

SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN CHRIST

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Acts 26:14-23

And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

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Do you ever get moving along from day to day, trying to do the right things, trying to do what you believe is what is pleasing to God and you find yourself not having any strength to overcome? Or you just don't even feel like being good or spiritual? Or you just want to just give up? I do! All the time! Saul, who would be eventually known as the Apostle Paul testified to King Agrippa that he had one of those days. Saul's doing his best at being zealous for the Lord, but in a brief period of time he was blinded and told that he was kicking against the very goad of Christ, or the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this passage of Scripture we not only hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (that is, the good news of Jesus Christ), as spoken by the Apostle Paul, but it could be said, it contains the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, how one is saved in Christ Jesus, how one is delivered in Christ Jesus, and how one is sanctified in Christ Jesus. Sanctified meaning you are set apart in God's holiness, in Christ Jesus! Hopefully it isn't something as dramatic as being blinded for us to be set on the right path that God is leading us on.

Saul of Tarsus, then is also called Paul (**Acts 13:9**). The Scriptures do not say where the name change came from. It can be surmised that Jesus gave Saul the new name Paul. Saul means "asked", or "asked

for", which is what the Israelites, in the Old Testament, did in asking for, or really crying out for a king. God said, you want a king, fine, here's Saul. And as we know from the story in Scripture, that didn't work out too well for them. Paul though, means little. Paul who referred to himself as "less than the least of all the saints" (**Ephesians 3:8**) and God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness". He may have taken that name himself, recognizing fully his place in God's kingdom, after all we could all be called "little" compared to God Almighty, or He may have been given the name "little" but He was given the understanding to not only salvation in Christ Jesus but in overcoming all things in this world and that didn't come in Paul's "little" strength but in Christ Jesus! In fact, what Jesus spoke to Paul, that He would "deliver [him] from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" is the same thing Jesus is saying to each of us, even now! Our starting point is what we know as **John 3:16-17**, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

Yes, we all must believe on the Lord Jesus, that He died on a cross for our sins, that He took our sins upon Himself, that we are forgiven of our sins, and that as Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, conquering death, we too will raise from the grave unto eternal life in Christ Jesus. Believing on Jesus is also believing in what Jesus said to Paul, that Jesus would, "turn [us] from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that [we] may receive forgiveness of sins [AND] an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

After Jesus had said what we know of as John 3:16-17 (For God so loved the world...), He continued with, ""He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."" (**John 3:18-21**) What Paul was called to preach was exactly what Jesus said He came to preach, the only difference is that Jesus was speaking of Himself as the Light of the world (**John 8:12**) while Paul was told to tell others of that light, that is Jesus. He was to tell people to not only turn to the

light but to allow His light to work in us and to sanctify us in Christ Jesus, to turn us from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that we would receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance with all those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus our Savior and Lord. Jesus didn't say, nor did Paul, or any other apostle, that we believe on Jesus then we go out and just do good works. Jesus basically said that he who turns to God, turns to believing in Jesus, and comes to that light, being Jesus, and then His work in us will be clearly seen by others, as we then also shine His light that is working through us.

One thing I make sure to always tell people is to keep calling on the Lord Jesus. Help me Lord Jesus! I need You Jesus! For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord [Jesus] shall be saved." (**Acts 2:21**) Listen though to what God said through Hosea, the prophet. "My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him." It could be said, none were shining the light of Jesus, telling of God's goodness, lifting up the name of the Lord. They would just cry out to God for help. No thanks to God, no praise of God. And if they did honor God with their words, as Jesus said, "'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."

The Apostle Paul said as much in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, "But of Him [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us **wisdom** from God—and **righteousness** and **sanctification** and redemption— that, as it is written, "**He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.**"

We really cannot take credit for any of what is the whole process of who we are in Christ Jesus. From our salvation, to our walking or living in His holiness, or in our workings in ministry, there is nothing that we can boast about ourselves. But **GOD**...will reconcile us to having a fellowship with God in Christ Jesus, He will grant us salvation and eternal life in Christ Jesus, He will work in us His sanctifying power in Christ Jesus, and He will work in us to be His light to the world around us...to all who will believe. That is worth boasting about! Many times in my own life and many times I've heard from others saying that we've tried to follow Jesus, tried to do what He wants me to do, tried to be a good person but I just keep failing. I keep falling back to my own ways. The key word in that statement that leads to failure is one of the smallest words in the English language and it is also one of the smallest of forces in the spiritual realm. It is **I**. We can't save ourselves and we can't make ourselves holy and we certainly can't save anyone else. But God can...and He will...to all who will continue to put their faith in Jesus! Yes, God's Word says that no one seeks God as Paul said in **Romans 3:11**, "There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God." But God, when He calls us to believe on Jesus, He plants within us a seed of faith. Paul said in **Romans 12:3**, "For I say,

through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as **God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.**" It only takes very little faith to even move mountains. It only takes a very little bit of faith to overcome this world, to "turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, to receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus." That isn't our job to do all that. It is God's. When we are given that mustard seed of faith to believe on Jesus Christ, we are then looking to God to save us, God to deliver us, and God to set us free in Christ Jesus, "For whom the Son sets free is free indeed!" (**John 8:36**) Yet all the while we can be His light to this dark and dying world as we keep looking to Jesus. "I'm not perfect yet, but I'm going to keep following Jesus and He is going to perfect me, He promised!" "I'm doing my best Lord, but I'm looking to you to change me from the inside out." Meanwhile as Paul said in **Philippians 3:14**, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The little I that I referred to, we all have a little I. There is no power though in the I. Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light." The only way the I or the eye is good is if it is focused on Jesus, which is the light that shines out of the I (eye). The I by itself is powerless. **The I in Christ WILL overcome the world and all of its darkness.** Paul said that he learned the secret of being content in any situation, whether well fed or hungry, living in plenty or in want. He said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." ALL things. Keeping our focus on Jesus. "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**)

When the apostles asked Jesus to increase their faith, Jesus told them of the faith of a mustard seed can move a mountain. But then Jesus gave a parable of the servant. Jesus said, "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.' "" (**Luke 17:7-10**)

In Jesus we find salvation. In Jesus we find deliverance. In Jesus we find the fulfillment of joy that our soul longs for. In JESUS! "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:9-11) Jesus promises us an inheritance of eternal life in Him (should we not rejoice and praise God!) and we are promised that we will be joint heirs with Jesus (should we not rejoice and praise God!) (Romans 8:17) and we can be encouraged in knowing that "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (should we not rejoice and praise God!) (Romans 8:31) and that we are "more than conquerors through Him who love[s] us". (should we not rejoice and praise God!) (Romans 8:37) And then also, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (should we not rejoice and praise God!) (Romans 8:39)

Our responsibility is in taking hold of the call of God "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Then to summarize Jesus' teachings He would likely say to us, 'ok great, now that you believe in Me, as I have loved you, follow Me and My teachings, and I guarantee all I have promised...salvation, being reconciled to God, deliverance, and eternal life, and great reward. Now go and be my light until I bring you to your eternal home.' That is paraphrasing Jesus' teachings but in Jesus Words He said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23) That means that we are called into a fellowship with our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! How much more blessed can we possibly be! The I in Christ WILL overcome the world! Glory to God! Amen.