

Paul's Example Testimony

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Date: 18 February 2024

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[0:00] I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun.

Brighter than the sun that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness to the things in which you have seen in me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for your word. As we open your word, we know that your word is living and powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

It is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. You've given us your word today so that we can make application to our life. And like a surgery this morning, you are cutting things out of our heart and mind that don't need to be there.

[1:55] And you are healing things and putting things together in right ways. So this morning we pray that as this word is applied to our life, that you would open the eyes of people who don't know you so that they will recognize your absence in their life.

And for those that do know you, I pray that this would be a time of encouragement and sharpening and challenge so that they, knowing what you've done in their life, can proclaim you as they have been called to do.

And so Lord, just be with us in this, guide us and direct us in this, and we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

I saw Russell Crowe, you know Russell Crowe, like gladiator Russell Crowe actor, talking about his movies. And some of his movies I can imagine he doesn't want his kids to see, but he was talking about that, talking about just his family and his films.

And what he said was, in this interview, he said, my children have never watched my films. My children have never watched my films. Charlie knows that Daddy makes movies, but he says they're not good enough to watch.

[3:14] I thought about that because you think about if my life was a movie, right? We've had that discussion in our family as we go through different trials from time to time.

Man, if we were a movie, nobody would watch this. The story's so redundant, you know? Would it be good enough to watch? Would your life be a story that's worth telling?

Would it be worth somebody listening to? Would there be value to it? If you're a follower of Christ, and if you're saying no, I just want to tell you this morning that you are wrong.

You're wrong. The reality is that your life is worth telling, and your story is worth telling. You may not think that.

You may not think there's anything significant in your life. You may not think that your story means anything to anybody, but the reality is, if you're a follower of Christ Jesus, something has happened in your life that's worth telling.

[4:21] And it's worth telling from the context of your story. And this is partially what we see here in the text this morning.

As we talked last week about Paul getting his story straight, and us, and the necessity of us getting our story straight, so that we can share it effectively, so that we can tell people what's happened in our life in a way that will be effective in communicating the things that are important, so that people can hear our story, and in the end, come to faith in Christ, because of not just the content of our story, but how our story interacts with the story of Christ and the gospel.

We talked about it in terms of being the handrail, as my mad carpentry skills were able to provide. Okay, my limited carpentry skills are able to provide.

Okay, my sad carpentry skills, at least, are able to provide some minuscule glimpse into some reality here, because we talked about the layers being added to that wood and creating strength so that somebody could take that curved rail and be guided down the staircase.

And so for us, just talking about our story in terms of being like a handrail that will guide somebody, help somebody get a hold of something as they walk down the stairs, guide them as they go up and down.

[6:00] It is not the gospel, but it is a guide that God has given us to help us communicate the gospel, help get people up and down those stairs.

And so it's helpful. We are commanded, according to the Scripture, to give a reason for the hope that is in us. That is the hope of Christ.

But notice that when Paul even said that, it is the hope that is in us. There is the interaction of the gospel at work in our life that God is using to communicate the gospel.

And it's one that God has given us. It's the main tool in your arsenal of ministry. Whoever you are, however old you are, your testimony is that tool.

So last week, we dealt with the first main layer of that, and we talked about the different parts of that as we talked about this divine conversion that we see in Paul.

[7:11] And in his life, what we saw was first, that first section was dealing with the past. And how important that is for us to share that we have a past.

Nobody has always been a Christian. Nobody. There is not one single example of a conversion in the Bible where someone was always a follower of Christ.

Not one. Please bring it to me so that I can be corrected in it.

But I'm going to tell you right now, you're not going to find it. There is no example in the New Testament of anybody that was always a believer. There is example after example after example of people who were somewhere whose life is described without Christ who came to Jesus.

Found Him. Or rather, He found them. And the reality is, that past is important to communicate as we're telling our story because people need to recognize that you were not always a Christian.

[8:25] They need to hear that because they need to recognize even if they have been in church all of their life, they have not always been a Christian. And we need that challenge.

We described it in terms of a divine conversion. This is a work of God. God has changed somebody. Changed me. And this is my story.

And so I'm sharing the past of that. And as we said last week, a divine conversion first includes a comparison of my life without Christ.

That's the past. So today we're looking at the second part and that is not only does a divine conversion include a comparison of my past without Christ, a divine conversion includes a personal confrontation in a moment of time.

