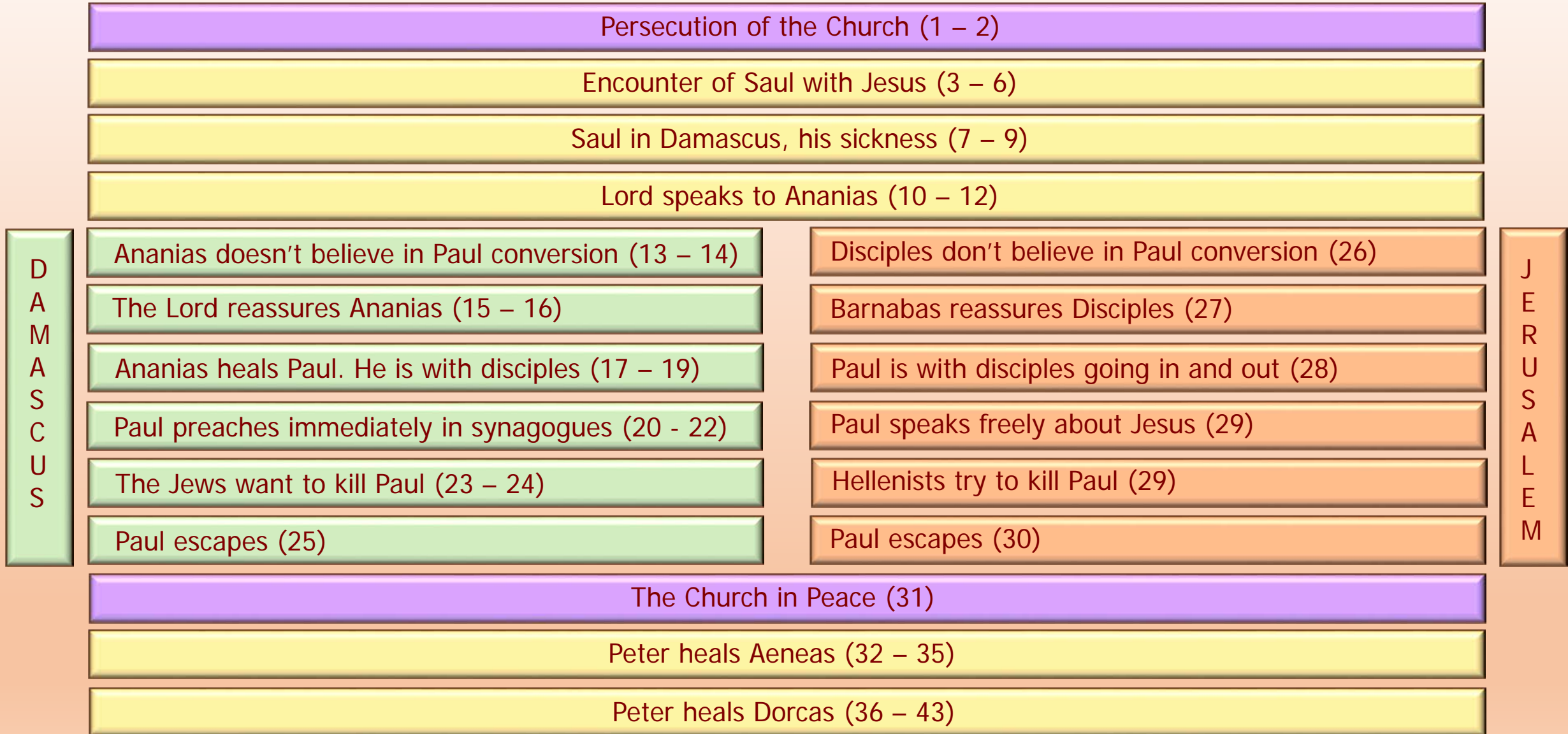


In the chapter 9 of the book of Acts we have four invitations to arise:

1. Jesus to Paul: "Arise and go into the city"
 2. Jesus to Ananias: "Arise and go to the street called Straight".
 3. Peter to Aeneas: "Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed."
 4. Peter to Dorcas: "Tabitha, arise."
- Our text is the encouragement of Jesus after the perplexed attitude of Ananias regarding his mission to Saul.



