

The Promise

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[0 : 00] Quiet enough in our hearts to allow you to do what we know it is your purpose to do, and that is speak to us by your Holy Spirit.

Not speak to us just as a whole lot of people that are gathered together, but speak to each one of us in the particular circumstances of our lives. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I started out today very well, I think, by getting Professor Robert Pout to read the Scriptures. Because if you want to know what Paul looked like, he looked like Professor Pout. I don't know whether I should ask him to stand up so you could have another look. But that's about what I imagine St. Paul looked like, and that gives you a picture of who we're talking about.

And I want to tell you all about Paul, whose name originally was... I beg your pardon? Saul. Thank you very much.

[1 : 20] And he's called Saul for a long time, but then his name was changed to a more Roman name because he had a mission from Jesus to the Gentiles.

Now, this is what happened. The thing, the one thing I want you to understand today is how Paul came to know Jesus.

Now, there's hundreds of stories here of how people came to know Jesus. And the Schillenbergs are working in 800 languages in New Guinea trying to help people come to know Jesus.

So I want you to look at how one person came to know Jesus. His name was Saul, and his name became Paul. Now, it started out, because he tells most of the story of his life, even when he stood before King Agrippa.

He says, when I was a child, I did what my parents taught me to do. I believed in God.

[2 : 32] And we were very devout Jewish people. And everything we did was part of our serving God. The clothes we wore, the food we ate, the way we cut our hair, the language we spoke, the people we talked to, anybody could just look at us and know that the great business of our life was to serve God.

You could just tell by looking at us. And it was our business day and night in everything we did. When we went for a walk, when we sat down to talk, when we had meals, even if you looked at our houses that we lived in, you could tell that we were those who wanted by everything we could to serve God.

Now, the reason we did this, Paul said, was because we had been given a promise. And in that promise was the hope of our people.

Because we had been through persecution, and we had been through war, and we'd had our country taken away from us, we'd had our temple destroyed, we had every imaginable thing, terrible thing happen to us, but still we had hope.

And the reason we had hope was that we had this book. Part of this one right here. And in this book, we had been given a promise.

[4 : 07] And that promise was very important to us because our whole hope was based on that promise. Now, what was the promise, you might say?

Do you know what the promise was? Do you know what the promise was? If I asked you for the promise, would you know what it is? Well, it was a promise that was like a diamond.

It sparkled with so many different facets that it sparkled light into every part of our life. So listen, I've made a list of the promises. This sparkling diamond that was a promise to these people on which their hope was based.

They were promised that they would be given a shepherd, a good shepherd. They were promised that there was a just person who would not only be just, but he would do justice and he would come to be with them.

They had a promise that one day when they looked at the sky in the morning, the morning star would appear and that morning star would be a messenger from God, someone who brought God's will.

[5 : 19] They were told that there would be a special stone that was cut without hands and this stone would become the headstone of the corner and the whole of the kingdom of God would be built on this foundation and on this cornerstone.

They were told that there was one who would come who would be to them food and drink so that all the food they needed and all the drink they needed would be provided by this one who would come. They were told that there was one who would suffer and die for them. And that that would be very sad. But that out of it he would be raised to life again.

And Paul said we all believed that God could raise the dead. We'd never seen it happen but we believed that God could do it.

And that was part of his promise. What is contained in the promise was we once had a great king whose name was David but we were promised a greater king.

[6 : 28] We once had a wise king whose name was Solomon but we were promised a king who would be wiser than Solomon. We had a great prophet whose name was Moses and we were promised a prophet who would be greater than Moses.

We had a great soldier whose name was Joshua and we were told there would come one who was a greater soldier and win a greater battle than ever Joshua won.

We were told and listen to this that a child would be given to us. Somebody just like one of you. Just about the size of some of you.

One who would have come this morning and sat right here. A child. And about that child the promise was that the government of the whole world would be on his shoulders and his name would be called Wonderful Counselor the Mighty God the Everlasting Father.

That was the child that was to come. And we were told that he would be despised and rejected.

Well, those were the promises on which the hope was based.

[7 : 48] That one day that promise would be fulfilled. But how it was to be fulfilled nobody knew.

And so what Paul did and Paul was a Pharisee what Paul and all his forebears had done as Pharisees was that they did everything that God told them to do and they were meticulously careful about doing every possible thing that God wanted them to do.

The way they brushed the teeth the way they put on their clothes the way they ate their meals the way they related to their parents what they did on Sunday what food they ate and on and on it went. And they had 613 rules or commandments. And then to guard those so that there was no danger of ever breaking one of those they had other things that made it almost impossible to break them anyway.

And then beyond that they had a great hedge around them which protected them from anybody else who might come in and teach them to do things which weren't according to the 613 rules that they had.

And Paul worked night and day to serve God by in everything keeping all those rules. He wanted everybody to behave like that.