Personal confrontation in a moment of time. We discussed it last week as the first part of that, that first layer being the how, how my life was before Jesus.

[9:35] And today we're talking about it in terms of the wow. It's the how and this is the wow, the moment where I was confronted with the reality of Christ and was changed.

That experience. And then from here, the next message will be the now or how my life is after Christ. And those three layers are the main layers of our testimony, our story.

And so as you're examining yourself, you are trying to see where, what does my story look like if I'm going to communicate the gospel effectively and fulfill the mission of God in my life.

And if you're a believer, this is your mission. To communicate Christ. Christ. That's your mission. As you worship the Lord, as you walk with the Lord, you are called to be a witness for the Lord. You are called to give a testimony of what has happened in your life so that you can explain the gospel and demonstrate the reason for the hope that's in you.

[10:40] So you've got to get this. This is the most important message of your life. The most. It's more important than every crisis that you're facing at work.

It's more important than every family difficulty that you have. It's more important than your financial problems today. It's more important than the difficulty you're having in your marriage today or with your friends or your relational things.

Whatever all those things are that are clouding your mind that Satan wants to distract you with. The reality is there is nothing more important than this. Divine conversion includes a personal confrontation in a moment of time.

It's the wow moment. So Paul is an extreme example of a divine conversion. And I say he's an extreme example because when you read his testimony you're reading through it going, I didn't experience that.

Right? You're looking at this, man, a light shone around him. I mean, a bright light that brought everybody down to their faces on the ground that other people saw.

[11:50] And this voice from heaven speaking, this audible, seemingly sound of God's voice speaking to Paul and calling him to repentance.

And you're thinking to yourself, well, I didn't get that. Do I have a story at all? Well, you'll notice in the New Testament that all of the testimonies that are given in the New Testament don't sound like that.

His is very unique. This is a very intense example of conversion and it's intense for a reason because Paul, as we discover in this text, is going to be an example for the Gentiles that his conversion is, although unique in so many ways, is going to have fundamentals to it that are going to be the basis of his proclamation to the Gentiles and then in turn the proclamation of the Gentiles to the rest of the lost world.

This pattern that's going to be laid out in the Apostle Paul is going to be the pattern of the story with all the fundamental components that make up the layers to this part of his story.

And what you're going to see in here is that these layers are spelled out for us in a way that you can then start examining it and saying, well, what does that look like in my life? I didn't have a big light shining around me, but what did it look like?

[13:17] How is, what does my story sound like and what does it mean? When did Christ come? When did it make sense to me? When was my life divinely changed by God?

There's a few observations we make at the beginning of this as we're looking at this text. Number one, it is a moment of divine interruption in Paul's life. This is something significant about his story. He's, he's moving along in life. You see it in verse 12 in this connection as I continue my story. I was, as he said in the verse before, I was persecuting these Christians even to foreign cities. He was showing the extent of his sin. And in this connection, I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and the commission of the chief priest. What was he doing?

He's following through to the, in the full extent of his sin. He's going to Damascus and he's going there with the purpose of persecuting believers. And this story, we find the details of it in Acts chapter 9.

[14:24] So, so he's already shared some of the details of that, how he got the authority from the chief priest. He was serious about this and he's on his way. He is in the course of his life fulfilling his sinful life and all of a sudden he is divinely interrupted.

This is part of a conversion story. There is a moment of divine interruption where you are moving along in your life, in the course of your life, and it was not you seeking God, it was God seeking you. Right? This reality is significant. We want to make seeker friendly churches. So we want to be, we want to appeal to lost people and take all the crosses out of the buildings and take all of our religious words out and we want to speak in ways that is just so generic because we want to make it palatable for lost people.

That's been the generation before us and I think there is a reaction against that in our generation where people are realizing that was stupid. Stupid.

We've made no distinction between the church and the world and it's difficult to see the difference in us. the reality is there is a divine interruption that happens in our life.

[15:43] Christ is seeking us and he's calling us out of our sin. He's calling us out of our self-righteousness. There is secondly a moment of divine illumination.

You saw the change of direction that was required in his life. He was on the road. What a picture for all of us, right? He's on the road. It's like you're on the road of life. You're moving along.

