

# Double Darkness Natural and Religious

By Henry Mahan

**Bible Text:** Galatians 1:15-16

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If you will turn, please to Galatians one, the apostle writes in verse 13 of Galatians one, “You know my story. You know about my life,” he says. “You have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews religion how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and I wasted it. You know my story. I was a religionist to the extreme,” he said, “a religionist who did not know God. I was a self righteous Pharisee who did not know that I was a sinner. I hated the gospel of Jesus Christ not knowing that it was the only way to God. I persecuted people who believe the gospel. I haled them into prison who trusted Christ. In fact,” he says, “when I met the Lord, I was on my way to Damascus armed with papers, official papers which entitled me to put in prison anybody who named the name of Jesus Christ. But I met the Lord on that road and he revealed himself in me.”

Paul’s conversion was a remarkable conversion. The great persecutor became the world’s greatest preacher. The captor became the captive of the Lord. The chief agitator became the chief apostle. What a remarkable conversion.

But, my friends, I am here tonight to tell you that all conversions are remarkable. When God brings a sinner from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son, it is a miracle. When God raises a man from a spiritual tomb and gives him eternal life, it is a miracle. When almighty God turns one who hates him into one who loves him it is a miracle. It is called a new birth. It is called a new creation. And every conversion, contrary to public opinion in this day, every conversion to Christ is a miracle. And conversion to Christ is much more than a mental acceptance of religious facts. Now, believe it or not, conversion, redemption, regeneration, salvation or whatever term you want to use to describe it, is much more than giving mental acceptance to a few facts about God and about Christ and about his death and about his resurrection. And conversion is a whole lot more, contrary to public opinion in this day, conversion is a whole lot more than a decision to live a moral life or a religious life or a decision to adopt certain doctrinal principles and convictions and beliefs.

Paul had all this. He had all this before he met God. He said that over in Philippians three he told us that. He had all these things. And here in verse 14 he tells us that. Look at it. “And I profited. You know my story. I profited in the Jews’ religion. I was a success.” That is what he is saying. “I was not a failure. I knew everybody who was anybody. And they looked up to me. I was above many my equals in my own nation. I

was more zealous in the traditions, in the creeds, in the catechisms, in the doctrines, in the orthodoxy, in the theology, in the holy days, in the feasts, in the fastings. I was more diligent in prayer, in the law than anybody.”

Paul wasn't a nominal religionist. Paul was extremely successful. He believed in God. He believed in God. He believed the Bible was the Word of God. He had... you couldn't get Paul to say that the Bible had errors and contradictions in it; the Old Testament. He didn't have the New Testament. He had the Old Testament. But he believed in God. He believed the Bible was the Word of God. Every jot and tittle he believed. He was orthodox to the extreme. He was a diligent student of the Scriptures.

Paul was accused by one ruler of studying so much that he had lost his mind. He said, “Much learning, Paul, has made you crazy. You have studied too much, son. You need to take a vacation. You have just been in those books too much.”

He was a student, a diligent student of the Word. He lived a blameless religious life. No one could charge him with a violation of the written law. He kept the sabbath day. He kept every religious feast. He kept the Passover. He was the accepted leader of the religious people.

I wish there was some way, tonight, that I had the ability to draw a picture of this extremely, exceedingly religious man Saul of Tarsus. You couldn't believe how religious he was and how dedicated and how devout and how consecrated to what he believed, to his denomination, to his position, to his doctrine. He was consecrated. He was devout. And he would have destroyed anyone who disagreed with him. But he didn't know God. He did not know the living God. He didn't know himself. He didn't know God. He didn't know himself. He didn't know he was a child of wrath. He didn't know he was under condemnation. He was walking this religious road perfectly content, perfectly and absolutely persuaded that he was right in his worship. He was following the Old Testament Scriptures. And he was so strongly convinced and sincere that he was right that he was willing to commit to prison anyone who disagreed with him.

In fact, when they stoned Stephen, the deacon, the first martyr of the New Testament Church, the first man who died after our Lord was crucified and rose again, Stephen, this man Saul of Tarsus, this man of great power and position and prestige stood over there and held the coats of those who threw the stones. He didn't actually take part in the stoning, but he held the coats of the men who did it. He agreed with them that Stephen ought to die. He was doing... you talk about sincere.

