



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 9:1-9

Acts

"Surprised by Grace"

TRANSCRIPT

Our text is Acts chapter 9, and we're going to look at verses 1-9, a pivotal chapter and passage in the book of Acts and in the history of the church.

"Now, Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.' The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank." May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless us as we go to the throne of grace. Let's pray.

Father, we do count it a privilege to be here this morning, among the saints, among the men and women, young and old alike who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, who are your people, chosen from the foundation of the world. What a blessing it is, Father, to be numbered

among the saints and to be able to sit together and read your inerrant Word as we have done, and then to consider it in some depth and seek to understand it more thoroughly.

We pray, Father, that as we do, you'd bless us, that you would instruct us. We are responsible to be individuals who take up the text and read it and study it and think about it and think deeply on it, but we know, Lord, that of ourselves and by ourselves we cannot understand the words of this text. We must be taught. We must be taught of you. We must be taught through the Holy Spirit. You have blessed us infinitely with that great blessing of the Spirit of God who lives within the hearts of each believer in Jesus Christ. He is our Guide. He is our Teacher. He is our Protector, and we thank you for Him and pray that His ministry would go unhindered this morning in the hearts of each one here.

So, prepare our hearts for study together, and we count it a great privilege to come as a body, as this church, this assembly to the throne of grace with our petitions and there are many, Father. Many who have various needs, some very, very grave. We pray for them. Bless us too as we consider our text this morning. Bless us as we return this evening to remember our Lord and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and celebrate the new birth of those who will be baptized as well. Bless us now as we sing our final hymn. May it prepare our hearts well for our time of study together, we pray. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Sometimes it happens that people start out for one destination and end up at another. There are well-known examples of that. One of the best is out of our own history, that of the Pilgrims who left South Hampton, England, on the Mayflower and crossed the Atlantic for Virginia. After a long, miserable voyage, they woke up one morning to the sight of land, but it wasn't Virginia. To their surprise, they had arrived far to the north off the coast of New England. It was unplanned, but providential and illustrates the proverb, the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. It is God, not we

ourselves, who controls our destinies. We can make our plans, and we should. That's only wise, but as we chart our final course, as we chart any course in this life, ultimately, it is God's plan that prevails. There is no greater example of that than the one we find in Acts 9 with the conversion of Paul. When he was known as Saul of Tarsus, he set out on mission to destroy the church and ended up becoming its great apostle.

He arrived at a very different port from the one he had set out for. Man proposes, but God disposes. No one was more thankful for that than Paul himself. It was sovereign grace that laid hold of him that noon to produce the most famous conversion in the history of the church. The significance of it is indicated by the fact that Luke gives three accounts of it in the book of Acts. The first is that in chapter 9, and then two other times in chapter 22, and then in chapter 26. The first when Paul gives his defense in chapter 22 before the people of Jerusalem; and then the next in chapter 26 when he gave his defense before King Agrippa.

The repetition is intended to impress us with the importance of this event. It marked a turning point in Christianity. In fact, we can say very confidently I think it marked a turning point in the history of the world, but when it happened, nothing was further from Paul's mind than believing in Jesus Christ. There were no indications that anything of this magnitude would happen until it suddenly happened. Paul was an implacable enemy of the cross. He was utterly dedicated to stamping out the name of Jesus. He had a hand in Stephen's death. The men of the synagogue who stoned him laid their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. That was a decisive moment for Saul. He realized from the breadth of knowledge in Stephen's speech and Stephen's earnestness in delivering it that the followers of Christ were a force to be reckoned with. Saul had been outmatched by Stephen. He and the others were unable to cope with his wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke even though Saul himself was well-trained. He was a

man very much like his opponent. Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew, a Greek-speaking Jew and so was Saul.

He was born in Tarsus in Asia Minor. He grew up in a strictly orthodox home. His father was a Pharisee and a Roman citizen. So Paul inherited citizenship from his father, but it wasn't Rome that influenced Saul. It was Jerusalem. He went there as a young man and was trained as a rabbi by the great rabbi of that day, Rabbi Gamaliel. In fact, he became Gamaliel's star student. "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries," he told the Galatians. "Being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions."