I was sinking deep in sin having a wonderful time, right? It's not how that song goes in case you're wondering. I was sinking deep in sin far from the faithful shore.

But for most of us it was I was sinking deep in sin having a wonderful time and then all of a sudden Jesus comes in and interrupts my life. What happened to Paul?

A moment of divine illumination. You see the light shining and this theme of light shining is the theme of proclamation of the gospel even as Jesus talked about himself being the light.

[16:46] I am the light of the world. And the contrast is seen now in Paul's past life and what's happening this divine illumination that's showing him the contrast of the darkness that he has been living in.

it becomes a picture for us in some way. Pattern if you will. It's a discernible difference now between light and darkness and this light he said was shining brighter than the sun.

I mean bright. And so it's not that he couldn't see the difference it's that it was so bright it was so overwhelmingly bright that I can't not see the difference.

God's will is actually discernible. It's he's not hiding from us it's not like the divine secret okay it's like I'm just I'm going to see if you can guess the answer to this question and then I'll let you into heaven okay it's a mystery it's hidden somewhere and I'm going to hide it you're going to find it maybe and you can be saved.

No it's actually it doesn't work that way. It is a divine interruption it's divine illumination God reveals himself that's the message of the scripture that scripture is a revelation of Christ he's revealed himself even when Peter comes to faith in Christ and makes the declaration you are the Christ the son of the living God how do you know this Peter?

[18:18] Who revealed this to you? The father revealed this to you this isn't something that you conjectured or came up with on your own divine revelation divine illumination and it leads to divine thirdly divine instruction and you see this in verse 16 and verse 19 the moment you respond to the call of God it's a revelation so that there's instruction to call you in and so you notice even in verse 18 I'm sorry verse 16 no I'm sorry verse 14 I'll get it eventually verse 14 and when when we had fallen to the ground I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew language Saul Saul why are you persecuting me?

a call for introspection a personal confrontation where there's introspection and now I'm examining my life why are you persecuting me?

why are you against me? and then not only a personal introspection but a personal identification of Christ this isn't a need for church this isn't a need for religion it's not a need for psycho pop psychology whatever it's not a need for new relationships it's not a need for better you all those kinds of things it's actually a revelation of Christ I need Christ in my life I remember talking to somebody Brandy and I were sitting at Amazio's Pizza we like to do that bring somebody to lunch and try to explain the gospel and try to have gospel conversations and and I remember sitting with somebody one time and and we were talking about a relationship with the Lord and this lady said she said you know I've my life is just not right it's not things are not in order and I've got so many people just saying you just need church and she said

I don't need church I need Jesus and I don't know how to get there and we were just like oh man what a what an open door of opportunity right I don't need church a lost person that it's more than that it's an identification of Christ a personal revelation that you need Jesus you don't just need more religion in your life and it's a call a personal call for change and direction as he says rise stand to your feet and Paul's response in verse 19 and I did not disobey personal response a call to rise stand to your feet to walk we get more details in some of the other testimony remember this is a

condensed version is this everything he said we don't know but this is the important thing that we need to hear it's a divine call moment of divine interruption a moment of divine illumination a moment of divine instruction and so what does it instruct us to do and here here is the gist of this for us as I was studying this

I was like man how clearly does he lay this out five things that a divine confrontation involves and this is part of the layering of our testimony notice what he says and this is the verses 16 through 18 and you'll see this break down in that passage into component parts okay 16 through 18 but rise stand upon your feet for I have appeared to you for this purpose to appoint you as a servant and a witness to what to things in which you have seen me in this vision you've seen me you've gotten to see something and these things what are you going to do with them things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I'm sending you so you're going to be a witness and I'm sending you what are you going to do what are you going to tell them

[22:51] I'm sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from power the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me what have you just seen in me Paul these things these are the parts of his eyes being opened remember the picture is he's been blinded and his eyes are being opened to who Christ is he's getting a revelation of Christ and who he is in his life and these parts are going to be the parts of what he shares in I mean Luke is sharing the story in the book of Acts and he has told Paul's testimony for the third time now you realize that this is the third time he's gone through Paul's story first was the description as it unfolded in the historical account then in chapter 22 so that was in Acts 9 1 then in