I have heard people say, “Well, preacher, it doesn't matter what you believe, if you believe in God. Just so you are sincere.”

You won't find that...are you that sincere? Will you put to death a man who disagrees with you? Are you that convinced of what you believe? Are you that persuaded that you are right? Saul was. You talk about a man who was sincere, he bloodied his hands. He soiled his hands with the blood of men who disagreed with him, so extremist.

“You know my conversation. You know all about it.”

I'll tell you this. There is no darkness like religious blindness.

I want you to turn to Matthew six. Now, I want you to listen to this. Years and years and years ago I was listening to brother Rolfe Barnard preach and he got over here in Matthew chapter six and did a little work on this verse 22 and it gave me an understanding of that verse for the first time in my life. I want you to look at Matthew chapter six. Now, this is not worth our time if we do not make a personal application. Like Ronnie prayed a while ago, “Teach us thy Word. Lead us into thy Word that we may experience it.”

He says in Matthew 6:22, “The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eye be single,” or sound, if it be sound, “the whole body is going to be full of light. But if your eye be unsound evil, your whole body is going to be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.” That is the Lord speaking.

“What does he mean, pastor?”

All right, stay with me. Now, here is what our Lord is saying. The light of the body is the eye. In other words, what you see and the spiritual eye, what you understand, gives you illumination. It illuminates your whole being. It illuminates your whole being. What you see and what you understand. We are talking about not these eyes here. We are talking about a spiritual eye. We are talking about the eye of understanding. What you see and what you understand illuminates your whole being.

Now, if what you see is right and if it is sound and if it is true and if it is according to God's Word, if your understanding, if your eye of understanding is sound and you are taught of God, then your whole being, your heart, your mind, your principles, your conviction, your attitude, your whole being is going to be full of light and full of illumination and full of understanding and motivated by that which you see. The light of the body is the eye.

Now, that is true naturally. If I could not see there is no way that as I stand before you that I would know where Jack is sitting. I wouldn't even know whether he was here or not. If I was led in here blind and not a sound was made I wouldn't know whether anybody was here or not. I wouldn't know who was here or if they were even here or if the place was packed, you see. I have no light.

But now what makes me see Ed Ballard sitting there and know who he is and think about him and see Mike and Debbie sitting here and think about them and understand who it is and the smile on their face and so forth. I understand. My heart reaches out to them. My understanding, my affection is all influenced by what I see. Do you understand what I am saying? Your light of the body is the eye. And if I can see good my whole being is illuminated by what I see. My understanding is cleared up.

That is true spiritually. That is true spiritually. The light of my whole being is my eye. What I see.

Oh, someone says, "You see?"

Yes. I see. I understand. And if what I understand is sound, if what I understand is true, if what I understand of God is true, if what I understand of myself is true, if it is sound, if it is clear, if it is factual, if it is according to God's Word, if what I understand about sin and what I understand about substitution and what I understand about redemption and what I understand about eternal life, if what I take into my eyes, my spiritual eyes, is sound, my whole body is going to be illuminated. My whole being will be illuminated. I will have the right thoughts about myself. I will have the right thoughts about you. I will be able to forgive. I will be able to show mercy. I will be able to love. I will be able to play. I will be able to put things in their proper perspective. I will be able to understand the value of things spiritual and material and natural.

You see, if you...if your eye is sound then your whole being is going to be straight.

But now watch this. But if your eye be unsound, if the information you are taking in is wrong... Suppose I am drunk I see two Mikes. Now it ain't like that. There are not two Mikes here tonight. I look out there and see four doors. That's not right. There are not four doors. My whole...my perspective is all off. It is all wrong. I am getting the wrong information. And as I walk toward the door I will go in the wrong door. I will hit the wall. You see, I am getting the wrong...If your eye is unsound and if your spiritual eye is unsound then your whole body is going to be full of darkness.