Saul had no doubts about Judaism. He was proud to be a Jew, completely secure in the Jewish traditions and the certainty of acceptance by God through law-keeping, through his own merit as a devout Jew. He learned the law well from Gamaliel, but he didn't pick up any of Gamaliel's tolerance towards the church. He was convinced that it was a cult that deified Jesus and faked His resurrection as the priests had said when the disciples stole the body from the tomb. The cross itself was a great stumbling block that kept him from even considering that Jesus might be Israel's Messiah. The very idea of a crucified Christ was an offense to him. He could not get beyond that idea to even consider the claims of Jesus Christ.

But it clearly wasn't an offense to many Jews. Many had believed that Jesus was the Messiah, that He was raised from the dead. In fact, many of the priests had even believed, and so when he heard Stephen's compelling sermon that day in the synagogue of the freedmen, he became convinced that the survival of Judaism depended on destroying the church. He consented to Stephen's stoning and then began a great persecution. In chapter 8, Luke wrote that Saul was entering houses and dragging off men and women to prison.

Luke loved Paul. He was his close friend. I think it's even fair to say that there was a sense in which Paul was Luke's hero, but he didn't hide the dark side of his former life. He was brutal. He dragged off women as well as men. Saul probably saw himself in the line of

Phinehas who stopped a plague when he killed an immoral Israelite man and Midianite woman, and in the line of Elijah who slew the prophets of Baal, and Mattathias who was the father of the Maccabees. He could well have modeled his zeal against the church after these men who struck down God's enemies. Saul considered the church to be just that. It was the enemy of God. It was the enemy of the truth. He spared no one. He had no pity.

Now, he was not content to restrict his campaign to Jerusalem. He was determined to pursue Christians wherever they fled. In his defense, before King Agrippa in chapter 26, Paul said, "Furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities." That's where Luke picks up his account at the beginning of chapter 9. A number of the Lord's disciples had fled to Damascus and Syria. So Saul went to the high priest and obtained letters from him for the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Everything has to have a name, and the early name for Christianity was the Way, not doubt taken from the Lord's statement in John 14:6, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." The early believers understood that there is only one path to salvation, and that is Jesus Christ. It is not a path of works. It is not a path of human effort and merit. It is the opposite of Judaism and every other religion. Path of life, the way of salvation is that of faith alone in Christ alone. It is faith in His person and His finished work at Calvary.

The American Indians used to call Christianity, the "Jesus Road." There is more implied in that image of the "Way" or the "Road" than just believing in Jesus. It also suggests traveling with Him. It suggests a life-long journey, and that's what the Christian life is. It is a life. It is a course of conduct. All who begin with faith in Christ persevere in that faith in a continuous life of faith. Christianity is the way in that it sets forth the path to God through Jesus Christ, but it is also the way in that it is the path of conduct that pleases God the Father. You cannot separate the two. They are parts of the same path.

Justification and sanctification are distinct from one another. Justification is a legal declaration. It is God's statement that the believer is just in His sight. It takes place once. It is forever. Every believer is declared innocent. Every believer is declared righteous before God in full compliance now and forever with His law. Nothing the believer can do from the moment of faith on can make him or her more acceptable to God. We are accepted by Him completely at that moment of faith. That's justification, and yet we are justified as sinners. We're still sinful men and women, and we are corrupt in our lives and in our thoughts.

So sanctification is that work of the Spirit, which actually changes us. It conforms us to the image of Jesus Christ. It produces a change in our hearts and conduct, and it is progressive. It's not a one-time event. It continues throughout our lives and is never complete until we are finally brought into the Lord's presence or until we see Him when He comes. So the two are different from one another. They are distinct from one another, but they are inseparable from one another. The justified man or woman will be sanctified. The believer in Jesus Christ will be obedient.