Acts chapter 22 verse 6 he tells the story again it's the message that he's preaching as he's yanked out of the temple in Jerusalem and the centurions are all there and now he's standing before the governor he's standing before the military tribunal he's standing before all of the significant people in the city and what does he do he shares his testimony again it is the platform for his preaching and he's going to do this over and over and over through the scripture you're going to read it in Philippians you're going to read it in Galatians and every time it for his preaching it all stems from his testimony of transformation a divine work of God in my life that opened my eyes to the reality of the gospel here he's giving instruction on the message that he's going to proclaim to the Gentiles that in turn as he's appointed to proclaim it to them that they can now see that in their own life and proclaim it from their testimony to anyone who comes to Christ is going to be a witness to the things that they have seen in Christ anyone everyone if you have come to faith in Christ Jesus then you have a personal experience with Jesus that needs to be told a divine conversion so what are the things that he sees that he's going to proclaim that are going to be fundamental to every divine conversion that we need to share number one when it's a divine conversion it confronts you with a moment of revelation to open their eyes in in the account for

Paul it says in Acts 9 8 Saul rose from the ground and although his eyes were opened he saw nothing so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus and for three days he was without sight he neither ate nor drank Paul's conversion is an example for us of eyes that were closed that are now opened it's the story of the blind man right the testimony of the blind man when the Pharisees come and they're like who gave you permission to teach or preach on the Sabbath and be healed on the Sabbath and all those kinds of things and he said look dude I don't know what happened but I was blind and now I see Jesus is the one that did it it's his testimony I couldn't see and now I see the message of the gospel in my testimony is the moment my eyes were opened to who Jesus is the preaching of the gospel is to proclaim in such a way is to reveal

Jesus for who he is so that people can see Jesus for who he is in their life he says why did you why do you kick against the go what does that even mean right I heard that the first I don't even know usually how we are with stuff like that is we just like skip over it I'll go to whatever is next right I don't know what that means what's next I'm waiting for something to jump out at me and the reality is when you study the scripture the more you dig in the more you realize that almost every word in there is something that's going to jump out at you if you'll just get a hold of it right what do you kick against the goads a goad is as I looked it up it's talking about a pointy stick kicking against pointy

sticks what does that even mean and I'm trying to envision this and I'm like what I don't get it at all until I start realizing that those pointy sticks were the sticks that were used by whoever was driving the donkeys or the horses or the cattle it was a prod it's difficult for you to kick against the prodding isn't it

[28:13] Saul the sovereignty of God the God of the universe who keeps speaking into your life who keeps calling you to himself who keeps bringing conviction into your life and into your heart you keep kicking against him isn't it hard Saul isn't it difficult for you to keep running from God I can't get away from this gospel message I remember that as a lost person I was like are people sending a newsletter out about me you know every time I talk to somebody they seem to get right at the heart of my sin and I'm like good grief are they talking about me I go to church and it's like the pastor knows something about me right you ever felt that way like when somebody's preaching and you're like did somebody talk to him had somebody come to me after a sermon actually it was a couple days after I preached came to me during that week and he said I want to know if my wife talked to you I have no idea what you're talking about no

I know I she had to have talked to you about this I'm like brother I'm going to tell you right now I have not talked to your wife about anything but I will guarantee you this the Lord is talking to you about something right it's hard to kick against the goats God's sovereign he is relentless he is pursuing that's why the releasing the hounds of heaven against us you know we're running from God and faith and mercy and grace are pursuing us God is after us John 8 12 again Jesus spoke to them saying I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life I am the light I open eyes you can see begins with a moment of revelation it's what Paul preached 2 Corinthians 4 6 for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of

God in the face of Jesus Christ it is God who has revealed Christ to us it was a moment of revelation a moment of opening my eyes so that I could see I couldn't see before I didn't know I needed Jesus and in a moment of time he interrupted my life he stepped into my life and opened my eyes and I realized my only hope is in Jesus Christ he preached it in Colossians Colossians 1 13 it is he who has delivered us from the domain of darkness transferring us into his kingdom the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption you were in darkness but now you're in light in the Lord therefore walk as children of light amen amen 1 Peter Peter preaches this same way he says it in this way he says but you are a chosen race 1

