

Katamares: Acts 9:3-9.

9:4 *Why Do You Persecute Me?*

The Heavenly Lord on Earth.

Augustine: How can we show that he is there and that he is also here? Let Paul answer for us, who was previously Saul.... First of all, the Lord's own voice from heaven shows this: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Had Paul climbed up to heaven then? Had Paul even thrown a stone at heaven? It was Christians he was persecuting, then he was tying up, then he was dragging off to be put to death, then he was everywhere hunting out of their hiding places and never sparing when he found them. To him the Lord said, "Saul, Saul." Where is he crying out from? Heaven. So he's up above. "Why are you persecuting me?" So he's down below. Sermon 122.6.5

The Lord Shared Our Human State.

Basil the Great: For it is written, "And when all things are made subject to him, then the Son himself will also be made subject to him who subjected all things to him." ⁹ Do you not fear, O man, the God who is called unsubjected? For he makes your subjection his own, and, because of your struggle against virtue, he calls himself unsubjected. Thus, he even said at one time that he himself was the one persecuted; for he says, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" when Saul was hastening to Damascus, desiring to put in bonds the disciples of Christ. Again, he calls himself naked, if anyone of his brothers is naked. "I was naked," he says, "and you covered me." ¹⁰ And still again, when another was in prison, he said that he himself was the one imprisoned. For he himself took up our infirmities and bore the burden of our ills. ¹¹ And one of our infirmities is insubordination, and this he bore. Therefore, even the adversities that happen to us the Lord makes his own, taking upon himself our sufferings because of his fellowship with us. Letter 8.12

The Humility of Jesus.

Ephrem the Syrian: The One who conquered persecutors [here] below and reigns over angels [in heaven] above spoke from above in a humble voice. The One who on earth pronounced ten woes ¹³ against his crucifiers, above pronounced not a single woe against Saul, his persecutor. Our Lord pronounced woes against his crucifiers to teach his disciples not to flatter their killers. Our Lord spoke humbly from above so that the leaders of his church would speak humbly. Homily on Our Lord 26.1.14

9:5 I Am Jesus, Whom You Are Persecuting

Paul Drawn by Christ Himself.

Chrysostom: The eunuch was on the road and Paul was on the road, but the latter was drawn by no other than Christ himself, for this was too great a work for the apostles. It was great indeed that with the apostles at Jerusalem and no one of authority at Damascus, he returned from there converted. And those at Damascus knew that he had not come from Jerusalem converted, for he brought letters that he might place the believers in chains. Like a consummate physician, Christ brought help to him, once the fever reached its height. It was necessary that he should be quelled in the midst of his frenzy, for then especially he would fall and condemn himself as one guilty of dreadful audacity. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 19.15

9:6 Rise and Enter Damascus

Christ's Wise Dealing with Paul.

Ambrose: Although Paul was struck and taken up and was terrified because blindness had befallen him, still he began to come near when he said, "Lord, what will you have me do?" ¹⁸ For that reason he is called the youngest by Christ, ¹⁹ so that he who was called to grace could be excused from the guilt of his hazardous years. Yes, Christ saw him when the light shone round him; because young people are recalled from sin more by fear than by reason, Christ applied the goad and mercifully admonished him not to kick against it. Joseph 10.58.²⁰

9:8 Saul Could See Nothing

The Injury Was for Good.

Ephrem the Syrian: [Saul's] impairment did not [result] from our compassionate Lord, who spoke humbly there. Rather, [it was the result] of the intense light that shone intensely here. This light was not a punishment that befell Paul on account of the things he had done. It injured him with the intensity of its rays, as he himself said. Homily on Our Lord 26.2.²²

Encounter with Christ.

Ambrose: Although he saw nothing when his eyes were opened, still he saw Christ. And it was fitting that he saw Christ present and also heard him speaking. That overshadowing is not the overshadowing of blindness by grace. Indeed, it is said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you." ²³ On the Patriarchs 12.58.²⁴

9:9 For Three Days

The Power of the Resurrection.

Chrysostom: "And for three days neither did he eat nor drink, being blinded." What could equal this? To compensate the discouragement in the matter of Stephen, here is encouragement, in the bringing in of Paul. Though that sadness had its consolation in the fact of Stephen's making such an end, yet it also received this further consolation. Moreover, the bringing in of the villages of the Samaritans afforded very great comfort. But why did this take place not at the very first but after these things? That it might be shown that Christ was indeed risen. This furious assailant of Christ, the man who would not believe in his death and resurrection, the persecutor of his disciples, how should this man have become a believer, had not the power of his resurrection been great indeed? Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 19.²⁵