Do you see what it is saying so far? If your eye be evil, if your eye be unsound, if what you understand about God... I was preaching this morning who God is. Now, if you don't understand that your conception of God's all wrong. You don't know how to pray. You don't know how to praise him. You don't know how to approach him. You don't know how to plead for mercy. You don't have a mediator. You don't understand substitution. You don't understand the atonement. You don't understand your sin. You don't understand your inability. You don't understand God's command. You are going to go about it all wrong. Maybe you will take part in burning candles and counting beads and bowing and scraping and crawling on beds of glass and making crusades to the holy land and all this foolishness. Your eye is unsound so your whole understanding is unsound. You have taken in false preaching. You have taken in false words. You have taken in false doctrine. You have taken in the commandments of men instead of the Word of God. And so your whole understanding is perverted.

Are you with me so far? That is what Christ is saying here.

Now, the light of the body is the eye. What the body...what it's response is, is going to be dictated by what it takes in. If I am out on the street and I am fixing to cross the street

and I look and there is a car coming. My body is going to respond. I back up, let the car by. If I don't see my body is going to get in trouble.

And he said, "If your eye is sound, if your spiritual eye is sound and you are taking in truth, your whole body is going to be full of light and understanding and wisdom, spiritual wisdom. But if your eye of understanding is unsound, your whole body is going to be full of darkness.

Now, watch this next line. "If, therefore, the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness."

In other words, if your eye of understanding is unsound and what you call light, what you call wisdom, what you call spiritual understanding, if it is darkness, you have got a double darkness. You have got a double darkness. You have got a natural darkness and you have got a spiritual darkness. You have got darkness among darkness.

Here is what he is saying. The man without any religion at all, the man without any opinion of God, any opinion of himself, any opinion of Christ, the man without any religion at all is better off than a man with a false religion and a false idea of God. The heathen is in darkness. But the religionist is hedged about with a darkness that surrounds a darkness. The Gentile had no knowledge of God. The Gentile had no understanding of God. He had no prophets. He had no law. He had no gospel. He lived in darkness.

Now, for God to be revealed to his heart only required that his darkness of unbelief be penetrated by the divine revelation. That is all. Here is a man who has no religion. He has no preconceived notions of God, of Christ, of the gospel, of the cross, of resurrection, of the gospel or anything else. He is just a heathen. He is just a barbarian. He is just an unbeliever.

Now, all you have got to do is penetrate his unbelief with divine light, with the truth of the gospel. That is all. He is naked. All you have got to do is bring him a robe. He is dead. All you have got to do is bring him the message of life. He is sick. All you have got to do is take him to the doctor.

But Saul of Tarsus and every religionist, he had no knowledge of God, which was darkness. But he had built up, through the years, and through his religious studies and through his orthodoxy, he had built up a false idea of God. He not only had no knowledge of God, but he had a false knowledge of God and a false knowledge of righteousness and a false knowledge of the law. And before his natural unbelief could be dealt with, God had to deal with his false religion.

Do you see what I am saying?

Here is a natural heathen. He knows nothing about the gospel. He is in darkness, the darkness of unbelief. He doesn't understand. But if you bring him the gospel you don't have to tear down anything to get to him. All you have got to do is get to him with the

gospel. But when you come to a religionist, he is in darkness. But the first thing you have got to deal with is not his darkness by nature, not his sin by nature. The Holy Spirit has to deal with is religious forts that he has built up. The Holy Spirit has got to deal with his religion.

This is our problem today. We can't get to a man's natural problems because he has got too many religious fortresses out there. He has got too many religious beliefs. He has got his religious orthodoxy and his...what he thinks about God. You come to tell him what the Bible says about God, he has already got his opinion of God. And that...his god has to be slain before you can ever begin to deal with his need of the living God. He is not just naked, he is wrapped in righteous rags.

Do you see what I am saying?

He is not just naked. The heathen is just naked. He knows he is naked. He knows he is a sinner.

Take the woman who came in when Christ was having dinner in the Pharisees' home. And he was lying there and this woman was a harlot. And she came in and bathed his feet with tears and dried them with the hair of her head.

Now, she knew she was a harlot. She knew she was a sinner. She knew she was doing wrong. She knew she had sin. She knew she needed help. All Christ has to do is minister to her with the gospel and tell her about his grace and his love and his kindness and mercy to sinners.

“I came to seek and to save the lost.”

