

SEEING THE LIGHT

how to prepare your heart for learning and sharing the gospel

LESSON 8 | PAUL CAME TO SEE THAT GOD'S PURPOSE WOULD TAKE HIM WHERE HE WOULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED HE COULD GO | 1/24/2021

Already in this study of Paul's conversion to Jesus Christ, he learned to had to accept that 1) Jesus was the Son of God, that 2) God commanded people to be loved, not hated, that 3) sin was the source of his problems, that 4) there really is life after death because of Jesus' resurrection, that 5) all religions were not equal before God, that 6) conversion is not a miraculous event, and that 7) the FAITH that truly saves is manifest in true PENITENCE and BAPTISM. Today, we are focusing on the words and

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- **God spoke to Paul** (26:16-18) | "For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom **I am sending you**, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."
- **God to Ananias** (Acts 9:15) | "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a **chosen instrument** of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel..."
- **Ananias to Paul** (22:14-15). | "And Ananias said, 'The God of our fathers has **appointed you** to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard."

We last saw Saul in Acts 8:3, where it says that he was ravaging the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, and putting them in prison. He was now expanding the work to the city of Damascus which was about 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem; a six-day journey altogether. As we have already noted, he is pictured (and self described) in "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (8:4) as an angry, violent man absolutely convinced of his own righteousness. Of course, we don't know what Saul looked like. An old apocryphal book, dating to the end of the first century, described Paul as "a man of moderate stature, with crisp hair, crooked legs, blue eyes, large knit brows, and long nose, at times looking like a man, at times like an angel." (Cited in Gaebelien). But the point is that when Jesus appeared to him at midday, He was forcing Saul to see how far he would really go because of the task Jesus was now putting in front of him.

As Saul, in his early life and training (A.D. 1-35), his birth same, given by his father or some near kin, was either to honor a relative or perhaps an Israelite king of history, King Saul, who like Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin. But Paul was born in a Roman city, which gave him rights as a Roman citizen, in Tarsus (Acts 22:3) and was a bustling city a few miles inland from the Mediterranean on Turkey's southern shore. By Paul's day it was a self-governing city, loyal to the Roman Empire. We do not know how Paul's parents or forebearers came to live in Tarsus – but perhaps were immigrants. He was well trained in the Jewish Scriptures and tradition (Acts 26:4-8; Philippians 3:5-6) and at an early age he entered the synagogue day school. Every Jewish boy would have also learned a trade. Paul learned the art of tentmaking which he later used as a means of sustenance (Acts 18:3). Paul eventually went to Jerusalem to study under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel. He was probably a teenager at the time (Acts 22:3) and chose a path in Judaism as a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5). His zealotry was the key to his success in persecution (Acts 7:58).

In the three accounts tell of Paul's experience, the variations in details are accounted for by recognizing that each story is told to a different audience on a different occasion. But what is unified in all is the clarion reality that Jesus was calling Paul to a life and a ministry that he was "appointed" to (22:14), "chosen" to (9:15) and "sent" (22:17).

In his letters, Paul said that Jesus had appeared to him (1 Corinthians 15:8-10; 1 Corinthians 9:1); the gospel he preached had come by revelation (Galatians 1:12); he had been called by God (Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 3:2-12) and that his conversion had brought a complete change in the inner controlling power of his life. It was like dying and receiving a new life (Galatians 2:20) or being created anew (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). This experience of radical change and call to the Gentiles provided the motivation to travel throughout the Roman world.

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And this is what the Lord told him.

1. "You are a chosen instrument." Jesus had said this to other soon to be Apostles: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit might remain" (John 15:16).
 - a. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said that the Jewish nation had been chosen to this adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (1:11-12).
 - b. Writing to the Galatians, Paul said that he had been set apart from His mother's womb, called by His grace, that he might preach (1:15-16).
 - c. "For he is a chosen instrument (vessel). Lit., a choice and excellent one or a vessel of desire.
2. You were chosen to declare the name of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.
 - a. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:6-9)
 - i. His connection to the 12 did not change his mission.
 - ii. And he saw that Peter's targeted people was different.
 - iii. And even the pillars, Peter, James and John, recognized His unique objective and endorsed the work he was doing.
 - b. To the Ephesians he wrote:
 - i. (3:1-10) "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."
 - ii. Paul knew what his calling, his election, and to whom God was sending him.
3. He was also to bear the name of Jesus to kings.
 - a. He did so in the accounts we are studying in his defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26).
 - b. We know that he also appeared before Caesar Nero.
 - i. We can contrast Paul's optimism in Philippians and Philemon with his certainty of being near death in his second epistle to Timothy (2Timothy 4:6)
 - ii. Most interpret these verses is to see the "first defense" (2Timothy 4:16-17) as Paul's 62 AD trial before Nero, and his deliverance from the "lion's mouth" as his release after that trial. (Scholars today believe it is more likely that the "first defense" was a preliminary hearing before a later second trial. Under either interpretation, Paul was acquitted at his first trial.)
 - iii. Later Christian sources support the case that Paul was acquitted.
 1. Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians: "After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects."
 2. Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History: "Festus was sent by Nero to be Felix's successor. Under him Paul, having made his defense, was sent bound to Rome. Aristarchus was with him, whom he also somewhere in his epistles quite naturally calls his fellow-prisoner. And Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, brought his history to a close at this point, after stating that Paul spent two whole years at Rome as a prisoner at large, and preached the word of God without restraint. Thus after he had made his defense it is said that the
4. He was to bear the name of Jesus to the children of Israel.
 - a. This was Paul's first and earnest desire. He felt that he could convince them that Jesus was the Messiah (Romans 9:3; 10:1).
 - b. And in his persistence, God had to ask him to move on (Acts 22:17-21).