Peter 2 9 you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people of his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light revelation what was the moment of revelation where you realized you needed Jesus in your life and as you examine the past of your life and you're saying I just I'm scouring my life for every moment I can't find that I need you to hear me as sincerely as I can say it if your story does not conform to the reality of scripture you need a new story not just a moment of revelation but it involves also a moment of repentance and this is key we don't like to talk about repentance that's not a contemporary thought is it our contemporary churches churches in our city will not use the word repentance you believe that it's all over the bible that doesn't matter notice how he said it so that they may turn from darkness to light this is the message this is what you've seen in me it's an illumination in your heart that has driven you to a point where you turned from darkness to light and you hear the story in

Acts 22 12 when he unpacks it a little bit there there was a man by the name of Ananias a devout man according to the law well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there he came to me Paul said and standing by me he said to me brother Saul receive your sight and at that very hour I received my sight and I saw him and he said the God of our fathers appointed you to know his will to see the righteous one to see the righteous one to see Jesus for who he is the righteous one and to hear a voice from his mouth for you will be a witness to him for everyone of what you have seen and heard the purpose of this revelation is so that you're going to go do something you've got to turn from where you're at and turn to Jesus a turning you'll be a witness to everyone who's what you've seen and heard and so why do you wait rise and be baptized and wash your sins away calling on his name what a gospel message right that is gospel preaching right there that is clarity in the message

calling to repentance why do you wait

[34:26] Saul what's holding you back from turning to Jesus you're in darkness you're on the road and in this conversion you've been blinded that's just the beginning this is where Paul turned rise and be baptized it wasn't baptism that's just the symbolic outward expression of the inward change where he turns from sin and turns to Christ and demonstrates it in baptism showing the outward cleansing of what's happened inwardly call on his name Saul turn from sin and it's not just turning from his sin although his sin was grievous and that is such an extreme example he was a persecutor of churches and you say well my story I wasn't persecuting anybody and maybe you were a little kid when you accepted Christ and you didn't have like a heroin addict mentality that wasn't the picture of your life you weren't an alcoholic you were like 12 or maybe you were an alcoholic when you were 12

I don't know I don't know what your story is but it's going to be different but the fundamentals are the same there isn't a divine revelation moment and then there's a repentance moment it's repenting from not only the sinfulness but it's also from the empty righteousness this you may have been good you may have been somebody that followed the law that was Nicodemus story right I've done this from my youth and this was Paul's story too but what Paul said in Philippians 3 he said but you know what at that moment that turning point for me whatever gain I had I was a Pharisee I was all these things I was to the law I was obedient but whatever gain I had I have counted loss for the sake of Christ indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as my

Lord it's turning from my extreme sinfulness and my righteousness without him so I would say yes he gets us right he gets us that commercial irritates me so bad there's something good there there's some truth there the question is who's the message to if your message is to rebuke Christians for not loving people enough I understand that but that's not who you're sending the message to if you're sending the message to lost people where 100 million people will see a message that's only a partial gospel and never hear the other side the scripture describes that partial gospel as a false gospel 100 100 million people heard the message that they're okay right where they're at and the good people that aren't loving me enough are the wicked ones that need to repent and I'm actually okay I'm accepted he gets me he gets me in my homosexuality he gets me in my transgenderism he gets me in my racism he gets me in my crime he gets me in my drug addictions he gets me in my psychological problems that I've inflicted on my own soul he gets me for all the weakness that I have in every way he gets me he gets me he gets me wham wham wham wham what a whiny sissy empty gospel empty and it's empty because 99 million people do not get the other part of that message if they have a million people respond to their call center and get to hear from some small percentage of people that will that will somehow you know get them to an evangelical church out of all the churches that they're recommending and find one church that's going to actually preach the Paul Harvey rest of the story and want some small insignificant percentage of the hundred million people that heard that message will never hear the other side that their sin has separated them from a holy God and unless they repent they are headed to destruction it is the message of the gospel there is no gospel preaching in the Bible that is complete without the call to repent every seven major sermons preached in the book of Acts involve repentance as part of the gospel message so he gets us and for some of y'all he's gonna get us if you take repentance out of the story all you have left is a message that's just the love story sin has no sting to be removed hell has no heat to be avoided it's a hallmark channel gospel where you get Jesus for Christmas or something notice repentance led to forgiveness that's the gospel repentance is followed here by forgiveness you see in verse 14 and when

