

Introduction:

In the sermons that I began to preach last week, we are going to see the events of the last days of Paul, recorded by Luke. We saw the power of Christ in chapter 23 in overcoming the brutality and injustice of the gangster, apostate Church, represented by the twin powers of humanism, the self-righteous Pharisees and the worldly-wise Sadducees. The Risen Christ also triumphed over the conspiracy of the Jews, for there is no wisdom or power against the Wisdom of God. Finally, in chapter 23 we saw the Lord Jesus from Heaven triumphing over the dithering and vacillating of the secular power.

The instrument that the Lord Jesus to triumph over all things was the single apostle, Paul. All the weapons of the earth are the possession and the creation of our God, and none of them is successful against the Gospel, which even today spreads like leaven throughout the world in spite of the great powers arrayed against it. Today, we will try to see what is the nature of that power and how it is still changing lives today.

At the end of chapter 23 we left Paul in Herod's Prison in Caesarea. In a vision, God had told Paul that he must bear witness of Christ in Rome, so go to Rome he must. Chapters twenty four and twenty five give some steps on that journey. He had been sent to Felix first of all, who didn't know what to do with him, and so left him bound in Herod's Prison.

He was there for many days until his case was heard by Felix, who delayed decision, but gave Paul some liberty and had numerous conversations with Paul and trembled when Paul spoke of righteousness, temperance, judgment to come. Felix dithered, because he hoped that Paul would give him a bribe. This didn't happen and Paul was kept prisoner for two years until Festus replaced him as governor.

The Jews made complaint against Paul when Festus visited Jerusalem and Festus asked Paul about them when he returned to Caesarea. "Will you go to Jerusalem to be tried for the offenses that the Jews charge you with?" In order to escape the machinations of the Jews, Paul appealed to Caesar, which was his right as a Roman citizen. Festus consulted with his council and agreed with the request and reported it to King Agrippa when he came to welcome Festus to office. Festus did not know what to charge Paul with and it seemed an embarrassment to him to send Paul to Caesar without any reasonable charge. He consulted with Agrippa to find some way out of the dilemma. Some things never change in politics. Agrippa had his curiosity aroused and he determined to hear Paul himself and so the hearing was held there in Caesarea with all the great men of the city, the military bigwigs, and Paul was brought before them. Festus presented the case and Paul was permitted to speak before the king. Paul spoke for himself. After recounted the details of his former life as a Pharisee, he spoke of the hope of the Jews and the

resurrection of the dead. He told of the persecution of Christians. Then he came to his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and the words that Jesus spoke to him from heaven. That brings us to today's sermon, which focuses on Acts 26:14-18. Let me read:

“14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard* for thee to kick against the pricks. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 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; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 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.” (Ac 26:14-18)

Here we have the very secret of the power of Paul's apostleship, and the very kernel of the power of the church in all ages. It is nothing less than a deliverance of men from the power of the devil to the power of Christ; from a kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus Christ and righteousness.

Jesus said to Paul, after Paul had fallen to the earth before the dazzling light from heaven: 16 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; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

And here was Paul's mission; and here IS the mission of the church unto this day, which the true church is fulfilling throughout the world. There are five principles connected to this mission:

- I. The opening of the eyes. The eyes of the soul are blind until they are opened by Jesus Christ. Isaiah had prophesied that when Messiah came:
 - A. Isaiah:
 1. Isa 29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.
 2. Isa 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
 3. Isa 42:7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

- B. Jesus: John 9:39-41 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. 40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? 41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.
- C. How smug the Laodicean Church was in Revelation 3: 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.
- D. As Paul would write to the Ephesians: 17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
- E. Pr 4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.
- F. That's the first thing: the sense of the soul must be opened by the power of God so that everything else can be understood.
- II. Turning from Darkness to light: This goes along with the first. In scripture light stands for
- A. True Knowledge. Christ delivers from the darkness of ignorance
- B. True Righteousness. Christ delivers from the darkness of self satisfied righteousness
- C. True Faith. Christ delivers from the arrogance and darkness of unbelief.
- D. True Opportunity. Christ delivers from vacillation and procrastination: Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation. Give yourself up to Christ.
- III. Turning from the Power of Satan to God.
- A. This is called repentance. A turning around: Paul said this is the mission of every preacher: 2Tim. 2: 24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

- B. A translation from one kingdom to another: Colossians 1: 9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [Gift of God] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
- C. Only the power of Christ can deliver the soul from the power of the devil.

IV. Receiving Forgiveness of Sins and Inheritance. Eternal life.

- A. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (Joh 3:16-17)
- B. Paul is taking this message to the world.

Application: This is accomplish by faith alone: set apart, sanctified by faith.