

# **Words of Grace Seasoned With Salt**

## **BIBLE STUDIES, PERSONAL OPINIONS ABOUT CURRENT AND**

### **FUTURE EVENTS**

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## **What Paul Learned On The Road To Damascus**

More has been written about the conversion of Paul than any other conversion in history. His conversion is so amazing that 1000's of men have written 1000's of books and articles about it. I would say that millions of sermons have been preached about the conversion of Paul. God himself gives us three accounts of his conversion in the book of Acts; See Acts 9, 22 and 26. The fact God gives us three accounts of his conversion tells us that we should pay special attention to it.

Paul refers to his conversion in almost every epistle he wrote for his conversion not only changed his life, but what he believed. What he learned on the road to Damascus had an enormous impact on his doctrine and writings. God taught Paul many things the day he was converted and Paul spent the rest of his life preaching and writing about what he learned that day. Many of the doctrines he wrote about were based upon his conversion on the road to Damascus.

### **What Paul Learned That Day**

#### **He Received A Revelation About Jesus of Nazareth**

He found out who Jesus of Nazareth really was. In Acts 26:9-11 he wrote:  
***I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.***

These verses describe the hatred he had for Jesus of Nazareth before his conversion. He took out his hatred and wrath against Jesus by persecuting anyone who believed on him. But, why did he hate Jesus? ***Because he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was an imposter, a blasphemer and a criminal.*** He believed he was a false Messiah. This is what all Pharisees believed about Jesus. Paul was a Pharisee and he believed he did God a favor by crucifying Christ and persecuting his followers. That is why he persecuted the church of God and wasted it. That was the way he showed

his hatred for Jesus Christ. Paul was blinded by Satan and he was Satan's prize soldier in his battle against Christ. But, when he was converted his mind was totally changed.

Acts 22:7-10 says:

***And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.***

He found out that day Jesus of Nazareth was more than a mere man, he was the Lord. He called him Lord twice when he was converted. What a shock that must have been to Paul. It's no wonder he could not see nor eat for three days. His whole world was turned upside down. He realized that everything he ever believed or said about Jesus was a lie. The blinders fell off his eyes. He saw that he was guilty of crucifying his own Messiah. He saw that he did not do God a favor when he helped crucify Christ. He realized that he had murdered the Son of God and that he had persecuted innocent people. He found out that day that Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be; the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. What a blow that was to Paul. No doubt he wept bitterly when he realized what he had done.

This is why Paul proves over and over again that Jesus Christ is the Lord, God, Jehovah, the creator of heaven and earth in his epistles. He did not want anyone to make the same mistake he had made. Next to John, Paul wrote more about the deity of Christ than any writer in the New Testament. His mind was radically changed from that day forward about Jesus. And no one loved and served Christ as much as Paul did after he was converted on the road to Damascus.

One reason many people are lost today is because they are like Paul, they don't know who Jesus really is. The modernists and liberals think he was a good man and good role model, but they don't believe he is God. The Russelites (JW's) believe he is a created being or an angel, but they don't believe he is Jehovah God. The Jews still consider him to be an imposter and they still hate him as much as Paul did. But what is worse, are those who know who he is and still will not trust him to save them from sin and hell. The south is filled up with people like this.

## He Received A Revelation About The Cross

Isaiah 53:4-6 says:

***(4) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.***

***(5) But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***

***(6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

What Paul believed about the death of Christ on the cross before his conversion is verse 4. He believed that Jesus was stricken and smitten of God on the cross because he was a sinner and a blasphemer. He believed that God smote him because he was a liar and a fraud. The Law of Moses said, *cursed is everyman that hangeth on a tree.* (Gal. 3:13) Under the law criminals were stoned and their bodies hung on a tree as sign that they were cursed and smitten by God for their sins. That is why the Pharisees like Paul hung Christ on the cross. They believed he was a criminal and a blasphemer and by crucifying him they thought they were serving God and carrying out the Law. Christ's death to Paul and all the Pharisees was the execution of a criminal.

What Paul believed about Christ's death on the cross when he was converted is found in verse 5-6. When he saw the resurrected Jesus he realized he was not a blasphemer, but he was the Lord. He learned that his death was not for sins he committed, but for sins we committed. He found out that Jesus was not wounded for his transgressions, but for our transgressions and that he was not bruised for his iniquities, but for our iniquities. He found out that day that it was our iniquities and sins he died for and not his own.

The one he helped to crucify was risen; therefore his death was not that of a criminal, but a sacrifice for sinners. And from that day forward he ceased not to preach the cross for salvation. He wrote more about the cross than any other apostle. Every doctrine Paul wrote about is based upon the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ was no longer an emblem of shame and disgust to Paul. He gloried in the cross after his conversion. In Galatians 6:14 he wrote: ***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.***

One reason many people are lost today is because they are like Paul; they don't really understand the death of Christ on the cross. They don't know the real reason he died. Many people believe that he died as a hero on the cross. Some believe he died as a martyr on the cross. Some believe he

died for his religious and political beliefs on the cross. Some people like the Moonies believe he died as a failure on the cross. The modernists and liberals believe he died, but was not resurrected. The Jews still believe he died as a criminal. Many view his death as bad news. They are sad when they hear about the cross. Some even cry when they hear about the cross.

