

Paul the Apostle - a Vibrant Life (Part 1)

by Denny Kenaston

The sermon explores the vibrant life of Paul the Apostle, focusing on his conversion and the foundations of his ministry.

Duration: 1:06:42

Scripture: Acts 9:3

Topics: "Paul The Apostle"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying the lives of men as a way to learn theology by example. He highlights how Jesus taught theology through his life and actions. The sermon then focuses on the conversion of the Apostle Paul and the foundation of his ministry. It describes how Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, heard his voice, and was transformed by the experience. The sermon encourages listeners to prioritize seeking God's face and engaging in the disciplines of the Christian life.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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I'm very grateful to be here. I've been thinking about it for weeks now. You know, a lot of beautiful things happen when 550 serious men get together and sanctify a whole week to do nothing but seek God in sincerity and in truth.

I mean, you have to get a blessing when you do that. Because He is. And He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

He is. I promise you, He is. All we have to do is seek Him with a sincere heart this week.

And God will reward us. Isn't that encouraging? Praise God. This week is called one of the disciplines of the Christian life.

You know, there are many disciplines in the Christian life, and this week is one of them. Where you set aside all other things, you set aside your freedom to make money, you forget about the money that you're not going to make this week, and you spend the money that it costs you to come here, and maybe you even push away the plate a while and lose a few pounds while you're at it, and spend a whole week and do nothing but seek the face of God. God rewards those who exercise themselves in the disciplines of the Christian life, and that is what this week is all about.

Amen? Disciplines in the Christian life. By the way, they are a joy and a delight. Amen? Alright.

Let's stand for a word of prayer. Can we do that? Oh Lord, we love You this morning. Father, we love You for Your loving kindness to us.

We thank You, Lord, that You look down upon us today, and You are with us, and You can do both at the same time. Hallelujah. Lord, we need You.

We need You this morning. Every one of us in this room, we need You this morning. We look away from ourselves, and we look up unto Thee.

Yes, we look up unto the hills from whence cometh our help. Our help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth. Lord, we do.

We look away from ourselves, and we look to You, and You're the one who meets all of our needs. And so we pray that You will come and meet our needs, Lord, in this session, and give us what we need, Father. And You know what that is.

And I don't even know what it is. And I acknowledge that, Father, that I don't know what all the needs are in this room, but I give myself to You, and I pray that someday, somehow, God, that You would help me to say what needs to be said in this session, Lord. Because You know everyone, all at the same time, and all of our needs.

Oh, Lord, we worship You. Wash us. Wash us in the blood, Lord, from any little thought, any attitude, Father, anything that has passed through this heart of mine, God.

Just cleanse me in the blood this morning, Lord. And fill us with the Holy Ghost, every one of us. We pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Thank You, Father. Amen. You may be seated.

I'm going to give a title to my series. I know that it already said, you know, the ministry of the Apostle Paul, but I always change my titles. And I guess the reason why I always change them is, you know, life is pretty full and we don't get down to working on these messages until a few days before they start.

And as I've just been immersing myself in Paul's life, I've chosen to give this title to this series this week, Paul the Apostle, A Vibrant Life. We will be studying the ministry of the Apostle Paul. I'm not changing that.

But when you look at the life of the Apostle Paul, the life of the Apostle Paul and the ministry of the Apostle Paul, they are synonymous. There was no other thing. He had no other life but his ministry.

And he had no other ministry but his life. And they were both the same thing all at the same time. And so the ministry of the Apostle Paul was the ministry of a beautiful life.

And that's what we want to look at this week. Paul the Apostle, A Vibrant Life. I want to start this morning with Webster's 1828 Dictionary's definition of the word biography.

Because that's what we'll be doing this week. We're going to be studying a biography. The word biography is made up of two words.

One, bio, like, you know, biology. Bio, which means life. And the other word is graphy, which means to write.

So, thus, to write a life. Webster's Dictionary defines a biography this way, as the history of the life and character of a particular person. The Scripture does not use the word biography.

It uses the word testimony. But it's basically the same thing. God's Word is filled with testimonies or biographies or places where the Spirit of God wrote a life.

Well, we're not going to write a life this week, but we are going to preach a life this week. A beautiful life. A vibrant life.

A Christ-like life. This is Paul. A Christ-like life.

This is Paul. It is very clear in Scripture that the history of a life is one of God's primary methods to challenge and instruct His people. Psalm chapter 48.

Oh, I don't know, the last three or four verses there in that psalm encourages us to study Zion. To walk about Zion and take a good, long look at her. Look at her people.

Look at her men. Look at her prophets. See what she looked like in days gone by.

