

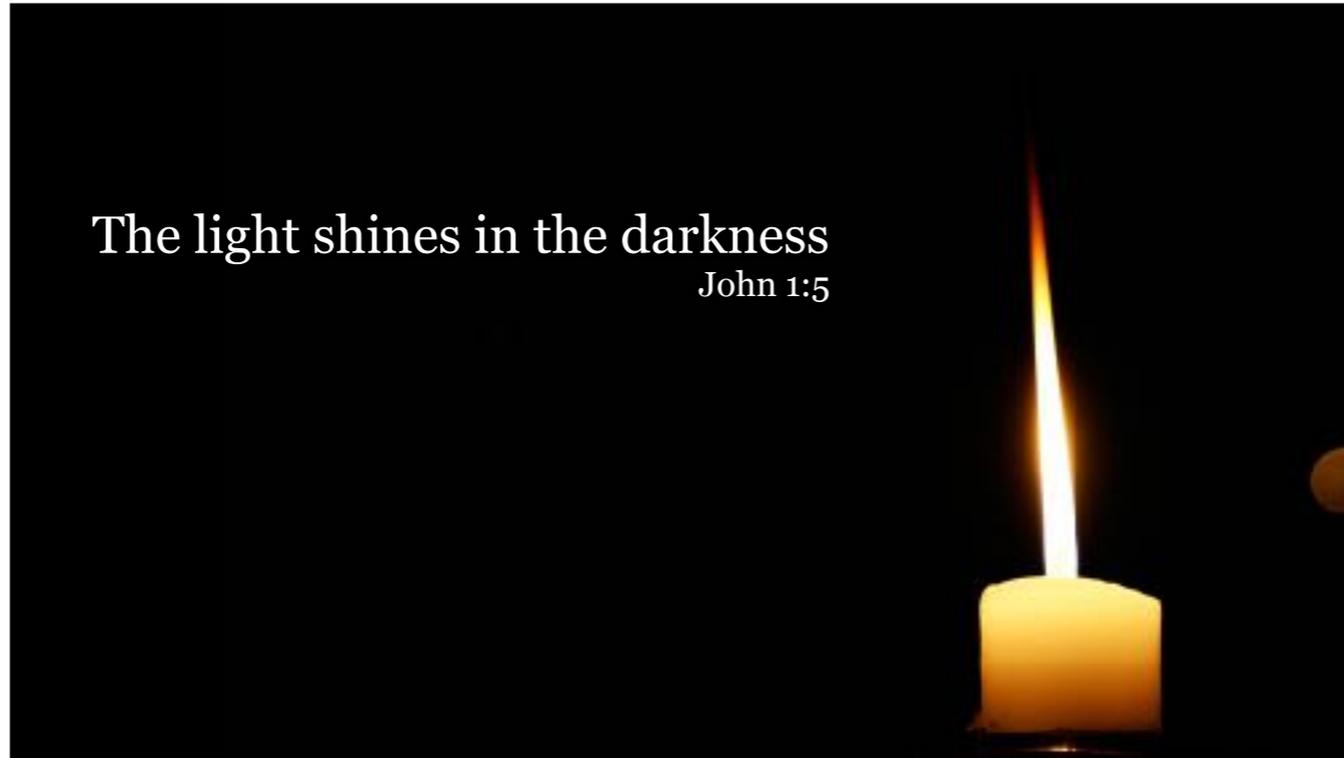


A Great Light from Heaven

Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:4-19

- Acts 22:3

The light shines in the darkness
John 1:5



- John 1:4-5 — In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- John 1:9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
- Acts 22