But now wait a minute. Here sits the Pharisee up here. He is just as lost as she is. He is just as dead as she is. He is just as wicked in his heart as she is. He is just as naked before God as she is. He is just as much on the road to hell as she is. But do you think Christ would accomplish one thing by talking to him about grace and mercy and love and the cross and the blood and the atonement? He has got to have his god to kill. He has got to have his religion destroyed. He is not just dead, he is double dead. He thinks he is alive. Before the sinner can be raised all God has to do is speak. But before the religious man can be raised God has got to kill him and then raise him.

He is not just without hope. He thinks he has hope.

Turn to Matthew chapter nine. Let me show you something over here. If that light which is in you, that religious light which you think is light, if it be darkness, how great is that darkness? How great is that darkness? Naked, but all clothed with self righteous rags.

And God comes to minister and he says, “I have got a robe for you.”

“I don’t need a robe. I have got a robe. Of course, it is got a bunch of holes in it. Lord, if you would just patch it up right here and back here a little bit, you know, and sew the pocket. I think I can make out all right.”

No. The Lord has to do it. The Lord has to strip him, break him down. Double darkness. Double darkness.

Come to a man, “I want to tell you about the Lord.”

“Oh, I know about that. You see, I have been in church longer than you have. I was raised in a church. My brother was a preacher. My dad was a preacher. Somebody else in the family was a preacher. And we have been pillars of that church for years. We have got religion.”

No, you are wasting your time because God almighty by the power of his Spirit has to kill that sinner, has to shut his mouth, has to strip him, has...this is the reason there are so many unsaved preachers. They are in double darkness. They have got walls of resistance and walls of rebellion and walls of religion built all around them. And they cannot be penetrated. This is the reason there are so many lost church members. Because these preachers have given them a hope. They are not without hope. They have a hope. They have got life. They will tell you, “I have got life.” That life is darkness. But it is life. And God says, Christ says, “How great is that darkness. How impossible to do anything with it.”

Look at Matthew nine, verse 11. And here our Lord was, in verse 10, Matthew 9:10, “It came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.” Here are these people in natural darkness, you know. They are sinners and they know it. They are publicans and sinners and our Lord wasn’t ashamed to eat with them and talk with them and minister to them. He came to save sinners. He came to save the lost.

But when the Pharisees saw it they said to his disciples, “Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners?”

“Well, what are you?”

“Well, we be not sinners. We be not sinners.”

And when Jesus heard that he said to them, “They that are whole do not need a doctor.” He wasn’t implying that these men were whole. “But they that are sick.”

But I’ll tell you. The first thing a man has got to find out before he seeks a doctor, he has got to find out he is sick. And if he never finds out he is sick, he will perish under the power of that disease.

Christ said, "You go," verse 13, "and learn what that means, 'I will have mercy, mercy and not sacrifice. I am not come to call the righteous, those who think themselves righteous, those who believe themselves righteous, those who are in darkness hedged about by darkness, those who are in a refuge of lies hiding in a false refuge surrounded by a protective wall of religion.'"

It is hopeless.

Let's go back to the text now, Galatians one. That is that double darkness. That is what Paul was in. All right, how did Paul get out of it? Well, let me show you. Galatians chapter one. I will be a lot briefer than I was this morning. Galatians one.

He said, "You know my life's story. You know all about it. You know what I was."

Paul's conversion...do you know what Paul called his conversion? A pattern conversion, a pattern to those who should afterward believe. He is a pattern of all men who are brought to Christ, but in particular, Paul is a pattern of those who are brought to Christ out of religion, out of religion.

Now, I will tell you the story, the life story of everybody here who had religion before you met Christ. It is right here. It is right here.

What did God do first? What is the first thing he did? He stripped you of your false religion. He showed you that what you believed was not true, what you professed was not real, what you claimed to know about God was actually error. God had to slay your false ideas of God before he revealed to you the truth of Christ. And Paul gives his story now in six statements.