[40:08] I'm sorry chapter 26 verse 16 16 but rise stand on your feet for I have appeared to you for this purpose to appoint you as a servant and a witness to the things which you have seen in me and those which will appear to you delivering you from the people and the Gentiles to whom I'm sending you to open their eyes verse 18 so that they may turn from darkness and to light from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness forgiveness of sins act 319 this is the preaching of

the gospel repent therefore and turn back that your sins may be blotted out that times of refreshing may come in the time in the name of the Lord or in the presence of the Lord repentance is what leads to forgiveness there is no forgiveness without repentance it's part of it it's the result of repentance repentance leads to restoration as he goes on to say forgiveness of sins and so that they'll take their place among those who are sanctified restoration find a place in Jesus a place in his name this is the gospel when did you repent sin when did you find forgiveness in your life when did you find restoration wholeness fulfillment in Jesus when did you find that that's part of your story that's Paul's story this is the pattern that he's going to preach to the Gentiles this is what the Gentiles need to hear it's what you need to hear so that you'll hear the gospel and conform your life and the story that you're telling to the scriptures and the example that Paul has been given for us that you'll be sanctified meaning cleansed set apart made holy

Paul said if anyone has grounds to boast man you would think I was holy Philippians 3:4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh I'm more circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrews as to the law a Pharisee as to zeal a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law blameless but whatever gain I have my sinfulness and my righteousness are seen in light of who Jesus is and how good I thought I was before now I weep at this because I've seen Christ for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things I count them as rubbish or I count them as dumb my righteousness was dumb

I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that which comes through faith in Christ rich young ruler came by night comes to Jesus Matthew 19 great testimony just of religious people church people church kind of people teacher what good deed must I do to have eternal life why do you ask me what's good Jesus digging self reflection causing him to think the only one that's good he would in her life keep the commandments keep the commandments follow think of the ten commandments follow those which ones he said I mean there's so many if you're a Pharisee there's one for every day of the year there's literally 365 commandments written down for me to follow and it's meticulous rules that have been written out

Jesus saying hey look to the commandments have you followed those how'd that work out for you how's that working out for you how's that looking in your life feeling righteous and yet you're still coming to me because you're empty feeling righteous thinking you're doing the right thing and yet there's something gnawing at your soul because you don't know me I'm the son of God in your presence it's not just faith of the son of God who died for us 2000 years ago he sees Jesus face to face he's in the presence of God he's looking at God in the face all these I've kept I've been righteous I've been good really let's dig a little deeper he's sell all that you have and give to the poor found the spot for he was rich he had much wealth wasn't that he needed to sell all that he had that's not what

Jesus was saying but Jesus was giving at the heart of his sin separated him from a holy God he's not so holy after all the picture of what our testimony should look like have I come to faith in Jesus because really this is the big number three part of this it's not just a moment of revelation a moment of repentance but it is a moment of response when did I respond to this when did I have that as he described that faith moment faith an absolute trust the moment where I turned from trusting in my own righteousness to save me or my own goodness to save me or turning from any other pursuit that was going to take away the sting of my sin outside of Jesus because now my mind's been illuminated I've got revelation he's shown himself in my life I need

[46:41] Jesus I need to turn from my sin and I need to turn to Christ in faith this is my response verse 19 I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision he tells the Ephesian believers this very thing for by grace you have been saved through faith it is not your own doing oh Ephesian believers I found this out the hard way it is the gift of God it's not by works so that no one may boast not even me I'm the chief of sinners separated from God some of you here this morning have had a conversion experience and you're nervous about being misunderstood you're worried

about being misunderstood there's a huge amount of anxiety in your heart about sharing your testimony sharing your story you need to go through layer by layer and examine yourself and make sure that your story actually lines up with the story and if your story doesn't line up with the story then it's not that the scripture needs to line up to your experience it's that your experience needs to line up to the scripture you've got to conform to the wall some of you you don't know which parts of your story are important to recall and this gives guidance to you that you can look through piece by piece part by part put it together and further some of you some of you are here and you have not had a conversion experience and the anxiety that you feel is the fear that you're going to be exposed at some point and the reality is you will be well maybe not in this life

