

THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION

ACTS 26:16-18 • TV166A

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By **Henry T. Mahan**

Acts 26:16-18

“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

Let's turn to the book of **Acts, Chapter 26** for our message today. I believe that God has especially laid on my heart a message for this hour concerning the preacher's commission.

Now, there is much religion today; there are many churches and there is a lot of preaching. But, I just wonder how many in the pulpit and in the pew and in the world understand anything about the preacher's commission.

What is the preacher sent to do? What is the preacher sent to say? Who sent him anyway, to whom is he sent? There are so many questions that arise in the regard to preaching.

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I selected as my text **chapter 26 of the book of Acts**. I will begin reading with **verse 16**; if you have your **Bible turn to Acts 26 and let's look at verses 16, 17, and 18**.

The apostle Paul is speaking, he says; *“Rise and stand upon thy feet for I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister.”* “This is what God said to me,” Paul declared.

“I have appeared to thee to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou has seen and of these things in which I will appear to thee, (or the things I will show thee or teach thee).”

“I will deliver thee from the people; (you don't have to be afraid of the people); I will deliver thee from the Gentiles, (the heathen) unto whom now I send thee.”

Then Paul gives a five-fold commission: The Lord said, *“I have made thee a minister and a witness to the Gentiles to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and to turn them from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.”*

Now, in this Scripture, in the chapter we have read from, **Acts 26**, God's messenger, (and there is no doubt about this), Paul was God's messenger. He is standing here before King Agrippa; he is standing before the royal court.

I am sure the king was there and possibly the queen and many captains, chief men, leaders, and witnesses. Paul is appearing before King Agrippa.

Now, it is true that Paul was a prisoner, probably in chains. He was bound but the Word of God is never bound, the Word of God is never bound; God will send His Word, His Gospel, the Gospel of His grace to whom He will and when He will.

Here, Agrippa was the hearer and Paul was the preacher. God sent His messenger to King Agrippa. Little did King Agrippa realize the great act of mercy toward him by God in allowing him to hear the Lord's messenger.

Little did this pagan king realize how momentous was this hour, how important was this moment. He was actually listening to God Almighty's preacher, God Almighty's messenger.

I wonder if you and I realize the importance of hearing the Gospel from a man who is truly sent of God. When the Samaritan woman left her home that morning going to the well, I don't imagine that she entertained any thoughts at all about meeting the Son of God.

She left her home with the water pot on her shoulder and started to the well to draw water, something that she had done every day for many, many, years, clear back to the time that she was a little girl and went to the well with her mother.

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But, that very day, she met the Master, she met the Christ, she met the Son of God. That very day she was brought to knowledge of God's grace. That very day her whole life was changed; she became a child of God. You think about that!

I wonder when blind Bartimaeus gathered his blanket, his tin cup, and whatever he had, and started down to the corner, once again to sit on the street and beg, outside Jericho. He had been doing that for years and years and probably his father before him, who more than likely was blind.

The Scripture says, "*Bartimaeus was blind;*" he was a son of Timaeus. Here, he left home with his blanket and with his old coat and his ragged garments and went down to the streets to sit once again and beg. Little did he realize that that day he would see; that that day he would meet the Son of God that that day he would become a child of God.

I wonder about the thief on the cross, the morning of his crucifixion. He knew he was condemned to die. He knew that that was the day he was going to die. I doubt if he had any thought of heaven or hell, or judgment, or Christ, mercy, grace, or forgiveness, or any of these things.

Yet, that day they nailed him to that cross and right beside him the Son of God. Now, you think about that, the Son of God hanging on a cross beside him. That day he called for mercy and that day he was made an object of God's saving mercy. God visited him in mercy.

This is what I am saying; little did King Agrippa realize the possibility of that hour, the potential of that hour. Here, the king was sitting on his throne and right before him was God's messenger, God's minister, God's witness, God's apostle with God's saving grace with the good news of Jesus Christ.

I wonder as you turned on your television this morning if you had any thought of this being an unusual day, of this being a momentous occasion, this being an hour when God may be pleased to visit you in mercy.

You have heard the Gospel, probably with these ears many times. Wouldn't it be wonderful if today you heard it with your heart. You have seen the Bible, words on paper all of these years, wouldn't it be something if today like the Samaritan woman, that you met Christ?

If you meet Him you will meet Him in His Gospel. If you are saved it will be by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*"

"The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth;" it is by the preaching of the Gospel that men are saved.

Paul said of the Thessalonians, "*I know that you are God's elect because our gospel did not come to you in word only but in power, in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.*"

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Wouldn't it be something if like the Ethiopian Eunuch, riding from Jerusalem down to Ethiopia in the chariot, reading the Bible, not understanding what he read, not comprehending the mysteries of grace, not understanding how God can be just and justify, not knowing how God is pleased to show mercy to sinners, if God should send to you a Phillip.