Those early Christians were that. They were obedient. They walked with Christ. They were dedicated to Him. Saul had witnessed that in Stephen and in others who willingly laid down their lives for Christ. He knew how firm they were in their faith. He knew that people who were ready to die for what they believed were a threat to what he believed.

So, armed with authority, the authority of the high priest and a contingent of Guards, he set out for Damascus, which is about 150 miles northeast of Jerusalem. It would have taken about a week to travel there from Jerusalem, but as he was nearing the end of his journey, approaching the city around noon when the sun was brightest and the sun was hottest, Luke writes that, "Suddenly, a light from heaven flashed around him." It was a light that outshone the sun and

caused Saul to fall to the ground. Then he heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

That was heaven's interpretation of the persecution and it reveals the close unity Christ has with His people who are His body. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Augustan wrote that it was the head in heaven crying out on behalf of the members that were still on earth. What an encouragement that is. Persecution of the church is persecution of Christ. We are His body in union with Him, and when we are touched, He feels it.

The statement, "I feel your pain," has become something of a political joke in the past number of years, but with Jesus it's true. He knows our condition. He knows that we are but dust, and He takes care of us, and there's great encouragement in that fact. Now, Saul's response in verse 5 is significant. He says, "Who are you, Lord?" He realized immediately that it was a voice out of heaven and in realizing that, he realized that God was speaking to him. "Who are you, Lord?" Yet, in recognizing that, Saul is utterly confused by the question, "Why are you persecuting Me?" He wasn't persecuting God. He was defending God. He was defending His law. Yet he was clearly being rebuked from heaven for his service. So with great confusion he asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

When he heard the answer, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," it must have sounded in his ears like a clap of thunder. Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the carpenter, Jesus the heretic, Jesus the one Saul hated was Lord. Stephen was right. He is the Son of God. He had seen Christ standing at God's right hand, and that meant that Saul had been fighting against Him. Saul had been fighting against the Lord. That moment Saul experienced a complete change. I really can't think of a better word to describe it than a total revolution in his life. His whole theology fell in pieces. His life was turned upside down. He began to understand that despite his zeal and firm belief that he was doing God's work, all of his life, all of his effort in Judaism was rejected by God.

He had excelled his peers in study. He had lived a disciplined life, a rigorous life. He was a model rabbinic student. He was a model rabbi. None of his peers could point to anything in Saul's life as a failure, as a flaw. He burned with zeal for God, and the Lord's answer to all of that was a resounding rebuke. It had absolutely no merit at all with God. In fact, it was all repugnant to heaven and later repugnant to Paul, of no more value to him, of no more value to God than a pile of manure. That's what Paul said to the Philippians, Philippians chapter 3. It was all rubbish, and that puts it mildly.

What an assessment that is of a man's life. Imagine coming to the end of a life, a life that has been spent in idleness, in self-absorption, or a life that has been spent in diligence, in effort, in discipline in an effort to climb the corporate ladder, obtain power in the world of business or the world of politics or whatever; but come to the end of it all and look at it and say, "It's absolutely worthless!" It's empty. It's come to nothing. What a terrible assessment that is of one's life, and that is what Paul realized. Everything that he'd done, everything was rejected of God, rebuked by God. It was empty. It was worthless.

Secondly, and more importantly, he realized at that moment that Jesus is alive. The resurrection is true. The cross did not discredit Him. It is of God. It is God's work. Now, he may have understood that at that very moment as he saw Jesus Christ. Maybe he saw the nail prints in His hands and immediately the servant of Isaiah 53 came to his mind, and he made the connection. I don't know. Maybe it was during those three days of darkness that he spent in Damascus, but he understood that the cross was God's solution to man's sin and Jesus' resurrection confirmed it. It was undeniable. He heard and he saw Christ, not just a bright light. In that light, he saw the person literally of Jesus Christ. He said that in 1 Corinthians 9:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:8. That vision, in fact, became Paul's proof of his apostleship. "Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord?" he asked.