And to acknowledge that the God who worked in that person's life is also the God that is working in my life. And that's the way I want to approach the life of the Apostle Paul this morning and in these sessions. The God who is working in Paul's life is the same God that is working in your life and in my life.

He hasn't changed one bit, brothers. Not one bit. He is the same.

He is just as mighty and powerful as He was in Paul's day. He is just as much a transforming God as He was in Paul's day. He is just as much an enabling God as He was in Paul's day.

This God is our God. So, we are encouraged by God in several places in the Scripture to study Zion. That's what we want to do this week.

Also, with introductory comments, I would like to just share a little bit of what A.T. Pearson wrote a hundred years ago about biography. I gave it to the young people in Bible school as we studied the life of David in November. But I feel it's worthy to be repeated as an introduction that we all can open up our hearts and realize what God wants to do deep in our soul as we look at a man who walked with God.

A.T. Pearson wrote one hundred years ago, this is his quote, because history is a record of facts. These facts demand a personal factor. The key to history is biography.

In other words, a record of facts can get pretty dry, amen? But the thing that makes history inspiring and challenging and instructive is biography. We're not just taking a bunch of facts, but instead we are going to study a life. Biography is the most suggestive and instructive of all studies.

He goes on to say, to portray the lives of men is to teach philosophy by example. And I'd like to change one word in his quotation. And that's the word philosophy.

And read it this way, to portray the lives of men or to study the lives of men is to teach or learn theology by example. And that's what we want to look at this week. Theology by example.

This is exactly what Jesus did in His life. His life taught theology by word and example. Isn't that right? Aren't we thrilled that He went about speaking and teaching, but while He was speaking and teaching, He was also living exactly what He was speaking and teaching.

And because of that, every one of us are impacted every time we pick up and read in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. The greatest treasure given to man is the God-breathed biography of the Lord Jesus Christ. And may I say, and this is my opinion, David and Paul are the next treasures that God has given to the church.

And if you stop and think about it, you will agree. How much is recorded out of the life of David in the Scriptures, more than anybody else's life in the Scriptures, except the Lord Jesus. And second to Him is the Apostle Paul.

If you consider all that was written about Paul in the book of Acts, and then all that Paul wrote about himself in all of his epistles, there is no more recorded biography than the Apostle Paul. And Paul was such a beautiful, pure, holy man that he wrote about himself continually. I'm not sure what you do with that, but you meditate on that.

We hardly can think of saying that. We don't want to say anything about us. We think, well, that's proud if you say something.

But Paul is just overflowing all the way through his epistles as he gives a doctrine, then gives his testimony, and then a doctrine, then more of his testimony. And he does this all the way through all of his epistles. So with Paul, we actually have two biographies to study.

Luke's biography of Paul, which is the book of Acts, and also Paul's autobiography, where he shares out of his own life in all of the epistles. Now, most of the time in our sessions here, we will be limiting ourselves to 2 Corinthians. It's a couple of years ago that the Lord just kind of opened that book up to me and I realized that Paul's ministry is emerging out of this book in 2 Corinthians.

And it may be because he was, and you'll note that if you read 2 Corinthians, he was speaking a bit in defense of his ministry because the Judaizers were coming in behind him, church after church where he went. They came in behind him trying to discredit his ministry, trying to usurp the simple gospel, and therefore Paul had to speak as a fool and he was trying to vindicate his ministry. And so therefore we find beautiful testimonies flowing out of 2 Corinthians about the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

So let's get into our sessions. We have 3 to cover here this morning. That gives me 15 minutes on each one.

Let's look first of all at the foundation of Paul's ministry. The foundation of Paul's ministry, if you'll turn with me to Acts, the book of Acts in chapter 9, where we want to begin looking at the foundation of Paul's ministry. Acts chapter 9 and we're going to start reading in verse 3 for the sake of time here.

Acts 9 and verse 3. And as he, Saul, as he journeyed, he came near Damascus and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he, Saul, said, who art thou, Lord? He knew it was no phenomena. And by the way, you will too.

When you're in the presence of God, he knew this was not some phenomena. Who art thou? And he said, I am Jesus. Imagine those words falling upon the heart, the ears of the heart of the Apostle Paul.

I am Jesus. I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, arise and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth and when his eyes were opened he saw no man.

But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was there three days without sight. Neither did he eat nor drink.

That's far enough to read for now. We will read a little further, but that's far enough for now. Here we have Saul, the sincere religious man, as sincere as they come, but sincerely wrong, face to face with the Christ, the Son of the living God, whom he has been persecuting.