Phillip walked along side. When the Eunuch spoke to him, Phillip said; "*Do you understand what you are reading?*" I'm sure that in shock he turned and looked at this man walking alongside the chariot. He said, "No, I really don't; I really don't understand. I'm reading Isaiah 53 but I really don't understand it."

Who is he talking about, himself or some other man? This man who was "*wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him and by his stripes we are healed;*" who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?

Phillip climbed up in the chariot and began at that Scripture and preached Christ to that man and that day he came to a saving knowledge of the Gospel.

That is what I am saying; it is some special day, it is a wonderful day and it is a day of all days, when God is pleased to cross the path of a sinner in saving mercy, when God is pleased to confront a sinner with His Gospel; "*today is the day of salvation,*" perhaps for somebody.

Anyway, Paul was preaching to Agrippa. Now, remember, the apostle Paul was a forceful preacher. If you will read this chapter when this TV program is over, you will find that Paul preached forcefully but courteously.

Paul wasn't mean, he wasn't harsh, he was a courteous preacher, very forceful and very plain, but very courteous. He was a bold preacher but not rude. Some preachers are rude but Paul was bold, but not rude.

Paul was persuasive; he said, "*I persuade men. I pray you, in Christ's stead; be ye reconciled to God.*" He was never apologetic. He never apologized for what he preached about, man's fall. He never apologized about what he preached about God's grace.

He never apologized for preaching about Christ's sufficiency. He never apologized for preaching the Holy Spirit's effectual work.

Paul never apologized for the truth. He said, "*Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that gospel which we have preached, let him be accursed.*"

He was a persuasive man but never apologetic and he spoke from experience. If you will notice these two things; let me show you this. He told Agrippa, "*The Lord God appeared to me on the road to Damascus.*"

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He told Agrippa how he was religious and how he hated Christ and how he didn't understand the Gospel. He told him how he thought salvation was in the law, in duties to the law, in ceremonies and traditions, in Feast Days and Holy Days.

He thought because of his Jewish heritage that he was automatically a child of God. He learned that all of these things were to no avail, that salvation was in Christ. God met him on the Damascus road and God stripped him and broke him. He said, *"I obtained mercy. I was a blasphemer; I was injurious; I persecuted the church."*

Do you know what a woman said to me recently? She said, "I have never heard a preacher; I have never heard a preacher call himself a sinner; in 30 years of going to church I have never heard a preacher call himself a sinner."

Paul did and this one will too. Paul said, *"Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief."* Yes sir, he said, *"I obtained mercy."* He said, *"I am not worthy to be an apostle. (I don't lay any claim to being anything). I am God's servant, God's messenger, and God's bond-slave."*

"I am not one wit behind the chief apostle; I am nothing. I am less than the least of all the saints." He said, *"Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief."*

He began to talk about what we were, but he said; *"God who is rich in mercy for his great love, wherewith, he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, quickened us together with Christ."*

He told Agrippa what he was; he identified with this man. He preached so that this man could identify with him. I don't want to hear an angel preach the Gospel. I don't believe that an angel could tell me a whole lot about the Gospel, certainly not from experience.

I want to hear somebody talk about the Gospel who has experienced it. I want somebody to talk about the grace of God who has partaken of it. I want somebody to talk about the mercy of God who has sued for mercy and received it.

I want a sinner to preach to me about a sinner's Saviour don't you? I like what old Richard Baxter use to say; "I preach as one who may never preach again. I preach as a dying man to dying men."

Paul knew that he was a sinner, he said, *"Of whom I am chief."* He was preaching to a sinner and he said, "you know; God appeared to me in the way on that road and God told me to stand on my feet, to stand on my feet and be his minister and a witness of two things."

First of all: He said, *"You will be a witness of those things that you have seen."*

You can't preach what you don't know. I say that to any minister who may be listening to my voice; you can't tell what you don't know any more than you can come back from where you haven't been.

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The only man who can preach repentance is one who has repented or is repenting. The only man who can preach faith is the man who has believed. The only man who can preach Christ is the man who himself has been brought by the grace of God into a living union with Jesus Christ.

Our Lord told Paul to preach what he had seen. Do you know that three times in the book of **1 John chapter 1**, John says this? *“That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that which we have seen and heard and our hands have handled of the word of life declare we unto you.”* We preach what we have experienced; we preach what we have experienced.

Then he said, *“Stand on your feet; you will be my minister to preach those things that you have seen and you have heard.”* Don't try to preach anything else!

Then, *“Preach those things that I will teach you, that I will reveal to you, that I will show you.”* You see; this is not our message. I don't have a message; it is His message. This is not our ministry; we don't have a ministry. It is His ministry; we are His ministers.

That is what the Lord said to Paul; *“You will be my minister and my witness.”* It is not our ministry and it is not our Gospel, it is His Gospel.

“Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men;” if it is, when they fall you will fall. Our faith must not, Paul said; *“it must not stand in the wisdom of men; it must stand in the power of God. It must not stand in men.”*

In **Philippians 3** Paul says, *“We are the true Israel; we are the true people of God,”* who have three marks, three characteristics; *“we worship God in spirit,* (not in form and ceremony and ritual), *but in spirit,* (not in tradition or custom or Holy Days).”

“We worship God in spirit.” God is Spirit and they that worship God worship Him not with trinkets and not with toys of religion and not with processions or put-on; they worship Him in spirit.

Secondly: We rejoice in Jesus Christ! We do not rejoice in ourselves, not in our denominations, not in our organizations and not in our works; we rejoice in Jesus Christ and *“we have no confidence in the flesh,”* yours, or mine, or anyone else's.

We don't bow down to any man. We don't call any man *“his holiness or father.”* Our Lord said, *“Don't you call any man your father; God is your father. Don't you call any man master; Christ is your Master.”* Don't you call any man *Rabbi; Christ is your teacher.”* That's right!

Paul said, *“God told me to stand on my feet and boldly preach what I have seen and heard and experienced and those things which he would be pleased to teach me.”*

Thirdly: Paul gave Agrippa, this pagan king, the preacher's commission.

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This is a strange place to find the preacher's commission but here it is. As Paul the apostle, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, but a bold and forceful and persuasive minister of the Gospel stands to give a witness before a heathen king and he said; "God Almighty made me a minister; he made me a witness; he made me an apostle, as one born out of due time and He gave me a five-fold commission.

First of all: He said, "*I am going to send you to open their eyes*"

My friends; it is perfectly clear from Scripture that men by nature do not see. Oh, I know; we see natural things and material things and physical things; that is not what I am talking about. Men by nature do not see the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

Men by nature do not see the mysteries of the Gospel. They do not see the wisdom of God in the cross. They do not see the attributes and character of God fulfilled in the sacrifice of His Son.

They do not see the need of a High Priest, of a Mediator, of redemption, of an honored Lord, of a vindicated justice they do not see.

Oh, they can understand religion and they can enter into good works and they can enter into the ceremonies and they can enter into some ways of trying to pacify a holy God but they cannot see into the mysteries of the Gospel.

"The carnal (natural) mind is enmity." It cannot understand the Gospel, the Gospel is foolishness to the natural mind. It is written; "*Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him.*"

Christ said, "*They have eyes but they don't see. They have ears but they don't hear. They have hearts but they don't understand.*" He said to Nicodemus, one of the chief, religious leaders, of his day; "*except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

Paul said; "*God sent me to open their eyes.*" I know that it takes the power of God's Spirit to give seeing eyes and hearing ears and an understanding heart. I know that the Holy Spirit regenerates, He awakens, and He enables men to see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

I know that men are taught of God. The Lord said, "*no man can come to me except my Father which sent me, draw him. They shall all be taught of God; every man that hath heard of the Father and learned of the Father cometh unto me.*"

But, it is the preacher's responsibility to preach that truth that the Holy Spirit uses to regenerate, to awaken, to convict, and to convert sinners, and to reveal Christ. It takes the Holy Spirit to reveal it but it takes the Word preached for the Holy Spirit to make it effectual.

What do we preach? What is the truth that we preach that opens blind eyes?

First of all: We preach the holiness and righteousness of God!

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Job made this statement: Job said, *“Lord; I’ve heard of you by the hearing of the ear but now mine eyes, (not these eyes here, not natural eyes, but mine eyes of faith, eyes of the inner-man; mine eyes) seeth thee, wherefore, I hate myself.”*

He saw the holiness of God and the righteousness of God. This is seen with eyes of faith in the Word as we declare who God is. Most preachers are not declaring *“the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence.”*

“Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple and all the voices of heaven cried, holy, holy, holy.” He said, *“When you come into the presence of God, let your words be few. God is in the heavens and you are on the earth.”*

How seldom do we hear a sermon on the awesomeness, majesty, holiness and righteousness of an unchangeable, infinite and immutable God. Martin Luther once said, “I will have nothing to do with an absolute God.” You better not have anything to do with an absolute God.

To Moses He said; *“You can’t look on me and live. No man hath seen God at any time.”* We don’t want anything to do with an absolute God; we want to do with God as Jehovah, as Saviour, as revealed in His Son.

The holiness of God is not being preached and the corruption of human nature is not being preached. It has to be preached; men won’t see it until it is preached.

The old-timers didn’t worry about offending the dignity of men. The old-timers didn’t worry about calling a spade a spade and a sinner a sinner. Paul didn’t worry about it. We preach the corruption of human nature by birth, by nature and by practice.

