

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 74

I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty Six (Continued).

A. Verses 12-18 – Paul tells of his Encounter with Jesus Christ! (continued).

1. Verses 15-18 – Paul declares what Jesus said to him.

- a. **Verse 15 – “...I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”** – In the midst of Paul (Saul of Tarsus) bringing persecution to the church, Jesus stops him on the road and states that, in reality, Paul was really persecuting Jesus. This tells us that to oppose Christians, is to oppose Jesus Christ. To hurt Christians is to hurt Jesus Christ. This shows the believer’s being united to Christ.
- b. **Verse 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.** – Jesus states clearly that the reason He had appeared to Paul was to make him a “minister and a witness.” - The word “minister” means; “a person who renders service—‘servant.’”¹ Dr. Utley adds some thoughts on this word: “The first term literally referred to an ‘under-rower’ on a ship. It came to be used idiomatically for a servant.² Paul referred to himself as a “bondservant of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Titus 1:1). A “bondservant” - “Metaphorically spoken of voluntary service, a servant, implying obedience, devotion”³ The word “witness” means; a person who witnesses—‘witness, one who testifies’⁴ This can be in a legal sense or in a historical sense. This word also has a double meaning where the other meaning is “martyr” or one who suffers death for their belief.⁵ Grant Osborne adds:

“The content of his witness has both past (‘what you have seen’) and future (‘will see’) components. The past aspect is Jesus risen from the dead, revealed to him on the Damascus road. The future aspect refers to further revelations of his glory as the Spirit-empowered witness goes out into the world.”⁶

- c. **Verse 17 – “I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,”** – Jesus promised Paul that he would be delivered (rescued) from both his own people and the Gentiles. This is detail not mentioned before. Later Paul testified saying:

“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”

II Timothy 4:17-18

- d. **Verse 18 – Paul shares the purpose he was being sent. (Note: The word “send” in verse 17 comes from the same word as “apostle”)**
 - 1) **“...to open their eyes...”** – This, of course, is speaking figuratively. It means to bring them understanding. To open the “eyes of their understanding” (cf. Ephesians 1:18).
 - a) **“...in order to turn them from darkness to light...”** – “Darkness” is often used in Scripture as a symbol of sin and its effects. It is often contrasted with light, as a symbol of forgiveness and the presence of God.⁷

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 459.

²Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 273.

³Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

⁴Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, 417.

⁵Utley, 273.

⁶Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 449.

⁷Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

“In this uneven duality, darkness becomes synonymous with all that opposes God or characterizes those who oppose God. Evil, the forces of evil, and the consequences of evil thus dwell together under this symbolic umbrella.”⁸

“Light” is used in Scripture as a symbol of the presence of God (**I John 1:5**), a symbol of God’s Word (**II Corinthians 4:4; Psalm 119:105**), a symbol of salvation (**II Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8-14**), and a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ (**John 8:12**).

b) **“...turn them...from the power of Satan to God...”** – The word **“power”** means; **“the domain or sphere over which one has authority to control or rule—‘jurisdiction.’”⁹** When we accept Jesus as our Lord by receiving the **“light of the glorious gospel”** (**II Corinthians 4:4**), we are no longer under the **“domain”** or authority of Satan but are now under the **“domain”** and authority of God!!

2) The result: **“...that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”** The word **“receive”** means; **“to receive or accept an object or benefit for which the initiative rests with the giver, but the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver”¹⁰** (cf. **Romans 6:23**).

a) **“...forgiveness of sins...”** – The word **“forgiveness”** means; **“to cause to stand away, to release one's sins from the sinner.”¹¹**

b) **“...and an inheritance...”** – **“a share or portion which has been assigned or granted—‘part, share.’”¹²**

c) **“...among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”** – All of this is for those who place faith in Jesus Christ. When we place faith in Jesus we are **“sanctified.”** The word **“sanctified”** means; **“to separate from profane things and dedicate to God; consecrate things to God; dedicate people to God”¹³** It also means; **“To make clean, render pure”, and is often rendered “holy”¹⁴**.

“This verse recalls the divine commission of Messiah (cf. Isa. 35:5; 42:6-7, 16). It is one of the best summary statements of not only Paul's mission, but also the mission of every believer (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 1:12-14). Paul was to do for others what God had done for him, and so should we. The sanctification in view is positional: God sets a person apart for a special purpose—both before and when he or she trusts Christ (cf. Eph. 1:4). Paul had gone to Damascus as the apostle (i.e., sent one) of the Sanhedrin. He returned as the apostle of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵

B. Verses 19-23 - The Effect this Encounter had on Paul’s Life.

1. **Verse 19** – **“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”** – The **“heavenly vision”** is obviously referring to the actual appearance of Jesus to Paul in the **“light from heaven”** (**verse 13**). Jesus said that if we really love Him, we will keep His commandments (**John 14:15, 21, 23-24**). There are many promises to those who obey (**Isaiah 1:19; Luke 6:47-48; John 14:23**).

2. **Verse 20** – Starting at Damascus, which is where he was heading when the Lord confronted him, to Jerusalem and all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, Paul preached the Gospel. Here he says he declared that they should **“...repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”** Repentance involves turning away from sin. We don’t just turn away from sin, however, we also need to turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ. When there is genuine repentance, there will be evidence of it in our behavior. Warren Wiersbe adds these thoughts:

⁸Judith A. Odor, “Light and Darkness,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, 475.

¹⁰Ibid., 571.

¹¹Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

¹²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, 613.

¹³Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977)

¹⁴Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

¹⁵Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 466.

“When Paul had asked, ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ (Acts 9:6) he meant it sincerely; and when the Lord told him, he obeyed orders immediately. He began right at Damascus and it almost cost him his life (Acts 9:20–25). Likewise, when he had witnessed to the Jews in Jerusalem, they attempted to kill him (Acts 9:29–30). In spite of repeated discouragements and dangers, Paul had remained obedient to the call and the vision that Jesus Christ gave him. Nothing moved him! (Acts 20:24)”¹⁶

3. **Verses 21-22** – Paul emphasizes that the Jews tried to kill him because he had been proclaiming **“...no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come...”** (cf. verses 6-7).
4. **Verse 23** – The prophets and Moses foretold that **“...the Christ (Messiah) would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”**

¹⁶Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 506.