Attempts have been made to explain away the miracle of Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road as an hallucination or a sun stroke or an epileptic fit. If that can be done, then Christianity can largely be discredited because the work and the letters of Paul can be dismissed as grounded in his imagination or in some chemical imbalance, but there's nothing at all to support any of that from the text or from history. It was an objective event witnessed by others. Verse 7 states that, "The men who traveled with him stood speechless hearing the voice, but seeing no one."

In Acts 22:9, Paul says that they saw the light, but didn't understand the voice. So they saw the light, but not Christ in it. They heard the sound of the voice, but they didn't understand the words that were spoken. They witnessed these things without receiving the revelation, but they did witness the evidence of a real event that resulted in a genuine conversion. Everything about Paul's life proves that as well. It was a life of single-minded devotion, single-minded service to Christ. He never wavered in his devotion to the Lord. He was tireless in his efforts to carry the gospel throughout the world. He suffered greatly in that service: beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonments. Men don't sacrifice their lives and their happiness on this earth for a cause that they don't believe in. Men who are deluded by false experiences don't show the soundness of mind that Paul had. His conversion was a miracle of God's grace just as every genuine conversion is. No one was more convinced of that and impressed with that than Paul himself.

When he spoke of his conversion, he spoke of it as a work of God alone. In Galatians 1, in one of the autobiographical sections of the New Testament, Paul recounted how he had been a zealous Jew, a persecutor of the church when in the midst of that, "God who had set me apart from my mother's womb was pleased to reveal His Son in me." God was pleased to do that. God did not have to do that. He was not under obligation to do that. God took the initiative according to His own will, according to His own pleasure; not because Paul was

deserving. He certainly was not deserving. Certainly, not because Paul was seeking. He had never sought Christ. He had only resisted Him.

In the version that Paul gives of his conversion in chapter 26, the Lord at this time said to him, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads," which means that he had been resisting the truth. He'd heard it. He'd heard it clearly from Stephen at his trial. He saw his face, which had about it the appearance of an angel. He heard his speech, which had been given convincingly, and he witnessed his death, which occurred miraculously. No doubt he witnessed a lot of godly responses and testimonies of faith in Christ from those he arrested during the great persecution. All of that stayed with him. It pricked his soul, but he rejected it. He rejected it because it was foolishness to him. It didn't fit his ideas of God, of the kingdom, of life to come. It did not fit his theology, and so he resisted the promptings of God, the words of youth, like a stubborn ox that kicks against the sharp stick of its master.

But Christ would not stop. He pursues His elect relentlessly, and He always wins. We can resist grace, but we can never resist it successfully. Saving grace is efficacious grace. Ultimately it is irresistible grace. It always draws the elect to Christ. His sheep hear His voice, and they follow Him. He will not lose one that the Father has given to Him. These are the words of our Lord. These are the promises that He makes. People resist that. They don't like that. It's not what they want to hear and believe. They want to be the captains of their own ships and masters of their destinies. Those who have experienced the grace of God know how foolish that is because left to themselves, people will always run their lives onto the rocks of eternal ruin, always.

God's grace prevents that. It saves sinners from themselves. God snatches us like brands from the fire. No wonder Paul was so taken with sovereign grace. God had saved him from himself. He had so resisted the truth, he was so determined to go his own way, that he had

to be laid low in the dust near Damascus before he could believe. God alone could do that. Only He could break the pride and the prejudice of Saul, open his eyes to the truth about Jesus Christ to Saul's utter amazement.

C.S. Lewis borrowed a line from Wordsworth to describe his conversion from atheism: "Surprised by joy." Saul was too, surprised by joy, surprised by grace that God would save him, the persecutor of the church, the chief of sinners as he believed himself to be. It never ceased to amaze the apostle Paul and give him the greatest joy. So the man who had set out to destroy the Way, now found himself on it. It was a different place from where he had planned to be, a different road from the one that he had been traveling, but he was there willingly. He had believed that Jesus Christ is Lord. He has confessed Him to be that, and he has done that because this is what grace produces. It doesn't force faith. It creates faith. It makes people willing to believe and Saul was a willing believer, but saving faith is just the beginning of life in the Way. It is an obedient life.