The Structure of the Book of Acts, chapter 9



The chapter 9 begins with the persecution of the Church. The verse 31 confirms that through God's action a period of peace began for the disciples.



The scene of Damascus is parallel with the text of Paul coming to Jerusalem. These parallel statements underline the reality of human beings having hard time to believe the magnitude of changes that God's power is able to do in human life.



III. God chose Paul to do an incredible ministry in challenging situations, showing to the entire universe what He is able to do with feeble vessels



1. The Choice of God

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine"



"God always gives His best to those
who leave the choice with Him."
Jim Elliot



"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done."

C. S. Lewis



"God will not hold us responsible to understand the mysteries of election, predestination, and the divine sovereignty. The best and safest way to deal with these truths is to raise our eyes to God and in deepest reverence say, "O Lord, Thou knowest." Those things belong to the deep and mysterious Profound of God's omniscience."

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*



2. My Witness

"To bear My name"



“Christians are not preaching in favor of ideal communities of believers, or promoting the perfect understanding of deep doctrinal realities. They are proclaiming God, the holiness of His name, and the beauty of His character. They are not uplifting the achievements of human beings. They are witnessing about God’s transformation of their life. The followers of Jesus are not essentially advocating a perfect life without sin. They are sharing with others the truth that there is no life without Jesus Christ.”
(DS)



"Jesus dwelt among us confidently proclaiming God's name, God's love, God's mercy, God's favor, God's grace, and God's plan. He stood in our midst, in the presence of the congregation singing praises to God, extolling God's infinite worth, and majesty, and glory. He proudly stood shoulder to shoulder with us in our suffering. This is what we need to do."

Jon Morrisette



We are to go forth to proclaim the goodness of God and to make plain His real character before the people. We are to reflect His glory. Have we done this in the past? Have we revealed the character of our Lord by precept and example? Have we not joined in the work of the enemy of souls and misrepresented our heavenly Father? Have we not been passing judgment on our brethren, criticizing their words and actions? Then the love of God has not been enthroned in our souls. Let us make a decided change."

Ellen G. White, Faith and Works, p. 61.



3. Universality of our Ministry

“before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel”



"I believe that the more permanent and continuous type of evangelism, while doing much to build up the local work and prevent apostasy, is playing an even more important part in helping, in a larger sense, to cause the earth to be lighted with the glory of the threefold message."

Philippe Knox



“The simplest, most direct, and most efficient method is for each Christian man and woman to go personally and tell everybody, in face-to-face intercourse, what God has done in Christ for the salvation of the world, and what Christ can do for those who trust Him. There can be no doubt that this is the most powerful evangelistic agency the world has ever known. It is the only sound basis of true and permanent evangelism.” Kilpatrick, Thomas B. (2013). pp. 218-9. New Testament Evangelism. London: Forgotten Books. (Original work published 1911), p. 218.



“God will put someone in your path today
who doesn’t necessarily need you... but
who desperately needs Christ in you.”