What is Paul's response? First of all, he acknowledges. It seems he acknowledges deity immediately. Who are you, Lord? That's a good place to begin, Paul.

Amen. Who are you, Lord? That's a good question for every one of us this morning, isn't it? Who are you? I am the Christ, the Son of the living God. We're looking here for just a few minutes at the conversion of the apostle Paul.

If we're going to study the ministry of the life, the beautiful life of this man called Paul, we surely have to begin at the foundation, that which the whole life grew up on, and that whole beautiful life grew up on, first of all, a clear conversion. There was no question at all when God was done dealing with Paul, he was thoroughly, soundly, completely transformed by the power of God, as we will see. And I like what Brother Moe said there about, you know, how can you exactly say, how does a person get converted? I agree with that, because I'm not sure where Paul got converted as I look at these Scriptures here.

I'm not sure. Maybe you know. You can share with me afterwards.

But it looks a little gray to me. Maybe we could say that there on the road to Damascus he was awakened. At least we could surely say he was awakened on the road to Damascus.

But then God, knowing how to deal with every man, just like He knew how to deal with that rich young ruler who was filled with money and materialism, then God also knew how to deal with a strong, zealous, religious leader. And He put him on His face on the road to Damascus. And Paul, so strong, so vehement, so zealous, so having everything together, so knowing what to do in every situation, he gets up off the

ground and he's blind.

And they lead him by the hand into Damascus. God knows how to take care. He knows how to take care of each and every one of us.

And there sits Saul for three days. No distractions. Amen? Three days.

No food. No drink. No sight.

No distractions. Nothing to take his tension away. All he has is three days to ponder those beautiful words.

Who are they? O Saul, I am Jesus, whom you have been persecuting. And then, Lord, what will you have me to do? And all the Lord said was, You just go to Damascus and it will be told you what you're going to do. And so there sits big, strong, zealous Saul for three days in a house in total darkness thinking on those words.

God knows how to take care of him. We're going to skip down to verse 17 here. We're going to skip an argument that Ananias had with the Lord.

By the way, he knew the Lord well enough to have an argument with Him. Amen? He knew the Lord well enough to have an argument with Him. Lord, are you sure? Do you know who this man is? And Ananias went his way and entered into the house.

And putting his hands on him, Saul said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way, as thou kinglest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been, scales. And he received sight and forthwith and arose and was baptized.

A believer's baptism. And when he had received me, he was strengthened. Then Saul saw certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed and said, Is not this He that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem? And cameth hither with that intent that He might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. Here we have the example of Saul, of his clear conversion.

There was no question about it. I don't know, maybe he was counting the cost for three days as he sat there. Maybe that's what was going on inside of his heart.

I don't know when his heart turned. I don't know when he came to that place where the revelation of what he had really been doing had dawned upon him, and his heart repented and turned away from that and yielded to God and said, Okay God, anything You want. I don't know all those things.

We don't see it all. It's not clearly seen to us. But it is very clear that Paul was converted there, in that setting.

And his conversion was clear. His conversion was sure. There was no question about it.

Nobody needed to sit him down and give him an interview to find out whether he was soundly converted. Amen? And I'm not against giving those interviews, you know, some of the conversions we have these days. You need to ask a few questions like that, but not with Paul.

You didn't need to sit him down and ask him any questions to find out whether he got through or not, because you could tell by the way his life was from the very moment he opened his eyes. And he went straight away to the synagogue and began to preach about the Lord Jesus, whom he met on the road to Damascus. Yeah, oh wait a minute brother, don't you think we ought to grow him up a bit before we turn him loose in the synagogue? Yeah, well you talk to the Lord about that, because remember the Lord said, you go to Damascus and I'll tell you what you're going to do next.

And it seems to me like he heard the Lord telling him, go to the synagogue and tell them about Me. Amen? So he didn't wait to grow up. And by the way, if you wait to grow up, you probably won't grow up.

That's the way that I experience it in my own life. The greatest growth, the greatest motivations to maturity is to clean up and confess up and consecrate up your life and then get up and go do something for God. So, a religious man, a sincere man, a zealous man, but a wrong man going the wrong way, fighting against those who love Jesus with all of their heart.

That's what he was doing. But he came face to face with reality that day. And he got born again.

And there was no question about it from that day forward. How about you? In Acts 24, verse 16, he gives his testimony to a king. The testimony of his life.

Beautiful testimony. He says these words to, I think it was Felix. He said, And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

Amen, Paul? We're looking at the foundation of Paul's ministry. And these words are foundational words, brethren. Herein have I exercised myself to have a conscience that is void of offense toward God and toward men.