Having called Saul to Himself, Christ now calls him to service. He instructed him to get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do. In his own account of his experience in Acts 26, Christ gave him his commission as the apostle to the gentiles at this time, something that never would have or could have originated in Saul himself. He was a Pharisee. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He looked down upon the gentiles as dogs, but this is the man whom Christ had chosen to carry His gospel to the nations, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and receive forgiveness.

It was God's will. He had spoken and Saul obeyed, picked himself up off the ground, but as soon as he stood, he discovered that he was blind. So those who were with him, took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. What a picture. What a change, the mighty Saul, utterly helpless. A proud Pharisee stripped of his pride, and led by the hand like a child. That's what grace does. That's what is necessary in order to effectively serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The

grace of God kills the old man, the self-centered man, and it makes us new creatures in Christ. It breaks self-will and self-sufficiency, and it makes us to know our complete need and dependence on Christ for all that we are, for all that we have so that we will lean completely upon him and not lean upon ourselves, not lean on our own understanding.

Saul, who got up from the dust was a different man from the Saul who fell into it. Calvin put it well when he said that the wolf was not only changed into a sheep, but into a shepherd of the sheep. For three days, he sat in a house in the dark in Damascus, unable to eat or drink. He had suffered such a crisis of the soul that he had lost all interest in his physical needs. You can just imagine all the thoughts that must have occupied his mind in those three days, the faces of those men and women who, he had brutally arrested and put to death, Stephen's angelic appearance becoming lifeless under a rain of rocks. Tears must have streamed down Paul's face as he thought of that, what a good man I killed.

But there was this overriding realization that in spite of all of that, all of the sin, all of the guilt, all of the blasphemy that had characterized his life, that he had been forgiven, forgiven all of it, forgiven freely; and not only forgiven, but Saul had been made a servant of Christ with a mission to the world, great mission. Saul's thoughts must have been lost in the greatness of grace as he no doubt was, as should all of our thoughts, all of us as we consider the salvation that we have been given by God because that salvation has been given. It is a free gift. From beginning to end, it is all of God. It is all free.

You say, "Well, but I did believe. I thought seriously about these claims of Christ. I pondered it. I read my Bible. I read the New Testament. I came to that place where I said, 'Yes, I believe.' I trusted. I invited Jesus into my heart. I did that." Yes, you did that, but you did that only because of the grace of God, which in the providence of God brought the message of the gospel to you and in the efficacious grace of God opened your heart to respond, to understand,

to believe. It is all of grace, and if Paul's conversion teaches us one thing, it teaches us that very fact. When a man who was not seeking Christ was captured by Christ and brought to faith in Him and made His great servant, that is all of grace.

Paul's conversion is certainly the most famous in the history of the church, but there have been many famous conversions. We've considered many of them in the past. Last week we recalled Augustan's conversion, how God pursued him across two continents until He laid hold of him in that garden in Milan. We've heard about John Wesley's experience at the meeting on Aldersgate Street in London when he was listening to a reading of Luther's preface to the book of Romans and felt his heart strangely warmed.

We've recounted the conversion of John Newton, saved while a British slave trader during a storm at sea, and how he celebrated his conversion in the hymn that he wrote, "Amazing Grace." We've all heard testimonies of individuals who have sunk the depths of depravity, who have come to the end of themselves, and it was then that God reached down and saved them. In fact, maybe some of you in this congregation had that experience. Not all conversions are as sensational as that. Not everyone's heart is strangely warmed. No one has as dramatic an experience as Paul. His conversion is unique, but take away the light, take away the sound and your conversion is exactly the same as that of Saul of Tarsus.

