

Introduction:

- We have been talking about the benefits of Apostolic Grace to the local church. What do we receive when apostolic grace touches the local church? We receive a ‘fire’ to turn the world upside down. We receive passion that compels us to go as sent ones. We realize we are ambassadors sent by the King himself to speak what he gives us. We also realize deep down the essential need for the Holy Spirit and working with Him.
- The apostolic things we have been speaking of are only found in a people who are utterly abandoned to God. I want to talk about the authenticity of our own conversion today. Just how saved are you? Do you understand what it means to be born again of the Spirit? We cannot use the language and not have the reality or we will find ourselves terribly deceived. Ie. My conversion and call to ministry.
- In Acts, we find three account of Paul’s conversion. The majority of Acts and 2/3 of the NT are what follows his conversion. Let me lay this thought before you this morning—We cannot go beyond the depth of our beginning. Acts 9:1-16

1. The Importance of Genuine Conversion

- a. Many people are not walking in the fullness of God today because they began inadequately. So much of our Gospel has been reduced to the formula of a prayer. (The need for disciplers is to find out how saved people are).
 - i. When we look at 1 Thess 1:3-10, what we find is a description of the salvation of the Thessalonians. They started with incredible strength, got rid of their gods, devoted themselves to God and they continued therein waiting for Christ’s return. So often, our walk reflects how we began. However, let me encourage you, if you had a weak start you can have new beginning today!
 - ii. We find a parallel with Israel in the book of Joshua. They were going into the Promised Land but first they had to ‘crossover’ the Jordan (*Yarden* - Most scholars would derive the name from the verb *yārad* “to descend,”¹). Sometimes called the decent into death. Ie. Baptism you are buried in death and raised in newness of life. They left the place of death (wilderness-their flesh kept them there) - those who were not able to cross over because they did not have the fullness of heart that Caleb “Whole heartedness” and Joshua had. Yet when it came time to cross over, three tribes chose not to cross. (Gad, Manassah and Reuben) They remained because of what was on the side they occupied. Trusted in what they had. Many people fail to cross over because they are unwilling to give up what they possess. We do not hear from Gad until Jesus crosses over to the Gadarenes and casts out some devils, drowns some bacon, and is kicked out of town by the very people who refused to cross over in Joshua’s day. There is a necessity for us to crossover lest our own carcass be found on the wrong side of eternity.
- b. Therefore, we must position ourselves for radical conversion/apostolic conversion.
 - i. vs. 3, Paul, as he was approaching/journeying. Sometimes I think it is much better for the person in error to be radically converted than it is for those who are surrounded by Christian tradition, and profess to be believers and are just “treading water” in correct doctrines.
 - ii. Paul was journeying. He was pursuing not just treading water. Would he have encountered the Light if he had been content to stay in Jerusalem? Are you in pursuit of the living God or treading in Christian waters? We must have the Light from above break violently into our lives if we are going to participate in this apostolic grace!
- c. The obstacles that stand in the way of radical conversion. Saul heard a voice, “Why do you persecute me?” As we look at the anatomy of conversion, I think we will see what is in us that must be

¹ Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., Jr., & Waltke, B. K. (Eds.). (1999). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

radically turned. Until this thing is turned, it will remain in opposition to God and to the church. What is it? It is YOU. When the 'you' comes before 'Me' Jesus has a problem. Vs 4 - "*Why do you persecute me?*"

- i. Until the "you" is radically moved behind the "Me" Jesus, we will always be opposing God. All the while, laboring and serving in His interest. Saul was zealous for God but was opposing His interest. This was a religious man whose own ideas were ahead of God's.
- ii. How do you stand before God? This stubborn, spiritually self-centered attitude can only be dislodged by profound conversion. This is what conversion is!
- iii. What we have done is allowed the Word of God to be seen through our own eyes, processed by our own minds, and 'fitted' in the structures of our lives. In doing so, we have made the Word of God agreeable to us thus putting ourselves above the Word. What we need is to let the Word wreck our 'fitting rooms' until we stand naked before the Word of God-no fig leaves. So many times, we hear God's Word, compliment the speaker, Facebook it and think we have done God a service by approving His Word. This is why we need to be converted! This self-centeredness is deep. What greater insult to God than to put ourselves above His Word. He is pouring out His heart to us in His word and we are calculating to what degree we will let it operate in us.
- d. We must answer the question, "*Who are you, Lord?*" However, that question never is asked until you hear Him say, "Why are you opposing me?" "*Who are you, Lord?*" "I am Jesus!" He cannot be our buddy; He cannot be our helper. (So often we want Him to be our helper with Him being Lord) He must be above our need! There has to be a God encounter that causes the soul to be undone - like Is 6.
 6. Woe is me! Until we have that, it is all verbiage, powerless verbiage.
 - i. Saul had such an encounter. He could see nothing else but the light. Paul could see no man, but he could say, "Who are you Lord?"
 - ii. Until we are blind to men and what they think, we cannot serve God in a radical/apostolic way. Until we are blind to seeing ourselves as we desire we will never see him as Lord. That is why we must have genuine conversion!