I don't know it could be but one day it's all coming out everybody's personal testimony has a wow moment a moment in time when you responded to the call of Christ a moment of confrontation with Jesus a fork in the road a decision point it's not an encounter with the church it's not an encounter with psychotherapy or pop psychology it's not some kind of reduced moralism it's not a message of social justice or equity it's not find religion it is you coming to Jesus turning from sin and putting your faith in the only hope for eternal life this is going to be offensive to you it is it's offensive to us Paul talks about it in 1st Corinthians 1 18 it's the foolishness of the cross it's foolish to those who are perishing it's offensive to your mind you reject it you do not want this you're inside you're screaming in rebellion against this you do not want it Matthew 10 Jesus explains it in Matthew 10 34 do not think that I've come to bring peace on the earth I have come to bring peace I've come to bring a sword I've come to set man against his father and a daughter against his mother and a daughter in law against her mother in law a person's enemies will be those of his own household the gospel brings division it's offensive it's offensive in so many different ways number one it confronts your universalist heart your universalist heart is the one that's wanting to say well God's not going to send them to hell for this or that just because they're gay he's going to send them to hell just because they love somebody he's going to send them help just because they tell a lie and it's the reality of our universalist heart is wanting everybody to get to go and not wanting anybody to suffer in some way and

Jesus says guess what that's not how the gospel works in John 14 6 he clarified it for us he said in case you're wondering about this universalist heart that's wanting everybody to go to heaven I am the way I am the truth I am the life and no one comes to the father except through me and this message is offensive to you and it confronts your morals it's at odds with your contemporary sense of values and lifestyle I'm not going to follow a Jesus who is going to condemn people for their sexuality I'm not going to follow somebody because he hates homosexuality or because he won't let women preach I'm not going to follow a God like that well guess what you don't get to decide God's standards for him you don't get to decide the boundaries for him you don't get to decide and it's going to be a confrontation of your morals in that it's going to be a confrontation of your feelings because you feel like your sin guess what he is but he has the right to judge your sin so it's not a judgmentalism that you're thinking he's going to judge your sin and your conscience is screaming to you telling you that judgment is coming it's going to confront your personal experiences

I was baptized when I was a kid I look back do I remember my faith and my repentance I don't remember all that but I remember being baptized and that is not a unique story I've heard that so many times you're going to go to heaven with that I thought of you know times that I didn't I look back and there were times everybody's got their report on their desk and I don't want to look left out I did zero and so I pick up some papers and put them on my desk so it looks like I've got something and I'm sitting there and one by one people are giving their report and I know it's coming to me and the entire time I'm just like dying a thousand deaths inside I don't hear a word of any report given I don't know what's going on all I know is that man there's coming a moment where I'm getting ready to have to show that

[53:52] I've got nothing nothing I grew up in a Christian home you're going to heaven with that and present that to God are you kidding I was baptized I was a church member I read my Bible I did this or that and you could go through a thousand things that you've done and listen to what

you're saying I did this I did this I did this I did this and there are going to be many in that day where the scripture says there are many who are going to say did we not do many mighty works in your name and Jesus said and in that moment I will declare I never knew you you you are going to heaven with that Paul Washer had it right when he said it this way the cross is not a sign of our great worth but of our great depravity that we were so evil even in our goodness that we were so evil that the only way we could be saved is by

God's son being crushed under the full force of God's wrath that was due us so whatever perspective you're coming from about your sinfulness or your righteousness before there better be a wow moment where you came to realize that Jesus is everything I won't share all these examples I was going through just example after example in history of significant people that gave their life to Christ I was reading about Augustine just his testimony his story Augustine great teacher of the early church and so much just theologically rich things that he produced for the church that have lasted hundreds and hundreds of years he wasn't perfect but he had so many good things but as a young man he was characterized by loose living that was his story he would follow various philosophers and then he would get delusional move on to another one and then one day this immoral man is outdoors and he imagined in his mind the voice of a child singing a song pick it up and read it pick it up and read it

Augustine deep theological thinker he's hearing this kid's song he said it sounded as if it was a kid's song never heard such a song he said but then I thought the thought struck me maybe God is trying to tell me something he found a Bible he picked it up he opened and the first passage he saw was in Romans 13 let us walk properly as in the daytime not in orgies or drunkenness not in sexual immorality or sensuality not in quarreling or jealousy but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires and he said and in that moment the light flooded into my life flooded into my life and he turned from his sin and he turned to Christ and was saved and you just think man what a great picture of salvation and then Martin Luther coming along reading Augustine as a monk an Augustinian monk following that order and then he comes in 1545 and he's reflecting on his own conversion and he says something like this in his journal meanwhile I had already during that year returned to interpret the Psalms he's a religious guy I had confidence in the fact that I was more skillful after I had lectured in the university on St.