Let's look at it briefly, Galatians 1:15. "But when it pleased God, when it pleased God." Now, my friends, everything begins with God. Creation began with God. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Man began with God. God said, "Let us make man." The kingdom of grace began with God. Paul said, "I thank God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Love began with God. "We love him because he first loved us." Christ came from God. "When it pleased God in the fullness of time to send forth his Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were born under the law." God sent Christ. "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son." We didn't send for Christ. God sent Christ. The death of Christ came from God. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." The preaching of the gospel came from God. It says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

So everything starts with God. Paul is going to talk about being delivered from this double darkness, from this death within death, from this refuge of lies within a refuge of lies. God...he is going to tell how God delivered him and he starts where every man has to start, "When it pleased God." That is where it starts.

All right, secondly. “When it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb.” Now, don’t call me a fatalist. And please don’t call me a hard shell. And please don’t call me an antinomian. And please, if you don’t mind, don’t call me anything like that, but just understand this is what God’s Word teaches and I must preach it and I believe it. That those who are the objects of God’s grace now always have been the objects of God’s grace. I can’t explain that. I just know the Bible teaches that. That is what God’s Word teaches. That those who are right now the objects of God’s grace and of God’s love, since God does not change, he said, “I am the Lord. I change not.” “I declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done saying, ‘My counsel shall stand.’” God doesn’t change. God doesn’t learn anything. He knows all things. God doesn’t forget anything. God is all wise. And whatever God does in 1978 he intended to do. He purposed to do. He planned to do. He foreordained to do. He predestinated to do before he started this whole thing. That has to be so or you make God a changeable, mutable, finite creature while the Scripture teaches that God is immutable which is unchangeable. God is infinite.

The reason the Bible uses foreknowledge in reference to God, “Whom he foreknew,” is because God knows it because he decreed it. He doesn’t know something is going to happen because he looked in the future and saw it was going to happen. He knows it is going to happen because he ordained it to happen. He foreordained it.

Those men who crucified Christ, when Peter preached to them after the crucifixion he said, “You with wicked hands crucified the Lord of glory, but you did what God determined before to be done. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you crucified. But God is the first cause of all things. And those who are now the objects of God’s grace were always the objects of God’s grace unless you have got a puppet God, unless you have got a God who doesn’t know what he is going to do, unless you have got a God that is confused, unless you have got a God that is defeated. He said, “I am the Lord. I change not. The gifts and calling of God are without change.”

And God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in thy mother’s womb, I knew thee. I sanctified thee. I ordained thee a prophet. Before I ever made you I set you apart.”

And that is what Paul is saying here. “When it pleased God who knew me and who loved me and who separated me from my mother’s womb.” Brethren, even when Paul was standing there holding the clothes of the men who were stoning that precious saint of God, he was an object of God’s love. That’s right. “But God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

When Christ came down here and died on the cross 1900 year ago that was 1900 years before you were born. But he came because he loved you and because he would redeem you and because he would pay your debt.

Turn to John chapter six. Now listen to this. John chapter six. And I...it is unfortunate that we label the truth Calvinism or fatalism or hardshellism or any other kind of -ism. It

is just truth. John chapter six, verse 37. Christ said, "All that my Father giveth me shall come to me. And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven not to do my will nor your will or anybody else's will. I came to do the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which have sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day."

Now, that is so. So what I am saying is this. "Whom he foreknew he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. And whom he predestinated he called. And whom he called he justified. And whom he justified, he glorified. What shall we say to these things? I say if God be for me who can be against me? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died. Yea, rather, is risen again who is even at the right hand of God who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ."

That is so.

"We love him because he first loved us."

"Herein is love, not that we loved God."

But, brother, I will tell you this. You don't love him enough now to be saved. You are saved because he loves you. God is not merciful to you because you are good. He is merciful to you because he is good. That's right. God is not merciful to you because you are gracious. He is merciful to you because he is gracious. God doesn't come your way because you love him. You don't love him enough now to influence his affections. No, we don't. I wish we did. But I am telling you this. He loves us. He loves us. He said...

Turn to Romans nine. Let me show you something here. He sent old Jeremiah down to the potter's house and told him to watch the potter work and learn something. And we could do the same thing in Romans chapter nine and verse 21. Here the Lord says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" Now which one...? We are clay and God is the potter. Now, who has got the power? You reckon that clay could form itself and God says, "Well, clay, you can be good if you want to. Just straighten yourself up and make yourself into a pretty little vase and I will put some roses in you."

"Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump," human nature, Adam's son, "of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God willing to show his wrath and to make his power known endured with long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." He prepared me for this a long time ago.

That's right. That's what Paul says here. Now, this is what I am saying. This is what I am saying. Paul was darkness, natural darkness. But he was surrounded with spiritual darkness. And how great is that double darkness?

And the people I am preaching to in this generation, they don't know God, but they think they do. They don't know God. They don't have God. They don't have salvation. They don't have redemption, but they think they do. And what I have got to penetrate by the Spirit of God's power and by the Word of God. I have got to penetrate this darkness that surrounds that darkness before I can get to this natural darkness. And God has got to kill. He has got to tear down their forts and tear down their false conceptions and tear down their false ideas and rip off their fig leaf aprons of self righteousness and expose their darkness. And when he does, boy, they will reach out. They will reach out. God doesn't convict you by revealing to you what you think you are. He convicts you by revealing to you what you are. And God almighty doesn't reveal himself by revealing himself in the character you think he is. He reveals himself in his true character. He has got to tear down what you think he is.

Here is the third thing that God separated me from my mother's womb and he called me and he called me by his grace. The old timers used to talk about a general call and an effectual call. There are two Scriptures, Matthew 20:16 and Matthew 22:14 that say the same thing. "Many are called, few are chosen."

Can you handle that? "Many are called, few are chosen."

Well, this "many are called," are called...there is a call of nature. God has not left himself without a witness. He says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." He says that men can understand the power of God by the things that are made which leaves a man without excuse. Most all men believe there is a God. And they found that out from the general revelation of nature, the general call. They may have never seen a Bible. They may have never heard a preacher. Even the old Indians here in America talked about the great spirit. And even the heathen talk about some kind of God.

Well, God...that...even that is light. Even that is a call of nature. And then there is a call of conscience. He talks about in Romans how that every man has a conscience. And his conscience excuses or accuses him so that he is without excuse. God has written his law on every man's heart. You can't find a man or a woman in this world that does not know right from wrong. That is the light...that is the call of conscience. And then there is a call of judgment over in the book of Amos. You read that text. It says, "Prepare to meet God." Well, there is a whole lot that went on before that. You see the sign...here is what is wrong with the signs on the road, you know, "Prepare to meet God." That is just part of a Scripture. What God said to those Jews, he said, "I have sent judgment on you and you haven't returned to me. I have sent pestilence, ate your crops up. You didn't return. I sent war and killed your young men and you didn't return." He said, "I sent famine and you did without food and you didn't return to me. Now," he says, "prepare to meet God."

These are calls, calls of providence, calls of judgment. And then there is the call of gospel preaching, what I am doing right now. I do it over the television on Sunday. How many thousands of people listen? But they listen and then they just turn it off and they go their way. They go their way. They have no...no real conception of what has been said.

But now, brethren, this call that Paul is talking about here, God called him. He called him. He had gone through this nature and law and conscience and preaching and orthodoxy and reading the Scriptures. But one day on that road he met God. And God said, "That is far enough, Saul." And God struck him and God blinded him and God broke him and God unsaddled him and God put that old proud rebel in the dust. He unhorsed him, Rolfe used to say. He put him down in the dust and he lifted his eyes to heaven and he said, "Who art thou?"

And our Lord said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you persecuted."

And he said, "Well, Lord. What will you have me to do?"

"Well," he said, "You get down there to a certain place and it will be told you what to do."

And God sent him down to that street called straight and God sent Ananias, a preacher, to him and preached the gospel to him. And Ananias said, "Now, why do you tarry? Get up and be baptized and confess the Lord." And this is what I am saying. God...every one of his objects of mercy...I don't care how proud they are or what a rebel they are. I don't care if they come out of the pulpit or out of parliament. It doesn't matter if they come out of the jail or from the judge's bench. It doesn't matter if they are a carpenter or a contractor. It doesn't matter if they are a doctor or if they are the dumbest fellow in town. God is going to meet his own. And he is going to meet him with a faithful preacher and a faithful gospel and a faithful word from this book. And that fellow is going to be awful glad to hear it. That is the call.

