

Saul the Persecutor to Paul the Preacher

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- [0 : 00] Let us sing to God's praise verses from Psalm 32. Psalm 32 from the beginning down to the double verse marked 5.
- O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned. All the transgression he hath done, his sin, is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, and in his spirit there is no guile nor fraud is found therein.
- When as I did refrain my speech and silent was my tongue, my bones then waxed old because I roared all day long. For upon me both day and night thine hand did heavy lie, so that my moisture turn it to us in summer drought thereby.
- We'll sing to the end of the double verse marked 5. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned.
- All the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered.
- [1 : 38] friendships hard and not the excommunication he hath done.
- All the transgression he hath done, whose sin is conveyed asses. All the transgression he hath done, There is no kind, nor fraud is half therein.
- When I signed in, we filled my grief, and silent was my hand.
- My bones and words at all be mine, I roared all day long.
- For upon me, both day and night, thine love in heaven is high.
- [3 : 10] So love my boys are carnivore, and summer's love divine.
- I bear alone how underly my sin acknowledged.
- And thy boys lie iniquity, I have no coverage.
- I will fall present to the Lord.
- My trespasses and I, unknown sin I created.
- [4 : 30] Forgive me, I am not.
- I guess to turn now to Paul's epistle to the Galatians, in chapter 1. Galatians chapter 1, reading at verse 11.
- Amen. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it, and profited in the Jews religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly serous of the traditions of my father.
- And so on. We resume our consideration of this epistle, noting tonight that Paul is now sharing some autobiographical detail.
- [5 : 57] As we read together from the book of Acts, a familiar account of how the Lord met with him on the road to Damascus.

And many say that that is the point at which Paul was converted. Very often it is identified as the point at which conversion took place.

But as with many of the experiences of the Lord's people, it is seldom the experience of one moment.

Although I suppose we have to acknowledge that you are only alive or dead. You are a stranger to God and you are brought into the compass of the fellowship of his family.

But it is clear from Paul's own confession that the Lord was dealing with him prior to that encounter. But he is telling his testimony as it were, or speaking really about what is true of himself, not to attract attention to himself as such, but to allay the fears of some who are brought to question the reality of his faith or the reality of his role as an apostle.

[7 : 48] And there are many who are intent on undermining the confidence that people have in the preaching of the apostle.

And we see, or we have seen, how he saw himself as a servant of Christ. And that is the motive that he has for presenting the gospel.

He is not there to serve himself. He is not there to be self-serving or seeking honour from men.

His role as an apostle is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I want us to notice, first of all, the emphasis that he places upon the gospel that he preaches as to its source.

He is able to confidently assert that this gospel that he preaches came to him directly from God himself, or through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 06] And secondly, we have to appreciate the wonder of the person of the apostle as saved, when contrasted with what he was before the grace of God entered into his life.

We have to appreciate the extreme position that he occupied before coming to faith in Christ.

So first of all, the gospel that he preaches. He says, I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It seems a slightly untidy way of expressing the truth that he wants to convey. But very often we find that the translation of the Greek original language is a bit like that.

But simply put, what he is saying is that all he now knows about Christ came from one source, and that was directly from the Lord himself.

[10 : 40] Now he is not saying that he hasn't come to more knowledge than he possessed, because clearly that would not be true. Even in his unregenerate state, he was confronted again and again by Christian believers.

He heard what he believed, he understood what he believed, and even though he didn't believe it himself, that knowledge was his.

And Paul, as an individual, is surely a remarkable man with the faculty of reason and understanding, and probably a very strong memory.

So he would know quite a fair bit about the Lord Jesus Christ. But that's not what he's talking about, the accumulated knowledge that he has, but rather the knowledge that he came into possession of directly from the Lord himself.

And that was what was instrumental in bringing him to faith in Jesus Christ.

[11 : 54] We can say that ourselves, that those of us and most of us have grown up within a gospel context.

We've heard the scripture, we've read the scripture, we've heard the testimony of God's people, and these things may have penetrated our minds and our hearts to a degree, without being the means by which we are converted.

But when the grace of God comes, and the word of God in the hand of the Holy Spirit, with regenerating power, that is what is essential for bringing us to a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it is then undergirded or accompanied, more than likely, with other knowledge that we possess. He is, what Paul is saying here, and he is saying it to those who are, who are, who are his enemies, those who are resisting what he is doing, those who are, as I said, undermining his endeavors as a servant of God.

