

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

LESSON NO. 3 - Read Acts 26 + 1 Corinthians 15

Saul the Christ-hater becomes Paul the Christ-lover.

Saul of Tarsus, the expert scholar and likely member of Israel's highest ruling legislative and religious body, The Sanhedrin, is "born again" on the road to Damascus where he had planned to persecute, imprison and kill any lover of Jesus Christ he might find.

The Lord Jesus reveals Himself in wonderful majesty to Saul, gives him a totally changed heart and sends him out to be baptized and instructed by a man named Ananias. When the Lord Jesus, who is Sovereign over the entire universe, calls any man to follow Him, that man or woman MUST follow.

Mark 8: 33-35 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

Because of the love that is now begotten in the heart of all "new-born ones", the person who sees Jesus Christ clearly revealed in Scripture will begin to do what Saul began to do: Immediately begin to tell everyone possible about Jesus Christ and His love for the souls of every person ever born.

Where do we next find Saul, whose name was changed to Paul for his new life's work as a Christ-lover and Christ-follower?

Acts 26 -

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself."

So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: **2** "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, **3** especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

4 "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. **5** They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. **6** And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. **7** To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. **8** Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things [a]contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. **10** This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. **11** And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

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Paul Recounts His Conversion

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.’

Paul's Post-Conversion Life

19 “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, **20** but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. **21** For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. **22** Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— **23** that the Christ 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.”

Agrippa Parries Paul's Challenge

24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!”

25 But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. **26** For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. **27** King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.”

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, ***“You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”***

29 And Paul said, ***“I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”***

30 When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; **31** and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.”

32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

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What was the simple truth which Paul, the Christ-lover, now declared to the world?

1 Corinthians 15 -

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, **4** and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures, **5** and that **He was seen** by Cephas, then by the twelve. **6** After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. **7** After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. **8** Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain**; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. **11** Therefore, whether it was I or they, **so we preach and so you believed.**

The Risen Christ, Our Hope

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **13** But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. **14** And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. **15** Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. **16** For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. **17** And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! **18** Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The Last Enemy Destroyed

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have [d]fallen asleep. **21** For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. **23** But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. **24** Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. **25** For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. **26** The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. **27** For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. **28** Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Effects of Denying the Resurrection

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29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? **30** And **why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?** **31** I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. **32** If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

33 Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” **34** Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

A Glorious Body

35 But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?”

36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. **37** And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. **38** But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds.

40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. **41** There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, **it is raised in incorruption.** **43** It is sown in dishonor, b. It is sown in weakness, **it is raised in power.** **44** It is sown a natural body, **it is raised a spiritual body.** There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. **45** And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. **47** The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. **48** As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. **49** And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.**

Our Final Victory

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. **51** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54** So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “**Death is swallowed up in victory.**”

55

“O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?”

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56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. **57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Application: Have you seen the risen Christ? Have you said, *“Yes Lord, I will follow you wherever you ask me to go and I trust you will lead me every step of the way. It is my highest blessing and privilege to simply declare to everyone: ‘Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God and I love Him. I want the world to only know this one thing about me, that I am a Christ-lover and Christ follower!’ “*

Please write down any questions and forward to us. We will attempt to answers as we are given clarity, time and opportunity.

All our love to you in Christ - Jon + Philis