[9 : 04] Now what happened then of course was that Paul grew up anxious that everybody else should do what he did and that's what religious people are like and they're very troublesome.

And so Paul went around trying to get everybody to do what he did and he had his worst trouble with a new group of people that were springing up all over his part of the world and they said they were followers of Jesus.

And they said we don't have to obey the law of Moses all we have to do is to love Jesus and do what we love to do. We're not going to be have to people anymore we're going to be love to people from now on.

Now just in case some of you have antinomian tendencies I let me tell you that to hear the law of Moses ultimately means that you will love Jesus and to love Jesus ultimately means that you will obey the law of Moses.

But Paul hadn't understood that yet and that was the great discovery he was to make and he went around and anybody who didn't keep all these rules and regulations he went and found them out and had them thrown in prison he sometimes had them put to death.

[10:24] So important was it to him that they should maintain the hope of Israel that they should keep their part of the bargain in the promise that God had made to them and he was violently angry at those people who said they loved the Lord Jesus and so he went about doing that and one day he was in Jerusalem and he saw a young man his own age who loved the Lord Jesus and that young man said you know all the promises that were made to our forefathers about Joshua about Moses about the foundation stone do you know about the good shepherd about the just man do you know all those promises this young man said well they're fulfilled in Jesus well that disturbed Paul very much and not long after that that young man was stoned to death for saying it so indignant were they with him they threw stones at him until he was dead and Paul went on his journey and he went down to Damascus and as he was on his way to Damascus he discovered something that day about himself which he never knew before and he tells

Timothy about it when he writes a letter he said I didn't know but deep down I was a very violent person I was angry he said deep down I was a very ignorant person for though I knew all the laws and all the rules and regulations I didn't know what they meant and he said deep down all I wanted to do was hurt other people by persecuting them and the worst thing of all in me was that I was an unbeliever so that when Paul wrote to Timothy he said that Jesus had come into the world to save sinners and he said do you know who was the worst sinner of all Paul said it was me because I was violent and I was a persecutor and I was ignorant and I was an unbeliever and so it was on that road that a great light shone and Paul was knocked down and the light came to him and a question was asked of him and now listen to this question because it's a very strange question the question came to him was

Saul Saul why do you throw me in prison why do you want to kill me what have you got against me Saul you know how you should behave you've been told your conscience has been trained you've been directed why won't you do it if you know the law of Moses you must know me but Saul said I don't know who you are who are you and the voice came to him and said I'm Jesus and you see that was the moment at which Paul came to know Jesus and Jesus told him Paul I want you for a very special purpose I want you to be and these were the things that Paul was he was a servant of Jesus Christ a slave of Jesus

Christ a prisoner of Jesus Christ an ambassador of Jesus Christ he was an apostle of Jesus Christ the whole of his life from that point on had to do with his relationship to Jesus and Jesus said I want you to live your life so that anybody who ever sees you or anybody who ever hears you or anybody who ever comes in any kind of contact with you will know about me through your life and that's what Paul did with the rest of his life and he told this whole story that was read for us this morning he told this whole story to King Agrippa and King Agrippa was sitting in judgment on this man and Paul was standing before them and he had chains around his ankles and chains around his wrists and he couldn't move except to shuffle along with all these chains on him and he told all this story to King Agrippa who sat there in the splendor and majesty of all his finery and all his royal power and authority and Agrippa turned to Paul and said you're mad you're out of your mind what you say about

Jesus can't be true and you know what Paul said to him he said King Agrippa you know that what I'm saying is true because you know the scriptures you know the promise you know the hope and I wouldn't exchange my place with you for anything but I would love you to exchange your place for mine except he said for these chains I don't want to wish them on you but I wish you could take my place and then you would know and what would he know well this is what he'd know because this is how Paul ended his story about how he came to know Jesus listen to it it's from 2nd Timothy chapter 4 and verse 6 this was Paul this was the beginning of Paul's knowing Jesus and then these verses are from the end after he had lived his life in relationship to Jesus he said

[16:13] I am already on the point of being sacrificed the time of my departure by which he meant his death had come and he says I fought a good fight because I am a soldier of Jesus Christ I have finished the race because I am an athlete for Jesus Christ that puts my very best into I have kept the faith that Jesus is the fulfillment of the hope which was promised to my people and then he said and think of him saying this to King Agrippa who was there in his pomp and majesty and all his authority and all his royal robes Paul said henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who love his appearing and so

Paul you can tell the story of Paul's relationship to Jesus when he says to a king I wish that you were even as I am you have a temporal crown and you have a temporal authority and it will soon be taken away from you and it was but I will have a crown that will never be taken away and I will be made a king by somebody who has far more authority than you and that's how Paul came to know Jesus and that was the result of Paul becoming a servant of Jesus and that's what awaits us when we come to know Jesus too Amen for him himself and he has been