Turn to 2 Timothy, chapter one, verse nine. And, brother, you don't...you're not...you can't be the same when you hear this gospel, when you hear it with a heart, when you hear it with a heart. I know a lot of people hear it with the ear and say, "Well, that sounds pretty good, you know, that sounds about right." But when you hear it with the heart it just...it takes over. It dominates your thinking. It dominates your spirit. It dominates and controls your life. It just...you are just a new being. A man in Christ is a new person. It is not something you can take once a week on Sunday and listen to it and lay aside till next week this same time. It is a subject and a person and a life that controls your thinking all week long. You meet the Lord.

In 2 Timothy one, verse nine, "He saved us and called us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Jesus Christ before this world ever began." It was given to me before the world began. But one day...turn back to Galatians...one day when it pleased God.

That is what Paul said, “When it pleased him, when it pleased him who separated me from my mother’s womb...it pleased him one day to call me. He called me by his Spirit. He called me by his Word. And he revealed for...he revealed his Son in me.”

Now, the difference between being saved and unsaved is whether or not God reveals his Son just to you or in you. Now, you think about that a little bit. There is a word there to reveal his Son not just to me, but in me.

Judas knew who he was. But he wasn’t revealed in Judas. God reveals Christ to us. He is revealed to us in his deity, in his incarnation, as our representative. He is revealed in his righteousness before the law. He is just and justifier. He is our mediator. He is our Lord and King. He is revealed to us. And let me tell you this. If God the Holy Spirit reveals the Son of God in you, then his life is implanted in you and his grace is implanted in you and his Spirit is implanted in you. And this thing of salvation is not just to accept Jesus as your Savior. That is not scriptural language, incidentally. It is to receive Christ as your Lord.

Now, think about that a little bit. When I receive Christ I receive him into myself. I eat his flesh and drink his blood. And he said, “If you don’t eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you.” That is what he said. You can accept me in a position, accept me in a place, a service, accept me as being what I say I am without receiving me into your being. Christ...Paul said this. “I travail till Christ be formed in you.” And then he said, again, “Christ in you, that is the hope of glory.” Jesus Christ to most people is like an insurance policy. They are all fixed up for heaven. They open the drawer and throw it in and shut the drawer and say, “Now, when I need that I will come back and get it. And I will run down to the church and pay premium every Sunday. That will pay my premium on that insurance plan. I done it already. I am not in the company. I am not really interested in the company. I am not... I don’t have a part in the company. I don’t vote. I don’t care what the company does. I just got that policy and I go down to church and pay my premiums on Sunday and let them know I am still...got the policy so they won’t cancel out on me. But I am not interested in the company.”

Well, I can tell you this. The true policy of security is to join the company. That’s right. It is to become the president’s son. That’s right. It is to take part in the board meetings. That is what it is. It is to move in. And Christ moves in, in me, in me.

All right. Watch on. Now watch this. “That I might preach him among the heathen.” Paul was a chosen vessel to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. That is what he is talking about here.

Why did God reveal Christ to you? Well, he said in Matthew 11, “Because it seemed good in his sight.” That is the first reason. He said in Psalm 106, “He saved you for his name’s sake.” He said in Ephesians 1:6, 12 and 14, “To the praise of his glory.” He said in Romans 8:29, “That he might have a people like his Son.” He said in Ephesians 2:4-7, “That he might show the exceeding riches of his grace.” That is why he saved you. That

is why he revealed Christ in you. And we are going to glorify him whether in life or in death.

Now, look at the sixth thing and I close. “And immediately, when God did this work of grace I conferred not with flesh and blood.” What does that mean? It is a two fold meaning. First of all, Paul said, “I didn’t go to other people and find out what their experience was so I could compare mine. I didn’t go to other people, not even the apostles, to find out their opinion so I would know if I was right or wrong. I didn’t go to other people and seek their advice. The Lord revealed himself to me and the Lord’s Word will be my rule.”

Now, this is one of the most tragic things of these so called soul winners. God help them. God’s private secretaries who are going around and telling people whether they are saved or lost, talking them into a profession, giving their advice, giving their opinion, giving their experience. And they are making folks two fold more the child of hell than they are. That is tragic.

