Acts Chapter 26 Verses 15 – 18

* Has anyone ever said something to you and *you heard them* **but** you kind of had ***no idea what they said*** and so at the time it was almost as if you didn’t hear them? Some of y’all I hear were like that with my cat joke last week! **HA!** Twenty some years ago, as Paul was making his way to Damascus to *capture, torture and persecute* Christians, Jesus reached His finger down from heaven and **flicked him** off his horse!
* All the way back in Chapter 9 we are given an account of what Jesus said to Paul. Acts 9:4-6, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.”* **39 words** received, ***understood and actioned.*** But here he is, after walking with the Lord for more than 20 years, serving Him and growing in Him (which by the way is what **walking with Him** means), Paul now recalls with clarity the details, ***the rest***, of that original conversation. **128 words** given to us here by Paul…
* What does that mean? Why do I point that out? As you seek the Lord and as you walk with Him, you understanding not only **deepens** of His *will and word and heart* ***but it also widens***…you ***catch*** more…its like trading in your fishing pole for a commercial fishing net! God has so much for each one of us in every verse of His Word…every touch of His hand…***every issue and circumstance of every day***…and one reason why I study the Word every day and have done so for years upon years…one reason (among MANY) that I choose to trust God’s ways over my own in my daily decisions…is that I know that in doing those things…moving forward/progressing in my faith, ***I will see more, catch more, hear more, understand more***…**I will grow.**
* Twenty years ago Paul could only process 30% of what God was telling him…***he missed 70% of what God was trying to show him***…but now, grown…he recalls and understands the 100%. That inspires me to press in. Why? Because I don’t want to miss the blessing of God on my life. ***I don’t want to miss the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and the approval of the Lord on my life***…and yet I know that the truth is, without growing in my faith…I am going to miss it…so I’m constantly chasing after Him…Biblical phrase for that, *“Seeking His face.”*
* Just a couple of proof texts for that little lesson…, Luke 16:10 is probably my fav (reading from the NIV), *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”* Matthew 25:23, *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”* Amongst many others, John 14:21 can also be referenced.
* And so we have here the complete account, the complete message ***finally and completely grasped and understood*** by Paul and man **it’s awesome.** In what Jesus said to Paul is the pattern of redemption for all men. First, when you encounter Jesus personally and find yourself humble towards Him (as Paul was), *ready to receive, ready to obey, ready to listen*…the first thing Jesus will do, and this will be for the first time in a human’s life, He will take your sinful, dark and deficient spirit by the hand and command you to rise and stand on your feet. Standing for the first time…***able to stand upright for the first time***…***in the holy presence of a holy God!***
* Then…God will install eternal purpose…lost to the unsaved…eternal purpose is lost if someone is ultimately going to hell…***Jesus installs eternal purpose***…then…eyes begin to open to the reality of truth…not truths…but TRUTH…and the opening of the eyes, **the understanding of wisdom and reality** has ***two primary effects on the life of a person***…first, it turns us, our lives, our attitudes, our motivations, **our lives**…from darkness to light and in the process of doing so, turns our days, decisions, dealings from the power of Satan to the very power of God. ***That’s like ditching the D Cell and getting onto the Nuclear reactor!!***
* Fix your marriage? Be a better husband, an awesome wife? NO PROBLEM!! Get off that substance, stop hating that co-worker…quit wasting so much time and life being lazy and unproductively unprofitable? **These questions are a thing of the past!** *Bio-spiritual jazz, man!!* (Taking from TRON) These are the promises and the pattern of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of mankind. Why? To give us forgiveness…that we may FEEL forgiveness and receive an inheritance taking our place in many that are sanctified…set apart for eternal life in glory! Notice…all God does for us is for us…what of this is for Him? **None of it**…it’s all for us because His love is ALL for us!!!
* ***He MAKES us, then DELIVERS us, then SENDS us, and all the while SANCTIFIES us!!*** Man, are you sanctified by God? Are you set apart from what you see of this world around you? **Are you different?** That is the fruit man…the proof of a saving faith…are you yet MADE? It’s like the heavenly mob! HA!!

Acts Chapter 26 Verses 19 – 23

* **That is entirely the case!** Paul is saying ***nothing more*** than was said by the prophets and Moses…and even God all the way back in Genesis Chapter 3! I love that! I love how the ***entirety of the canon*** of scripture…66 books, written over a span of 1500 years by 40 different authors and ***yet the entirety of it entirely agrees!*** It all aligns, it is uniform in its ***message, character and heart***…why? How? ***Because it is the workmanship of one God!*** And Paul makes the case which is still critically important (at least to me today) that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is solidly based on the Word of God, not on any *traditions or spiritual experiences* of any man!

Acts Chapter 26 Verses 24 – 26

* I **SO love** that statement!!! Two reasons why! First, many false teachers and false teachings, most if not ALL of them come from the *“corner.”* Some sort of *unique or personal experience or revelation* BUT…not the Gospel! Not **true** Christianity! Why would God who loves the world and desires that ALL would be saved, why would he make it some sort of hidden thing! He didn’t!! ***It’s all out in the open and everything is available for examination!*** Second reason, Paul hasn’t lived his live *incognito!!* He hasn’t done his preaching in an ally…he’s out in the open…hiding nothing and I love that because **here he stands.** I want you to know this, ***your testimony is NOT your salvation experience…it’s YOUR LIFE!!*** And Paul stands tall and firm here because he knows nothing of the *“corner.”* Hidden junk or ulterior motives…

Acts Chapter 26 Verses 27 – 28

* One of the ***saddest verse sets in all of scripture.*** To lose a game by a landslide is better than to lose by 1 point…Agrippa **believes**…he believes these things to be true…but notice this, he is not and does not become a follower of Jesus Christ…***a Christian.***

Acts Chapter 26 Verses 29 – 32

* No Agrippa…he is already set free…you might have been set free yourself if you had ***moved beyond agreement and belief and submitted yourself to God.*** You might have been set free, you would have been…but now and forever you bear the burden of price of your decision to **not** respond to the grace of God through Jesus Christ.
* I heard a story I want to leave you with…, *“In the final decade of his life, my grandfather woke up every single day at 7 A.M., picked a fresh wild flower on his morning walk, and took it to my grandmother.  One morning, I decided to go with him to see her.  And as he placed the flower on her gravestone, he looked up at me and said, ‘I just wish I had picked her a fresh flower every morning when she was alive.  She really would have loved that.’”* ***We all have to deal with regret, that’s just a part of life, but that does not have to be part of your eternity***…I pray today that you would move beyond belief to freedom…God is ready and hoping even now to MAKE you, to DELIVER you, to SEND you…to SANCTIFY you. ***What will you do?***