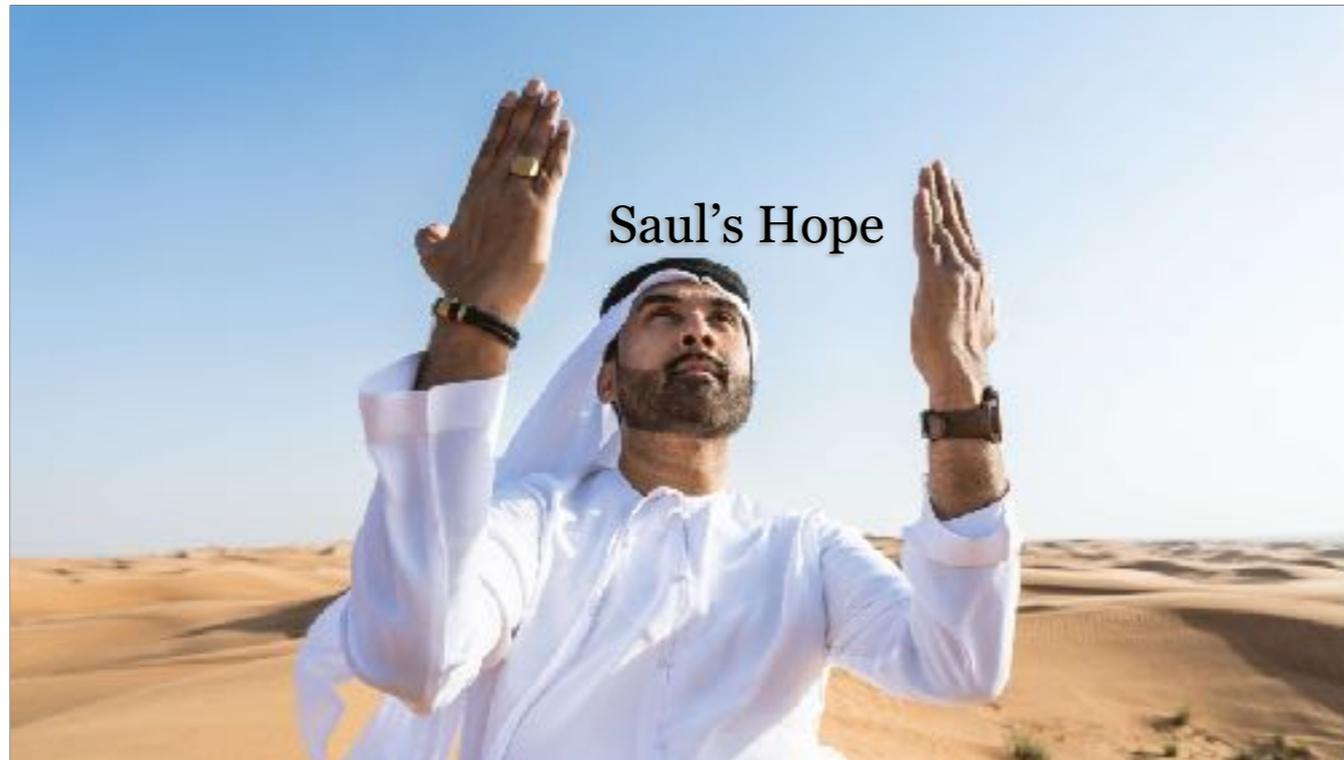
Saul

- ◉ Jew
- ◉ Strictest sect — Pharisee
- ◉ Zealous for God

- Acts 22:3
- Jew
- Strictest Sect — Pharisees
- Zealous for God
- Saul thought he was walking in the light.



- Saul's Hope
- Acts 26:6-7 (ESV)
 - 6 And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,
 - 7 to which our twelve tribes hope to attain,
 - as they earnestly worship night and day.
 - And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!



- Promises
 - To Abraham: Genesis 12:1-3
 - All nations to be blessed.
 - Sacrifice of Isaac?
 - Abraham's hope was that God would raise him from the dead (Hebrews 11:19)
 - To David: 2 Samuel 7
 - King, Throne
- Acts 26:8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?
- Saul was a man who's hope was in God.



- Saul's Zeal for God (Acts 22:3)
 - Strictest Sect: Pharisee (Acts 22:3; 26:5)
 - I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9).
- Attitude
 - Breathing threats and murder (9:1)
 - Raging fury (26:11)



- Persecuting (22:4; 26:11)
 - Bonds to be punished (22:4)
 - Locked in prison (26:10)
 - Cast vote to put them to death (26:10)
 - Punished often in synagogues (26:11)
 - Tried to make them blaspheme (26:11)



- Convinced
 - Violence
 - Make blaspheme
 - Death
 - How can Paul see these as being justified?
 - Serving God
 - Saving Israel
 - Saving souls



Saul's Respect for Authority

- Saul's Respect for Authority
 - Saul's persecution was not just his own mission, he wasn't a Jewish vigilante
 - 9:1-2: went to High Priest
 - Asked for letters to the synagogues at Damascus
 - Belonging to the way
 - Bring bound to Jerusalem
 - 22:5: High priest and whole counsel of elders
 - Letters to brothers
 - bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished

Saul is a man convinced
that he's doing right.



