

**Text: Ac 26.18**

We are back in the book of Acts, where I am picking up some details in Paul's *apologia* (defence) before King Herod Agrippa II. We covered the broader passage, Acts 26.9-18, about a month ago, giving an overview of Paul's testimony of conversion.

Paul's testimony concerned his history as a persecutor and his conversion by the intervention of Jesus himself on the road to Damascus. This experience opened Paul's eyes to the Christian message and turned him from opposition to active support and proclamation.

We zeroed in on details with a look at "The Crucial Test of Genuine Christianity," Ac 26.11, and "Kicking Against the Goads," Ac 26.14.

- On the subject of persecution, we saw that our security lies in Christ alone, not in the strength of our will or convictions.
- On the phrase, "Kicking Against the Goads," we saw that Paul meant to say very plainly to his Gentile hearers that they were opposing God if they opposed his message.

Today we turn to one more detail, a really marvelous statement the Lord gives Paul in the vision concerning the purpose to which the Lord was sending him.

Read Ac 26.16-18, text 18

In our passage, the Lord gives Paul his authority for the ministry. The ministry has a specific purpose, which will enable specific results.

You all know, I am sure, what it is like to see indistinct objects clearly when the right lens is before your eyes.

I am obliged to wear lenses at all times since my eyes are very near-sighted. Without them, everything that is further than six inches from my face is indistinct.

Other objects are so difficult to discern that everyone must use lenses to see anything about them.

Very far objects require telescopes (of varying powers) to see any detail.

Very small objects require microscopes to distinguish details.

In high school, my lab partner and I discovered a single-cell animal going through the process of division into two animals.

The main benefit of this was that we got the rest of the school day off to record our “observations.”

Our verse is one that applies a clarifying lens to the gospel and helps us understand what is going on.

## A brief opening grammar lesson:

Three infinitives:

To open their eyes...

[to] turn from darkness...

[to] receive forgiveness...

Several ideas infinitives can express, but among the most common are “purpose” and “result”

Main verb: “I am sending you” (17)

Purpose: “to open their eyes” (18a)

Result: “so that they may turn [to turn] ... and that they may receive [to receive]” (18b)

I point this out in preparation for a point I want to make later in the message.

Ac 26.17 ... I am sending you, <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

**Proposition:** The mission of enlightenment enables the transformation of souls.

## I. The purpose of the preacher (the mission)

A. Blindness (depravity)

1. Inherited from Adam
2. Inclined to sin
3. Blind to the gospel

Ep 4.17-18 ¶ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,<sup>18</sup> being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart...

Depravity does not mean every individual is as bad as he can be, but that he walks in darkness and cannot see the gospel

## B. Opening blind eyes

1. A frequent metaphor in the Scriptures
2. The mission of the Messiah

Isa 42.6-7 "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,<sup>7</sup> To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

### 3. Transferred to his servants

Lk 24.46-48 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,<sup>47</sup> and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> "You are witnesses of these things.

### 4. Stated purpose here: "I am sending you to open their eyes"

## II. The essential result for the believer

- A. Opened eyes enables the *transition* from one spiritual realm to another
  1. Turn from darkness to light: a turn in the mind
  2. Turn from dominion of Satan to God: a turn of allegiance
- B. Opened eyes enables the *reception* of spiritual blessing
  1. Forgiveness of sins
  2. Inheritance among the sanctified

### III. The critical point of transformation

#### A. Remember the point of grammar

1. The apostle sent “to open the eyes”
2. The result: “so that they may turn...”

#### B. No apostle, nor any other preacher, can do the turning

1. The mission is to open the eyes
2. The mission is not to turn the souls

Sometimes a new Christian will speak about someone who led him to the Lord, “He saved me.”

That’s not quite right. The Lord saved him. The Christian witness just opened the eyes.

#### C. The reason for this: men are in darkness and can’t see without help

1 Cor 2.14 ¶ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1. Some say that the Holy Spirit opens the eyes and gives the faith
2. Our text says that the one believing “turns” — because his eyes are opened
3. What opened the eyes? The one on the mission from God: the preacher

Rm 10.14-17 ¶ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” <sup>16</sup> However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” <sup>17</sup> So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

4. Confirmation: our text says the ones turning “have been sanctified by faith in Me [Jesus]”

## 5. To sum up

- a. The Lord sends the preacher
- b. The preacher opens the eyes (by preaching the word)
- c. The believer responds in faith [turns], and receives forgiveness [salvation]

### **Conclusion:**

Some whose eyes are opened refuse to turn — they shut their eyes again. They won't believe.

The mission of enlightenment is ours: preach the word!

Those who believe, will receive.