He is, he is plainly asserting that he is what he is, as a gospel preacher, as an apostle of the Lord, by reason of the intervention of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

[13 : 39] If we read his words in 1 Corinthians 15, he speaks of himself as an apostle. He says, Last of all, he was seen of me also as one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, that I am not meant to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Now these words clearly make plain to us that the experience that Paul, or Saul of Tarsish, had, that he attributes to God, are identified by him as being the source of the gospel.

The gospel that penetrated his heart, and with which he was then entrusted to go out and proclaim to others. Now, when he speaks of himself as the least of all the apostles, the commentators would debate this point and say, what does he mean by that?

Does he mean that he was the last of the apostles to come to a knowledge of Christ, or does he, in all humility, consider himself to be of a lesser sort than all the other apostles?

[15 : 20] And clearly Paul is somebody who is not endowed with a proud spirit. He is somebody who knows that he is what he is by the grace of God, and that's no bad thing.

The commentator, the author, Joseph Pippa, speaking about the kind of person the apostle Paul was, he says that he received his message directly from Jesus.

Now, when you read the account, the blindness, the physical blindness that Paul suffered, or Saul suffered, prohibited physical manifestation in the ordinary sense.

But he was able to recognize whose voice it was and discern him in a different way to those who were alongside him because they heard the voice but they didn't know whose voice it was.

Paul, on the other hand, or Saul, on the other hand, knew that it was the voice of the Lord. And to Paul, this is all important.

[16 : 42] When he is describing his role as an apostle and his purpose in declaring the gospel, he has this certainty. Whatever people say, nobody can take away from him his experience.

I think I was listening to somebody recently who was talking about their own experience of seeing Jesus and nobody would be able to dissuade them that they hadn't seen Jesus physically with the eyes of their head.

and while we might not have seen the physical sight of the Lord, it would be wrong of us to take away from such a person that what they saw was in some way as close to being the person of the Lord Jesus as you could get to see him.

but we have to remember that when it comes to physical manifestations of the divine, especially the second person, the Lord who is God, who is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is Spirit, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man, retaining the two distinct natures, but Christ is in glory and he is in glory as the God-man and while he may choose to reveal himself on the scene of time in a physical manifestation, he is sitting at the right hand of the majesty on high and you cannot displace him.

I think that would be my answer if a person asks, but I would not and should not take away the confidence a person has in what they experienced in the way that God dealt with them.

[18 : 54] Paul is charged to deliver the gospel, he has no authority to change it and even though his enemies blame him for that, and suggest that that is what he is doing, they have no warrant for doing that.

For example, John MacArthur speaks a lot about the kind of enmity that Saul or Paul as he became known from the point of his conversion, the kind of enmity that was directed against him, in a sense was easy for his detractors because he was unlike the other twelve who were not well known in the church.

He wasn't, he was different to them, they were well known apostles, they had seen and walked with the living Lord before and after his death on the cross.

Whereas Paul was not with them and Paul did not walk with the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ physically as they did.

And that was part of the armory of those who sought to undermine his confidence. But Paul was not to be shaken. And that's what he says, I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[20 : 49] And that was an unshakable belief that he had, a confidence that the person who had revealed the gospel to him did it supernaturally and the one who revealed it supernaturally to him was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the second thing, what seems to solidify the argument in Paul's mind is what he once was. And it's not a surprise because the kind of person that the apostle was before he encountered the risen Christ, Christ.

He was an enemy of the cross. He was intent on the destruction of those who were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What they knew of him prior to his conversion, he was quite confident that they knew who he was and what he was engaged in.

he said to them, you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews religion. He was well known.

[22 : 07] You know yourself, the chapter that we read when Ananias was told, go and meet this person, go and speak to this person, go and relay these words from the Lord to him.

he was terrified because he knew fine who Paul was, who Saul of Tarsus was, and the last thing in his mind was to go into the company of somebody who was intent on the destruction of the church.

And clearly he earned that reputation. He earned that reputation.

beyond measure I persecuted the church of Christ and wasted it, and profited in the Jewish religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my father.

Paul was engaged in a vendetta against those who had forsaken the church of Christ or the church of, pardon me, the believing Jews.

[23 : 28] He had abandoned, they had abandoned the church of their fathers, the belief system of their fathers, departed from it, and that made Paul or Saul as he was even more zealous in bringing them to account.

