

## Acts Series #21 - "The Mission Part 1" Acts 26:14-18

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *What Is A Christian?*

1. Many of you saw the article in the Star two weeks ago about George Barna
2. He is a pollster who specializes in researching issues of interest and concern to the church
3. One of his recent books is titled *Absolute Confusion*
  - a. it draws its title from the fact that while there is a significantly high percentage of people who claim to be evangelical Christians
  - b. there is surprisingly, no, better, *disturbingly* little evidence of these people have a Christian mind
  - c. many of the cardinal beliefs of Christianity are not only not known
  - d. but what is believed is often diametrically opposed to biblical faith and truth

#### B. *Our Motto*

1. Our motto at Calvary Chapel is "Learning & Living God's Word"
2. We hope and pray that if a poll was to be conducted of the family here it would show a mindset consistent with the Bible
3. And to that end we want to take a look at a passage which clearly defines what it means to be a Christian

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Set The Scene*

1. Paul is still under arrest and in the custody of the Romans at Caesarea
2. Over two years have passed since his arrest
3. The new governor, a man named Festus, no relation to the Addams family, doesn't really know what to do with Paul
4. You see, when he first became governor, he had the Jewish leaders come and once again file their complaints against Paul
5. He then asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem to answer to the charges there
6. But Paul knew that there were men in Jerusalem who had vowed to assassinate him and a trip there was certain death, so he refused
7. And instead, appealed to Caesar himself, which was the right of every Roman citizen
8. But Festus knew that the charges against Paul were of no concern to Caesar and if he sent Paul to Rome without a worthwhile charge he could be jeopardizing his own position
9. You see, Festus knew it was extremely unwise to waste the emperor's time
10. So rather than sending Paul to Rome, he kept him there in Caesarea, trying to figure out some justification for sending him

11. And while he waited, Herod Agrippa, a neighboring ruler came to visit
12. Festus asked help from Agrippa in figuring out what to do with Paul; and Agrippa asked to meet with him
13. So Paul was brought in and Agrippa told him to tell his story
14. Paul knew that Agrippa was well acquainted with Israel and the Jewish way of life and religion
15. So he spoke openly about his past and upbringing
  - a. his training as a Pharisee
  - b. his zeal for the law
  - c. and even his role in persecuting the early Christians
  - d. but then he got to that point in the story that told of his experience with Jesus on the road to Damascus

### **B. Vs. 12-18**

- {12} "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,
- {13} "at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.
- {14} "And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
- {15} "So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
- {16} 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.
- {17} 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,
- {18} 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'
1. I'm sure that as Paul recounted these words to Agrippa, his heart burned within him to remember his first encounter with Jesus
  2. And now, so many years later, as he looked back over his life since then, he realized how the Lord had sovereignly directed him
  3. Paul's whole life and ministry were laid out before him that day on the road just outside Damascus
  4. It's Jesus words in v. 18 that I'd like us to take a closer look at today
  5. In this verse we find the mission of Paul's life
  6. But they are more than just *his* mission:
  7. In these words we find the essence of what it means to be a *Christian* in the truest sense of the word
  8. So let's take a careful look at it

### **B. To Open Their Eyes In Order To Turn Them From Darkness To Light**

1. Paul said that Jesus sent him to “open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light”
  2. Christians use all kinds of expressions to refer to *salvation*
    - a. we speak of being “born again”
    - b. of being “saved”
    - c. in older days they referred to it as being “washed in the blood”
    - d. or “redeemed”; “elect”
    - e. all these are synonyms for salvation
    - f. one of the more common descriptions you don’t hear as much as you used to just a few years ago is the word, “converted”
    - g. yet that one word best sums up what Jesus said to Paul in this verse
  3. For you see, to be converted means to “be turned”
  4. Christians are those who have been turned
    - a. Lee Atwater, who was the chairman of the Republican National Committee, died in 1991 of a brain tumor
    - b. he was once branded the "pit bull" of American politics but he was converted to Christ not long before his death
    - c. in interviews, he was bold and unapologetic about his newfound faith
    - d. in one he said, "I have found Jesus Christ. It's that simple. He's made a difference, and I'm glad I've found Him while there's still time. I don't hate anybody anymore. For the first time in my life, I don't hate somebody. I have nothing but good feelings toward people. It's just no point in fighting and feuding," he said.
    - e. the things that once counted in his life --power, fame, and glory - - no longer had meaning, he said.
    - f. in their place, Mr. Atwater talked about repentance, love, family, and relationships
    - g. he also thought it important to make peace with former foes, Democrats and Republicans alike
    - h. he wrote many letters of repentance, called people on the phone, prayed with them, and asked for forgiveness
    - i. coming from a politician, that's conversion!
  5. Yes, Christians are those who have turned; They have been turned from darkness to light
  - 5a. Paul was CONVERTED
    - a. from a hate-filled murderer
    - b. to a love-filled healer
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6. We know from the book of Genesis that when Adam and Eve were first created, they were naked but were unashamed because they were innocent and pure
    - a. it’s not that they were naïve
    - b. it’s just that they had never sinned and knew no shame
    - c. being untainted by sin, their bodies were perfect expressions of the creative genius of a loving and perfect God
  7. Many bible scholars are convinced that because Adam and Eve walked with God in Eden, like Moses who came down from Mt. Sinai with a