2. The Risks of Genuine Conversion

- a. If we will not be changed by the Word, then what will we be changed by? The risk is that it costs us everything! But, think about it, if you believe it, IT COST GOD EVERYTHING! Conversion:
 - i. Mary, Luke 1:38 "*Let it be unto me according to Your word.*" NKJV Mary was risking it all: You obey the Word and you become pregnant by a miracle. The result: how do you tell parents who will not understand, a community that enjoys stoning people like her, the dream of a life with Joseph, her reputation? Yet when she said those words, it meant bearing the full consequence of that Word.
 - ii. When God finds a heart like that, there is no limit on the divine work that can begin! God cannot even begin to work until there is a person ready to receive His Word. God has had no other starting point with humanity than, "*Let it be done to me according to your word.*"
- b. Note Saul's answer: "*Lord, what do You want me to do?*" NKJV When was that moment in your life when you transacted business with God with the absoluteness with which Paul started? There are no if's, no and's, no but's. No conditions, no stipulations, no guarantees. That is the doorway to the apostolic lifestyle!
 - i. How many lives are currently being held back? How many cities unchanged, nations untouched, all because of God's waiting on our answer to the question: "*What would you have me do?*" Art Katz said this, "The Spirit is given without measure, to the sons who have no purpose in

themselves and no life for themselves. They live by only one question: “Lord, what would you have me do?” Anything less is conditional.

- ii. No matter what you say, or how you say it, Jesus is not Lord until it has been given. Do you know the answer to the question? “What would you have me do?” vs 16 “*I will show him how much he must suffer for my names sake.*” No wonder we don’t ask that! But, for every act of obedience there is exceeding great kingdom reward!
- iii. We need to ask ourselves, “What would you have me do?” And, prepare to ask it daily. Whatever the answer we must realize, HE IS LORD, not we ourselves. There are always forces at work that either brings us to orbit around ourselves, which is apostate, or around His will, which is apostolic. To stay radical/apostolic we must ask and answer that question everyday. Maybe that is why Paul said, “I die daily!” 1 Cor 15:31. The risk is it costs us our lives!

3. Walking in Genuine Conversion

- a. Notice Jesus direction to Saul. “*Get up and go...*” That getting up is nothing other than resurrection power beginning its work! That which went down into death is now being raised to life. That ‘arise’ was not just invitation but it was an impartation of life to Saul. Paul has nothing at this point! He is blind. He is realizing he was off course. He is powerless and must be lead like a little child by others. All of his education now means nothing in this moment. The only life he has is the Word of the Lord, “*rise and go*”.
 - i. Three days and nights, blind, with fasting, forced to review his total understanding of God. Saul sat with himself. He sat in faith waiting. Obedience followed by anointing!
 - ii. Arise and go for many of us will not mean job changes or moves but this yielding of the heart to God will unlock heavenly dynamics that altar the course of your life and generations!
 - iii. The scary wonderful part of this is you only get to see just a bit in front of you. Arise and go is not the end. It only serves to cause us to tremble and cling to God for the next moment. That is not how we have been taught in our culture. Once you arise and go, it will be told to you. Once you put yourself totally under my authority and Word... It will be told you!
- b. Do you know when we are walking in this reality? It is when we see our children walking in this truth and in the seriousness of who we are. It is not just for the adults! Until we come to this, we are just lulling the generations into religious sleep.
- c. When Saul received his sight and immediately began doing what he knew to do best. Proclaim Jesus!
 - i. He did not look back! He began to immediately preach Jesus as the Son of God. 9:20; vs 22 in Damascus his preaching became more powerful. vs 27 Saul preached boldly in Damascus. vs 28 He went to Jerusalem and with the apostles he preached boldly in the name of the Lord.
 - ii. When only the Lord Jesus is in your sight and filling your heart will you move in this life with apostolic grace and power.

Conclusion:

- Conversion is to the uttermost or it is not conversion.