Mark Hart



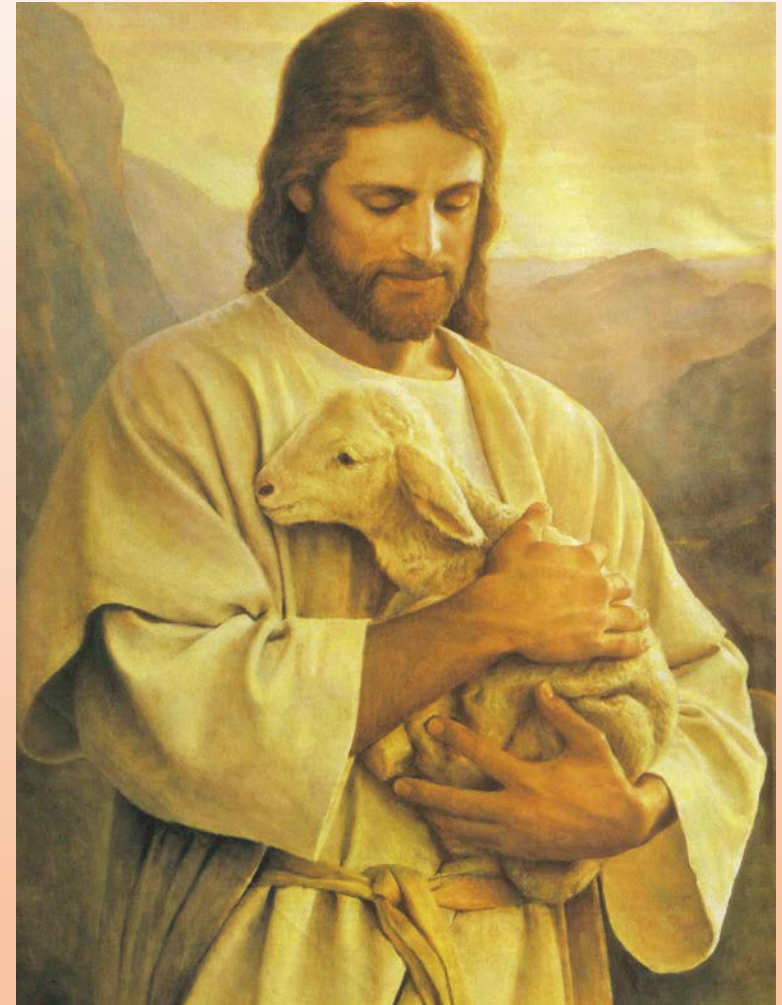
4. The Suffering is part of the Discipleship

"For I will show Him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."



“But pain insists upon being attended to.
God whispers to us in our pleasures,
speaks in our conscience, but shouts in
our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a
deaf world.”

C.S. Lewis



"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."
Elisabeth Kübler-Ross



“Saul planned to imprison Christians, to destroy their structure, and to put them to death. He didn’t know that he was working against God. On the road to Damascus, he met Jesus who showed him the abundance of His grace. At the same time the Lord presented him his incredible ministry among the Gentiles, as well as things he will suffer for God’s sake. In fact, whatever Saul planned to do against Christians, came back to the life of Paul, from another perspective. He went through all these challenges with humility and joy. This is why he shared his experience with the young Timothy: “I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. (2 Timothy 1: 12).”
(DS)

V. Conclusion



"God can change anyone. God gave Paul the strength, wisdom, and endurance to carry out the mission Jesus entrusted Paul with. One of Paul's most famous statements is: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," (Philippians 4:13), reminding us that our power to live the Christian life comes from God, not ourselves."
Jack Zavada



“The church of Jesus Christ is...a community...that is not held together by common interest and that is not held together by common blood and not even by common opinions and convictions but certainly a community held together rather by that voice that we hear at the beginning and at the end of our text, a voice that (Romans 5:5-13) sounds repeatedly and that is never to be falsified nor ever confused with any other tones in the world, "The God of patience and of comfort give you all...! The God of hope fill you all...! The voice that speaks to us in this way, so pleadingly and at the same time so giving so serious and also so friendly, is, in the words of the apostle Paul, the voice of the divine Word himself, from whom the church of Jesus Christ is born and from whom she must always feed and from whom alone she may be fed. God knows who God is; and in his Word he tells us : he is the God who give patience, comfort, and hope. God knows that we need him as we need nothing else and that we have no power over him; and in his Word he tells us this, he pulls our thinking and longing together and brings these to himself, that we must implore; May he grant us! May he fill us!"

Karl Barth

“The greatest of human teachers, Paul accepted the lowliest as well as the highest duties. He recognized the necessity of labor for the hand as well as for the mind, and he wrought at a handicraft for his own support. His trade of tent making he pursued while daily preaching the gospel in the great centers of civilization. “These hands,” he said, at parting with the elders of Ephesus, “have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Acts 20:34.

While he possessed high intellectual endowments, the life of Paul revealed the power of a rarer wisdom. Principles of deepest import, principles concerning which the greatest minds of this time were ignorant, are unfolded in his teachings and exemplified in his life. He had that greatest of all wisdom, which gives quickness of insight and sympathy of heart, which brings man in touch with men, and enables him to arouse their better nature and inspire them to a higher life.

Ellen G. White, Education, p. 66.

Paul: Background and Call

Acts 9: 15. 16.