- shining face, they were robed with a garment of light; the reflected light of God's glory
8. That light not only clothed them, it filled them, shining truth and life into every corner of their being
  9. But when they fell into sin, the light was quenched
  10. In fact, the first result of the fall was that their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked = Gone was their robe of light
  11. And the promise of knowledge in the eating of the forbidden fruit proved to be a lie
  12. For the light that had filled them became darkness, so much so they thought they could hide from God
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13. Our world has been a very dark place since that fateful day in Eden
14. For as it says in 1 John 1:5, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."
15. When man turned from God, he turned from light to darkness
16. No wonder God said that on the day man ate of the tree he would die
17. You see, light is the most basic need of life
  - a. without light, life cannot exist
  - b. all of the biological systems on our planet depend at their most fundamental level on light
  - c. it is the light of the sun which provides the basic energy source for all of earth's systems
  - d. if the light of the sun was somehow shut off, it wouldn't be long before every system on our planet failed and all life came to an end
18. What's true on a physical level is also true in the spirit
19. God is light; He is the author and source of truth and life
20. To turn from Him is not only to turn from light to darkness, it is also to turn from life to death, from truth to error
21. Human history is a story of one long night of darkness punctuated by occasional glimmers of light
22. The greatest of all these glimmers came in the Birth and Life of Jesus Christ
23. Of this, John writes in John 1 . . .

**{1} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**{2} He was in the beginning with God.**

**{3} All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

**{4} In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**

**{5} And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

24. Though man turned from light and became ensnared in darkness, in His love, God staged a rescue mission to turn man back to light
25. His plan was to send His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Life and Light of man
26. Jesus defeated the darkness and now all those who come to faith in Him are turned from darkness to light, from error to truth, and from death to life

27. This happens, as we read here in Acts 26, by the “opening of their eyes”
  28. Of course we’re speaking of spiritual sight, not physical eyes
  29. Before we can be converted, before we can be turned from darkness to light, the Holy Spirit must do a work of healing our spiritual blindness
  30. And the healing balm He uses is nothing other than the message of the gospel
  31. That’s what Paul was sent to share
  32. As He simply and clearly proclaimed the truth, the Holy Spirit would take it and use it to open the eyes of the blind
  33. And once their eyes were opened, they would realize how they lived in darkness but God was calling them to light
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34. Over the years as I have listened to different new age teachers, eastern gurus, and cult leaders, I’ve always found their supposed insights and deep teachings to be absurd and irrational
  35. They act as through they have some profound insight, some deep mystery they’ve managed though countless hours of exacting meditation to discover
  36. What’s the great secret they’ve managed to uncover? That we are all gods
  37. Wow! What a revelation!
  38. That’s new? - that’s the best their plumbing the heights and depths of the mysteries can produce?
  39. That’s not new, and it’s not new light: It’s the old lie, it’s the same old darkness
  40. If you want light -Turn to the Light of the World = JESUS!

### **C. To Turn Them From The Power Of Satan To God**

1. As it says next in v. 18, Christians have also been turned from the power of Satan to God
2. As offensive as it is to many people, it is still true; if a man or woman is not serving God, they are serving the devil
3. Oh, Satan doesn’t care if people *think* they are serving themselves
  - a. he is content to sit quietly and not make a fuss -
  - b. letting people live under the delusion they are living their own lives to and for themselves
  - c. they know not that he is pulling the strings
  - d. and will only find out too late that they have been serving him all their lives
4. Like it or not, we were created to serve
  - a. our only choice is *who* we will serve
  - b. the devil or God
  - c. it may be the devil, or it may be the Lord but you gotta’ serve somebody
5. When man turned over dominion of earth to the devil, he fell under the reign of that dominion
6. As a consequence all of us are born into sin and lie under the power of the devil

7. But Jesus broke the dominion of Satan at the cross
8. Now we can turn back to God and be set free from the evil tyranny of Satan
9. A Christian is someone who has been turned from darkness and the devil to Light and God
  - a. certainly that means Christians are *different* from others who are still in darkness and under the power of Satan
  - b. are we?
10. Rosario was a terrorist in Peru who was well known and feared by all
  - a. she was an expert in several forms of martial arts and was an accomplished assassin
  - b. she had dozens of kills, including 12 policemen
  - c. when she heard that Luis Palau was coming to Lima for a crusade, she determined to kill him since the gospel conflicted with her ideas of the perfect communist state
  - d. so she entered the stadium where the crusade was being held and started to plan her assassination of Palau
  - e. Luis was speaking as she scanned the stadium for the best way to get close to him, and then make her escape
  - f. he spoke of heaven, hell, and salvation
  - g. and as she listened, she found herself drawn to the words
  - h. when the invitation was given, she repented of her sins, confessed, and received Christ as her Savior
  - i. 10 yrs. Later Luis met her for the first time
    - 1) she had assisted in planting 5 churches
    - 2) and was a vibrant, active witness and worker in an orphanage she had founded that housed over 1000 children

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *There Is More*

1. There is more to this verse,
2. And we will finish it next week
3. But till then, let's let these words frame our hearts and minds this week
4. To be a Christians means to be have our eyes opened
5. To be turned from darkness to light
6. To be turned from the power of Satan to God
7. And certainly, if that is true, if we have been this converted, we *will* be different

#### B. *Augustine*

1. The famous early church father and giant intellect, Augustine did not have an exactly sparkling life prior to coming to faith in Christ
2. Coming from wealthy family, he lived a morally bankrupt life
3. Walking down the street of Milan one day not long after his conversion, a former girlfriend who was a prostitute saw him and chased him down,

though he tried to get away

4. She called after him, “Augustine, it is I.”
  5. To which he turned and said, “Yes, but it is not I.”
  6. Though a recent convert, he clearly understood what *conversion* meant
  7. “If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old things have passed and all things have become new.”
8. May God give us the grace to live converted lives!