- Saul is a man convinced that he's doing right.
 - He hopes in the promises of God
 - Convinced he should oppose Jesus and followers.
 - Leaders of Jews agree with him.
- How do you convince a convinced man to change?
 - Also, how often am I the man who is convinced that I am right?



- But Jesus has a plan for Saul!
 - Save Saul
 - Use him to teach the Gentiles
- Galatians 1:15-16
 - But when he who had set me apart before I was born,
 - and who called me by his grace,
 - was pleased to reveal his Son to me,
 - in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles



- Acts 26:14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
- Literally: a goad is a long stick with a sharpened point. It is used by a farmer to get a plow animal to move forward.
 - To kick against the goad means to resist the prodding.



- Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.
- So Jesus had been prodding Saul to faith. To accept him as the Christ.
 - We don't know exactly how or when prior to this event.



- But we know that Saul often talked of how we come to faith
 - Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
- It's not surprising, then, that Saul is told to go to Damascus
 - Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.'
- Saul needed a bigger push
- But this is unique: never before, nor again



- Acts 26:11 — in a raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities
- Acts 26:13-18 (ESV)
 - At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.
 - 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground,



- I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language,
- ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?
 - It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’
- 15 And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’



- Why doesn't Saul know who is talking to him?
 - The great light at midday (miraculous)
 - Voice speaking in Hebrew (limits the options)
 - Deity? God?
 - Certainly not Jesus ... Jesus was not God.
 - But Saul, in his own mind, wasn't persecuting God: he was serving God zealously.
 - So who is this?
- And now Jesus certainly has Saul's attention.



- And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'
 - 11) persecuting THEM
 - 14) persecuting ME
 - 15) I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.
 - Is this enough to finally convince Saul of who Jesus of Nazareth really



- Acts 22:10: What shall I do, Lord?
 - 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose,
 - to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,
 - 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you



- 18 to open their eyes,
 - so that they may turn from darkness to light and
 - I really love this purpose, especially since Saul had just experienced it both physically and spiritually.
 - from the power of Satan to God,
 - But this one ... I don't think it was easy for Saul to hear this.
 - He was not serving God.
 - He was under the power of Satan: murder, violence, blasphemy



- that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’
 - And there is forgiveness for him and for all.
 - With faith in Jesus



- Acts 22:11-16 (ESV)
- 11 And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.
- 12 “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,
- 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me,
 - ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’
 - And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him.



- 14 And he said,
 - 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will,
 - to see the Righteous One and
 - to hear a voice from his mouth;
 - 15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.
- 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'



- Saul is a man convinced he's serving God, obedient, zealous and hopeful.
- But when he finally sees the light, he finds that he's wrong.
 - He learns that contrary to all that he thought: Jesus of Nazareth is Lord.
 - And he hears the truth.
 - What do I do Lord?
 - In Jesus there is forgiveness with faith and baptism.



- Do you need to be convinced to really follow Jesus?
 - Most of us who are here today are probably convinced we are doing right:
 - hoping in Him
 - serving him
 - zealous for him.



- What does it take for Jesus to get you to really listen to him?
 - You aren't going to get a blinding light one day.
 - But we all do need to seek the light
 - The great light from heaven is Jesus Christ!
 - He is our hope.
 - But you do need to seek the light?
 - Will you listen to the words of Jesus?
 - Will you serve the Lord as he sends you?

We implore you
on behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Call to Action

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Good News! Great Joy!

#07

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A Great Light from Heaven

Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:4-19

Synopsis: Saul is a man convinced and zealous that he is serving God. But then he sees the great light from heaven and learns that He is his true Hope and that there is forgiveness when he believes and is baptized.

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“Let all that you do be done with love.”