We preach the power and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His prophetic office, in His priestly office, and in His kingly office. He is a sufficient, effectual Redeemer, who made an atonement with which God is satisfied.

We preach the sufficiency of His sacrifice to put away all the sins of all the elect. We proclaim that vital union with Christ into which we are brought by God’s Spirit, ruined by the fall, redemption by the blood, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. *“He that seeth the Son (in His true nature and character); he that seeth the Son and believeth on him hath everlasting life.”*

Now, that will open blind eyes, but blind eyes will never be opened with error. Blind eyes will never be opened with compromise. Blind eyes will never be opened with ceremony; it says, *“Ever learning, and never coming to knowledge of the true.”*

It is going to take some plain, truthful, sincere, and simple preaching of the truth of God’s Word, to open blind eyes. That is what God sent us to do. He did not send us to get along with people; He sent us to preach the Gospel to them.

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He didn't send us to win friends and influence people; He sent us to preach the Gospel, to be His witness, His minister, His messenger, to this generation. Whatever they do with us it doesn't matter; it is their relationship with God that matters.

Then, I won't have any relationship with God unless we preachers stand up on our feet and tell the truth about God and the truth about men and the truth about Christ and the truth about salvation.

Secondly: He sent me to turn them from the power of Satan to the power of God.

My friend; I want to tell you something: it's not enough just to know the truth; it is imperative that we must love the truth. It's not enough that Christ be revealed to your mind, He must be received in your heart.

It's not enough that a man acknowledge Christ, he can, and must, and shall, bow to the claims of Jesus Christ. That is what Paul is talking about; God's people are turned from the power of Satan to the service of God Almighty, to the service of King Jesus.

They take His yoke upon them. They receive His brand upon them. A Christian is not a Christian only in creed but also in deed. A Christian is not just a Christian on Sunday but at all times. He's not just accepted Jesus as his personal Savior; he has bowed to Christ as his Lord and Master.

Thomas said, "*My Lord and my God.*" The Christian has not just changed his actions but his attitudes have been changed. It's not just his manners that have been adjusted but his motives have been changed.

The fruit of God's Spirit that dwells in every believer and the Scripture says, "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;*" he is none of His. We are not apologetic ambassadors; we are the King's ambassadors.

Let's tell men the truth; "*the fruit of the Spirit is love, (not hate, prejudice, and bigotry), but love, joy, (not despair and depression), but joy, and peace.*" It's not constant conflict within and without.

Most churches are torn asunder by factions, envy, division, and strife, anything in the world but peace. This is not of God. The fruit of the Spirit is peace and patience, gentleness, kindness, benevolence, and faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

"*You are not your own you are bought with a price.*" You don't belong to yourself. You don't belong to any man; you are bought with a price. He says, "*Therefore; glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.*"

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Yes sir; we have been conquered, we have been redeemed, and we have been bought and paid for. We belong to the King; we don't belong to anybody else, we belong to the King; we are His, He bought us and He redeemed us.

He purchased us with His own blood and we are His. We belong to the King. We have been turned from the influence and power of Satan to bow to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly: He said *"That they may receive the forgiveness of sin."*

I said a moment ago that the true preacher of God will not dignify human nature. He is not going to brag on it; he knows it by birth, by nature, by practice, and by choice, that we are sinners, every one of us.

"God looked down from heaven and saw that every imagination of man's heart is evil continually," evil compared to God's holiness, evil compared to God's glory. Man's thoughts and words may be good compared to man's thoughts and words but in the sight of God, in the presence of God's holiness, they are only evil continually.

"Even our righteousness in God's sight is filthy rags." I know that our righteousness and good works compared to other people's works and attitude may appear pretty good, pretty decent. I am talking about our righteousness compared with God's righteousness, our love as compared with God's love.

"There is none that doeth good, no not one." David said, *"My sins are everywhere before me."* John said, *"If any man say that he hath not sin he deceives himself and the truth is not in him. If he says he has no sin he makes God a liar."*

The true preacher knows that God's law and God's justice must be honored, must be satisfied, and must be vindicated. So, the question arises: *"How can man be just with God? How can he be clean that is born of a woman; how can God be just and justifier?"*

The true preacher found that answer in Jesus Christ: *"But of God are you in Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

"God sent his only begotten Son into this world, born of a woman, born under the law that we might be redeemed who are born under the law." God Almighty sent His Son into the world to be our Representative, our Surety, and our substitute and Saviour to die on the cross for us.

Fourthly: That we might receive an inheritance, an eternal inheritance. Peter said, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."*

Fifthly: All of this is by faith in Jesus Christ!

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All of these blessings and mercies come to us through Christ, by faith in Christ Jesus the Lord.

I pray that God will take this message and make it effectual to your heart, at least give you an interest to search the Scriptures, "*to see if these things be so,*" to look into the Word of God and to find life in Christ Jesus!