Christ said he talked to those religionists in his day. He said, “Well, you compass sea and land to make one proselyte to your religion. And when you have made him with your experiences and opinions and advice and doctrine, he is two fold more the child of hell than you are.”

“Well, preacher, what do we do?”

Preach the gospel to people and leave them alone. Pray for them. I’m not going to stand down here tonight and plead for you to make a decision before it is everlastingly too late. If God is working in your heart tonight he will be there in the morning. I guarantee you. He doesn’t move out until he finishes what he starts. I am not going to get down here and plead for you, “Oh, the train is leaving the station. If you are not on board it will leave without you. We are going to sing one more verse. Here is one more verse. And if nobody comes we are going to close. Oh, please, won’t you let God have his way.”

He will have his way. He will send you to hell or take you to glory. But he will have his way. I guarantee you that. His will is going to be done. And he will break you by his Word and by his Spirit or he will break you in judgment because every knee is going to bow and confess that Christ is Lord. And God is not asking you for any favors. Jesus Christ is not in your hands to do anything with. You are in his hands. And the question is not what am I going to do with Jesus. The question is: What is the sovereign Lord going to do with me. I sure hope he shows me mercy. I surely do. Don’t you? And that is what I want. That is what I am saying to people. You better quit conferring with flesh and blood. And I will say this. After I finish this message tonight. Don’t run to brother so and so and ask him if brother Mahan is telling the truth. Don’t even come to me and ask me to explain it. Why don’t you buy you a Bible and get in...get alone and say, “Spirit of the living God, if that preacher is telling the truth, I sure want to know it.”

I don't have any prejudice built up or any tradition to defend. I don't have any custom to defend. I don't want to go to hell defending my preconceived notions of God. If that preacher is telling the truth, show me. Huh? I dare you to do that. This preacher better be telling the truth or somebody better show him. That's right. That is the way I feel about it. I want to know God. I don't want to know what the Baptists say about God. I want to know God....what God says about God.

And Paul said, "I didn't confer with flesh and blood. I didn't look out the fellow who knew the gospel before I did." And watch this, the second two fold meaning I said. Now, watch this. You had better be careful right here. He said, "When it pleased God he separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me to preach the gospel. I didn't confer with flesh and blood about this matter. I didn't talk to Peter, James and John. And I didn't confer with my own flesh and blood either. No, sir," he said, "I didn't. I didn't stand debating and reasoning the matter to see if a relationship with Christ would be advantageous in my business.

You sit and listen to God preach his Word through the Holy Spirit and you say, "Now, wait just a minute. If I accept that doctrine so and so is not going to like it. And I might just lose my job, you know, if I start walking that way and see, I would have to leave my church. I have been there since I was a kid. And that preacher don't believe that. It wouldn't do for me to believe and him not to believe it. And I would have to give up my Sunday school class and my wife is not going to like it at all because she believes that everybody is saved himself by his good works. She is not going to like it. And mom and dad didn't believe it. And I reckon they are in heaven."

Now, that is what you confer with flesh and blood, now. That is what it is talking about.

"When God revealed his Son in me I didn't talk it over with flesh and blood." Neither Peter, James or John nor Saul of Tarsus either one. And God said it. That was sufficient. I bowed. I surrendered. I received it. His Word. His Word.

And it did. It sure enough, it cost him a whole lot. But he gained a whole lot. He wrote something like this. He said, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed when Christ comes.

*Our Father in heaven, make us bold to preach the truth. And, oh God, reveal to our hearts Christ who is the truth. Lord, we don't want to preach to men doctrines. A man is no better off who leaves one doctrine and goes to another even if the one he adopts is true if he doesn't know Christ, if Christ is not revealed in him, if he is not brought to love the master, to bow in submission to the master, to receive Christ Jesus into his heart.*

*So, Lord, enable us to preach Christ, the truth about Christ, the truth about men, the truth about thy glory and thy salvation and reveal it to our hearts. Lord, reveal Christ in us for his sake and in his name we pray. Amen.*

Lead us in a song, Ronnie, please.

Let's sing number 235. Stand please.

[singing]