

Saved on the Road to Damascus?

Joe Slater

Do you remember how Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus? (Be careful, now!) Oops! That isn't quite right, is it? Was Saul struck blind on the road? Yes! Did he speak with Jesus? Yes again! Did he come to a new understanding on the road? Another yes! Was he saved on the road? Emphatically, NO!

Many sincere religious people routinely speak of Saul being saved in the Damascus road. I respectfully submit that they are mistaken – tragically so! Having a miraculous experience did not save Saul. Speaking directly with Jesus did not save him. “Faith alone” did not save him. In fact, Saul wasn't even saved by the combination of a miraculous experience, speaking with Jesus, coming to believe Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah, and three days of prayer and fasting.

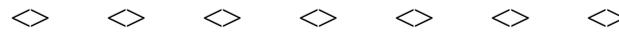
If Saul was saved in the Damascus road, he didn't know it, for he asked what to do (Acts 9:6). The Jews on Pentecost asked what to do (Acts 2:37); so did the jailer in Philippi (Acts 16:30). Were these people already saved? Of course not! Neither was Saul.

If Saul was saved on the Damascus road, Jesus didn't know it, for He told Saul to go into the city, and there he would be told what to do (Acts 22:10). Then the Lord sent Ananias to tell Saul how to wash his sins away (Acts 9:10-18; 22:12-16). Sin is what causes one to be lost; if Saul was saved on the road, then his sins were washed away there, and Ananias' words were meaningless!

But someone objects: “Ananias called Saul a brother in Acts 9:17. Therefore, Saul was already saved!” That may seem reasonable at first, but the logic is flawed. Peter called the unbelieving Jews on Pentecost

“brethren” (Acts 2:29). Stephen addressed the very unbelievers who would momentarily stone him to death as “brethren” (Acts 7:2). Speaking to unbelieving Jews who had just tried to beat him to death, Paul called them “brethren” (Acts 22:1). Surely nobody thinks these were fellow-Christians! They were “brethren” in that they traced their fleshly lineage back to common ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob). Likewise Ananias addressed Saul as “brother” in the sense of his being a fellow-Jew.

Saul was saved when, having believed in Jesus and repented of his sinful past, he arose and was baptized and washed away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). You can be saved the same way. Why are you waiting?



Some New Thing

The philosophers of Athens were interested only in “*telling or hearing some new thing*” (Acts 17:21).

I attempt to stay current by reading scholarly theological journals and listening to presentations at conventions. Often, however, it seems that “scholarship” consists of propounding “something new,” no matter how bizarre or offbeat it might be.

Preachers and religious writers need to stay fresh in their manner of presentation. It is almost sinful for the glorious good news of Christ to be presented in boring monotone, with over-used illustrations and stale, outworn rhetoric.

As to the message, however, “If it is new, it is not true; and if it is true, it is not new.”

Cecil May, Jr. (via Preacher Talk)

Sweeter Than Wafers With Honey

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Hebrews 1:17).

What was it? At first, the Israelites didn't know. It was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. God sent it to them as a gift, and it cured their hunger.

God's children ate manna for forty years. It must have tasted like a sweet cookie. But even sweet cookies can grow tiresome after a while. The Israelites told Moses, “*Our soul loathes this light bread*” (Numbers 21:5).

How dare they disdain God's gift and His care for them? The Lord sent fiery serpents to bite them, and many died. When they repented, God told Moses to make a serpent and put it on a pole. All those who looked at the snake when they were bitten would live.

Jesus is our manna, our bread of life. Like God gave the Israelites manna from heaven, He has given us Jesus out of heaven (John 6:31-35). Jesus came to give life to the world. He is the most excellent of God's good gifts. No one in the history of mankind has surpassed the sacrifice that He made for us. Peter said, “*He has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4).

Only through Jesus can we have these exceeding great promises. Without them, we could never become partakers of the divine nature and live with God in heaven. God's gift is sweeter than wafers made with honey. His Son is the bread that gives eternal life. We will live in heaven only if we look to Him. May we never tire of Him, but fill our hearts with His love and His teachings.

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