And he was personally responsible for putting men and women in prison. Now, some people don't like the idea of accusing Saul as he was of murder.

other. And they will say, yes, he was present when Stephen was put to death. And that is as far as you can say, the scripture doesn't say to you that he physically put anyone to death.

But remember, Saul was somebody who knew the word of God, who understood the ten commandments, and he understood the reality of what murder was.

And whether he was instrumental, personally instrumental in putting a person to death, the fact that he acknowledges, I gave my voice against them when they were put to death.

[24 : 56] He acquiesced in their death. He insisted in fact upon it so that when he took them to prison, it wasn't the kind of prisons that you got today that he was putting them into.

They very probably died in these prisons because they were brutal regimes that operated them. Men and women were put to these places possibly to die in them.

And he knew that and he was responsible for putting them there. But he is nothing if not honest. And his honesty is to be admired.

But at the same time, the people that were hearing him knew too well the kind of behaviour that he had towards the church.

But the thing for us to notice is that his seal was not after knowledge. He was diligent beyond words.

[26 : 01] Now someone described and it's not difficult for you to glean this from the scripture. He was somebody in his seal, in his own perverted view of what God wanted him to do.

He attended God's house when he was required. He prayed when he was required. He read the scripture when he was orthodox to the last letter.

He believed in many of the doctrines of the Bible and yet he did not believe in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He believed the Bible spoke of somebody of that name who was going to come as God's saviour to sinners yet he did not believe.

Jesus Christ was that person and that is the fundamental problem that many people have especially those who are raised under the gospel.

[27 : 10] They have a knowledge but it is not sufficient to save because it has not gone beyond the point at which they have put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Christ. I was reading some of you will have read the account that we have of the men of sky and there was an interesting person mentioned there.

I think there's three Donald Munroes. There was one involved at the time of the Reformation. There was one mentioned in the men of sky and there was another one at the end of the 19th century.

But this Donald Munro, he was physically blind and he was a musician.

He used to play the violin or fiddle. And because he was incredibly gifted, he had a powerful memory and probably that is why he was actually entrusted with being a catechist going around the districts reading, not even reading, but telling people about the scripture.

[28 : 32] Somebody said about him that he had memorized the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and that he had it in his memory. Because he was blind, he couldn't read.

But his role as catechist required him to go around the district where he was given this job to do. But not only was he blind physically, he was spiritually blind.

And sometimes he would go into the company and once he had done his catechizing, they would hear him play the fiddle. And I think the account that we have of him doesn't really, he's not very sure of when he was converted or how he was converted.

But when he was converted, he would tell people about their soul and the need that they had for salvation. And he would, he was very powerful, powerfully used by God.

And one of the blind who used to come to hear the blind, the fiddler, said, we preferred you better when you used to play to us the dunes.

[29 : 49] And he said to them, well, he said, if I had remained as I was, regardless of what you saw me do or heard me do, I would have gone to a lost eternity.

and in that sense, the gifts that Paul had before he saw the Lord, powerful as they were, knowledgeable as he was in the scripture, with a great grasp of all the doctrines that the Jews were familiar with, they would have cast him headlong into a lost eternity.

And it wasn't until he came to know, the Lord for himself, that he was able to speak for the Lord in the way that the Lord wanted him to.

And whatever grasp he had of the traditions, and there were traditions you know that Jesus condemned as well, not just the scriptures and what the scripture commends to the Jews, but also their own traditions.

He was probably as full of these as he was of the scripture, but God intervened and took him to himself and he was able then, with that confidence of the change brought by God in him, to resist strenuously all who sought to undermine the role that he had.

[31 : 24] God in God in the God in the God in the autobiography. This autobiography.

Well, we're going to consider this passage further. I have another duty tonight, so we'll close with prayer. Oh Lord God, we pray that you would bless your word to us, bless to us the consideration that we have of your servant you took from the darkness of the persecuting seal of your own church to being a wonderful preacher of the gospel, powerfully presenting Jesus Christ and him alone for salvation.

Bless us together we pray and remember all entrusted to you in prayer even anew this night. Forgive sin in Jesus name. Amen. Our closing psalm is psalm 32 again.

We're singing in Gaelic the last two verses of the psalm. Psalm 32 and the last two verses. This line for brown a clock and ur pneumonia lo together and mo known for long as■ peng chroncopienza and raspberry song horn song lyunff Ari horn wp hon n Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 08] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.