It took just as much grace to save you as to save him. You were no more pursuing God than Saul was. You were no more worthy of salvation than he was. All of us were saved when we were enemies of God, when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Read Romans 5:6 and 8. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. It's clearly stated there. You were dead in your trespasses and sins, but God being rich in mercy made you alive together in Christ. It's the grace of God for every believer in Jesus Christ, and we see it here. We see a model of it here in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Jesus Christ sought Saul, found Saul, quickened him, brought him to Himself, gave him life, gave him life,

gave him understanding, gave him faith. He made Saul what he was: a new creature. He did the same for me, and He did the same for you if you are a believer in Jesus Christ.

So you may look at the 9th chapter of Acts and you may think, well I don't see myself in this text at all, but you're there. That scene of Saul in the dust is you and me. God had to conquer us with the same power, the same amount of grace with which He conquered Saul. Our need was every bit as great as Saul's. His unconditional love, His unconditional care for us was every bit as great as it is seen in this text for Saul of Tarsus.

Now that should cause a response in all of us. That should make each one of us thankful, and it should encourage us because if God could save Saul, the persecutor of the church, then He can do that today. If there is someone you have been witnessing to or praying more; maybe it's a son or a daughter or a spouse or a friend and you have been praying for them for years and you haven't seen a response, don't stop praying. Keep praying. God can save the chief of sinners. No one is so far away that God's grace cannot reach and deliver them, snatch them as a brand from the fire.

Remember Stephen's final prayer. He prayed for his persecutors. He didn't see the results of that prayer, but this is the result of that prayer. This is the answer to his prayer, the salvation of Saul of Tarsus. So it should encourage us to pray, to be diligent in what we are doing as witnesses for Christ. It should also encourage us in a variety of ways because if God can make a man who harmed the church into the greatest missionary of the church, then what can He do for you and for me? He can make us servants as well. If He could do that for such a man, He can do that for us as well.

Do you want that? Do you want to know Christ better and serve Him effectively? Do you want to come to the end of your life and know that it was not rubbish, know that your life counts for all eternity? Then become like Saul: helpless and led by the hand. He spent the rest of his life being led, not being led by men, but led by

God, by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. That is the life that will be well-spent, a life that will leave you with no regrets. It is a life spent walking with Christ in His way, a life in which Saul's question, "Who are you, Lord?" is answered for us as we increasingly get to know Him, we increasingly get a glimpse of His glory and live lives that are obedient. Is that what you desire, to know Christ better and to serve Him faithfully? You will never be satisfied in this life in any other way. That's the life that the believer in Jesus Christ has been called to, so live it. Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow Him. Follow Him daily.

But there may be some here this morning who have not experienced that call. You have not believed in Jesus Christ. This text is for you. You are Saul of Tarsus. You are rebelling against God. You think, well, I'm not Saul of Tarsus. For one, I'm not Jewish. Two, I don't hate Christ. I like His people. Many of my best friends are Christians. If you ignore Jesus Christ, if you have adopted a different Christ from the Christ of the Bible, you are no different than Saul of Tarsus, and you can do one of two things. You can surrender to Christ, bow to Him as your conqueror as Saul did, or you can continue to rebel and rush headlong to destruction. There is no other choice. There is only one way of salvation, one path of life, and that is Jesus Christ, God's Son, crucified for sinners, raised from the dead and exalted to heaven. He is alive today.

So if you're here without Christ, if you have not believed in Him, look to Him, trust in Him. The moment you do, you will receive the full forgiveness of sin and life everlasting and the opportunity to serve the God of the universe. What a privilege that is. May God help you to do that and help all of us to understand the great blessing that we have received from Him. It's all of grace. May we live in that grace. May we follow His leading and be His servants effectively and well. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace, and we come to a text of Scripture like this, and we are reminded of that.

Paul was not a man who was seeking Christ. He was not seeking the light. He was absolutely opposed to it and implacable, enemy of the cross; yet he became a great preacher of the cross, a great apostle of the cross. He preached Christ and Him crucified. What a work of grace you did in his life. What a work of grace you have done in our lives.

Father, may we live lives that are pleasing to you, that are helpful to others. Bless us to that end we pray.