Paul's epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians and the one to Hebrews I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the epistle to the Romans but up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart but a single word in chapter 1 in the righteousness of God is revealed and that stood out to me in a way for I hated that word Martin Luther said righteousness of God this is my righteousness I'm the one serving God my righteousness which according to the use and custom of all teachers I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal and active righteousness as they call it with which God is righteous and righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner though I lived as a monk without reproach I felt that I was a sinner before God in this with an extremely disturbed conscience now

[58:58] I could not believe that he was that he was placated by my satisfaction I did not love yes I hated the righteousness of God who punishes sinners and secretly if not blasphemously certainly I murmured greatly against him I was angry with God and said as if indeed it was not enough that miserable sinners eternally lost through original sin are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments without having God add more pain upon pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with this righteousness and wrath and thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience nevertheless I beat importunately importunately old English upon Paul at that place most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted at last by the mercy of God meditating day and night

I gave heed to the context of the words namely in it the righteousness of God is revealed as it is written he who through faith is righteous shall live he who through faith is righteous shall live and there I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God namely by faith and this is the meaning the righteousness of God is revealed by the

gospel namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith as it is written he who through faith is righteous shall live here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates there a totally other face of the entire scripture now showed itself to me a religious man interpreting

Romans and Hebrews Charles Spurgeon I'll give one more let me give one more I quote him all the time and I read through and I came across his conversion story and I was like oh man and then I realized as this one commentator said he shared this story in his sermon 280 times it was years and years upon the brink of hell I mean in my own feeling he said I was unhappy I was desponding I was despairing I dreamed of hell my life was full of sorrow and wretchedness believing I was lost he was 15 years old I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair had it not been for the goodness of God and sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning when I was going to a place of worship he ended up going to a different place he grew up in a congregational church and he stopped at this very strange alleyway where there was a small

Methodist church and the preacher at the Methodist church wasn't preaching that day because of the snowstorm somebody just got up and preached it was a primitive Methodist chapel on artillery street he said and an unknown substitute lay preacher stepped into the pulpit to read this text Isaiah 45 verse 22 look unto me and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else that was it Spurgeon said and he had not much to say thank God for that compelled thank God for that for that compelled him to keep on repeating his text over and over and there was nothing needed by me at any rate except this text and then stopping he pointed to where I was sitting in the galley and he said that young man there looks very miserable what would happen if I did that on Sunday that guy

Dale and he shouted as I think only a primitive Methodist can look look young man look now look unto me many are looking to him but it's no no use looking here or there you'll never find any comfort in yourself some say look to God the Father no look to him by and by Jesus Christ says look unto me some on him say we must wait for the spirits working you have no business with that just now look to Christ the text says look unto me and assuming the perspective of Jesus the preacher continued Spurgeon said he said look unto me I am sweating drops of blood look unto me I am hanging on the cross look unto me

[64:34] I am dead and buried look unto me I rise again look unto me I ascend to heaven look unto me I am sitting at the father's right hand oh poor sinner look unto me he spoke only ten minutes Spurgeon said unlike your pastor he reached the end of his tether he said and then fixing his eyes on me when he said young man you look very miserable he could see it obey the text but if you obey now this moment you will be saved raising his hands he literally shouted young man look to Jesus Christ you have nothing to do but look and live and I had this vision

Spurgeon said not a vision to my eyes but to my heart God I saw what a Savior Christ was now I can never tell you how it was but I no sooner saw whom I was to believe than I also understood what I was to believe and I did believe in that moment and as the snow fell on the road home from this little house of prayer I thought every snowflake talked with me and told me of the pardon that I had found for I was white as the driven snow February 3rd 1990 I stood in an auditorium First Baptist West in Lockton Oklahoma I didn't understand everything about the Bible I didn't understand everything about Jesus I understood

I was a sinner I understood Jesus was a Savior and I didn't think he was a Savior I thought he was a Savior and I believed he died for my sin and I believe he rose again but even in that I believed he wanted me to respond to him in a personal response of turning from my sin and faith in him and February 3rd 1990 this lost sinner was saved h and changer He's God should live him but he was to