What you believe about the death of Christ on the cross will determine where you spend eternity, so you better get it right. Christ did not die as a martyr or a hero. He did not die as a failure. He didn't die as a revolutionary dies for a cause. The truth is he died as a sacrifice. He died in our place on the cross. It was for our sins and transgressions that he died. The penalty of sin is death and Christ paid the penalty by dying for them. We did the crimes, but Jesus paid the fine. Therefore, the cross is not bad news, it's good news. It was not a defeat, it was a victory. And until a person sees the death of Christ as a sacrifice for their sins, they are just as lost as Paul when he helped crucify Christ and persecuted Christians.

### **He Received A Revelation About The Law**

In Acts 22:3-4 he said:

***I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.***

Prior to being saved, Paul was a Pharisee who was very zealous of the Law of Moses. He kept the law all his life. He believed the law was his ticket to heaven. But, when Jesus appeared unto him he found out the law could not save him. He found out that salvation and forgiveness of sins was by faith alone in Christ. In Acts 26:16-18 Jesus said to him:

***But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.***

At the same time he was saved, he was sent to preach forgiveness of sins **by faith that is in Christ.** Not by the works of the law he had kept all his life, but by faith alone in Christ. That changed Paul's mind about the law he was so zealous of all his life. From that day forward he preached the law, not as a savior, but a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. (Gal. 3:24)

If keeping the law and the commandments could save you like many folks believe today, Paul would have been saved because he was very zealous of the law being a Pharisee. The fact that it took the resurrected Christ to save him shows us there is no salvation in the law today. If you could be saved by keeping the law Paul didn't need Christ and neither would you. The same is true of religion.

### **He Received A Revelation About Grace**

In 1 Timothy 1:12-16 Paul wrote about his conversion:

***And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.***

These verses describe Paul's conversion. When God saved Paul on the road to Damascus he saved the chief of sinners. He was the worst of the worst. No one was as evil and wicked as he was. God had never saved anyone as wicked as Paul prior to Acts 9. The grace it took to save Paul on the road to Damascus was exceeding and abundant according to verse 14. It exceeded anything before it. Paul's conversion was one of the greatest demonstrations of the grace and mercy of God this world had ever seen next to the cross. In fact, it was so great that God made it the pattern of salvation to all those saved after him in verse 16. If you are saved today you are saved by the same grace Paul was saved by.

What Paul learned about the grace of God that day he never forgot or ceased preaching and writing about. He wrote more about grace than any other writer in the Bible. His epistles define the true grace of God today.

Another reason many people are lost today is because they do not understand the grace of God. Most people believe they must earn the grace and favor of God by a life of good works. If that were so, God could have never saved Paul. Paul is proof that grace is not earned or merited by a life of good works. All of his works were bad when God saved him. Paul is proof that grace is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast. The only way God could have possibly saved a man like Paul was by unearned and unmerited grace and mercy.

## He Received A Revelation About The Church

Acts 26:14-15 says:

***And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.***

The Lord accused Paul of persecuting him before he was saved. How did Paul persecute Christ, if Christ was in heaven? By persecuting his people. In verse 10-11 he said:

***Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.***

When Paul persecuted the saints he persecuted Christ, because the saints are his body. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:26: *Whether one member of the body suffers, all the members of the body suffer with it* and that includes the head of the body. That is why Jesus said; *Saul, Saul why persecuted thou me?* The church is Christ's body and those who persecute the members of the body persecute the head of the body. You can't separate the members of the body from the head. Any injury done to them is done to their head. When Paul took out his vengeance on them, he took it out on Christ their head.

## He Received A Revelation About Gentiles

In Acts 26:17-18 the Lord said to Paul when he saved him:

***Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.***

Paul being a Jew and a Pharisee had no dealings with gentiles. (Acts 10:28) They considered gentiles to be as common and unclean as a dog. He knew they were cut off from the promises and covenants and were without hope and God being aliens from Israel. (Eph. 2:12) But that day he was sent to those same gentiles he once despised; *to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ.*

Paul spent the greater part of his Christian life doing what the Lord sent him to do in these verses when he saved him on the road to Damascus.

## **What We Should Learn About Paul's Conversion On The Road To Damascus**

\*We should learn that if God can save a man like Paul, he can save anybody.

\*We should learn that salvation is not earned by good works, for when God saved Paul all his works were bad. He was the chief of sinners when God saved him.

\*We should learn that Jesus Christ is more than a man, but he is the LORD, GOD, JEHOVAH.

\*We should learn that Christ's death was not a tragedy, but a victory for when he died he died for our transgressions and was bruised for our iniquities and was raised from the dead for our justification.

\*We should learn that keeping the commandments cannot save you for before Paul was saved he kept them.

\*We should learn the true meaning of grace; that it is the unearned and undeserved favor of God bestowed upon undeserving sinners like Paul and us too.

\*We should learn that when the saints of God are persecuted, that Christ their head is persecuted. When Paul persecuted the Church of God he was persecuting Christ the head of the Church of God.

\*We should learn that when God saves us we should ask the Lord the same question Paul asked: ***Lord what will you have me to do?***

The two greatest things we can do as Christians after God saves us is what Paul spent his life doing. He wrote in 1 Timothy 2:4: ***God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.***

God will have all men to be saved; that's the work of evangelism. God will have all saved men to come into the knowledge of the truth; that's the work of edification. Evangelism is done in the world. Edification is done in the local church. Paul spent his life evangelizing the lost in the world and then created local churches with his converts and in those churches he ordained pastors and teachers to teach them the word of God. (Acts 14:21-23)

If you spend your life doing those two things you will have a full time job and it's the two greatest works you can do in this life.

Pastor Art Watkins

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