Now that doesn't mean that he never had any offense this way or this way. It means that when there was an offense this way toward God or an offense this way toward men, he exercised himself to make sure that his conscience was clean. Praise God for the blood this morning.

And that was Paul's testimony. And by the way, this is toward the end of his life that he's giving this testimony. So we can see these are foundation stones underneath this beautiful life of the Apostle Paul.

Herein have I exercised myself, looking back over his whole life, to have a conscience that is void of offense toward God and toward man. The foundations of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. In Philippians chapter 3, he also gives his testimony.

And in these words in Philippians 3, we see the commitment. We can see the depth of the commitment of this man and how he viewed his Christian life and how he viewed the Christ of his Christian life, how he viewed the Christ that he met on the road to Damascus, and how it affected his life from that day all the way up until whenever he wrote the book of Philippians. In Philippians 3, in verses 7 and 8, just breaking into the middle of a very powerful portion of Scripture, Paul says these words, But what things were gained, past tense, to me, those I counted lost for Christ.

And I believe what he's referring to there is all of his heritage. You know? And the Hebrews of the tribe of Benjamin circumcised on the eighth day, as touching the law, blameless a Pharisee of the Pharisees. And all the credentials that he gives there in the beginning of Philippians 3, those he counted dumb, or he counted lost for Christ.

And I believe that's what was taking place there as he sat there in Damascus on that street called Straight, waiting for three days in the dark with no food and no drink. You can be sure that his mind was thinking, OK, I have been totally wrong. And if I'm going to now be totally right, I'm going to have to totally give up everything back there.

My heritage, my name, my reputation, what everybody thinks about me, I'm going to have to become a fool for Christ. Oh, what a beautiful way to get converted! Amen? What things were gained, past tense, to me, those I counted lost for Christ. Yea, doubtless, now he's in the present tense.

I count all things present tense, but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Now he's in the present tense. Amen, brethren? Yes, we do do that.

Yes, in that moment when God brings us face to face with who we are and who He is. Yes, we have to count our past. We have to count everything as dung and leave it behind us.

But oh, listen brothers, that's not enough to just count it dung one time back there. But we are living in the now. And if we're going to go on with the Christ who saved us, we must be willing to count all things but dung.

And that never goes away. Amen? I mean, I've been a Christian... Oh, I miss my birthday. 34 years now.

34 years now. Five days ago, I gave my heart to the Lord. All these years, I'm telling you, it doesn't change.

Not if you want to go on with God. It doesn't change. You have to continue to look at it all and say, that's no good and I don't want that and I give that up and it doesn't matter what happens to me.

All I want is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. This is the foundation underneath the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Look at his commitment.

You see, Paul tasted. He tasted that the Lord was good. And all it could do is say, everything else is manure.

It's all manure. Is it all manure? Is it? What looms up before your heart this morning, brother, that stands in the way of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things past tense and do count them but done, that I may win Christ. Paul, surely you've won Christ.

You've been walking with Him for many years, Paul. Surely you've won Christ. Yes, I have won Christ, but I am winning Christ every day.

I want Christ. That's all I want. That was Paul's testimony of commitment.

This is the foundation, brethren. Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, and he was never the same. Ever.

It totally transformed his life. Ongoing. He spent ten years of preparations with God before Acts chapter 13.

Spent some time on the back side of the desert. That was good for him, getting his theology straight. Spent some time in Tarsus, his hometown.

Spent some time at Antioch. Spent some time at Damascus. But it was ten years before God really brought the call to realization in his life.

There in that prayer meeting in Acts chapter 13 where the Holy Ghost said, Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Ten years went by. Paul's life was spiritual.

Paul's life was vibrant. His eye was single. Therefore, his whole body was filled with light all the days of his fruitful life.

This is the foundation of his ministry. It's foolishness for us to look at a man's life if we don't come to grips with the foundation underneath him that produced that life. Amen? Then all it is is just being enamored with somebody else.

Making some kind of an idol out of this person. No, he was a man just like we are, of life passions just like we are. This God is our God.

Let's move on to the second point, the simplicity of his ministry. And we'll be reading in 2 Corinthians 11 for that. The simplicity of Paul's ministry, 2 Corinthians 11.

This point flows very well from the previous one. And let me just give you a little definition of simplicity before we read these few verses. Verse 1 through 4. Simplicity.

It means singleness and sincerity. Singleness. Remember? Sermon on the Mount? What if thine eye, the eyes of your heart, be single? That's what the word simplicity means.

Singleness and sincerity. This singleness was the strength of Paul's life. And he was concerned that it stay that way for his converts.

The simplicity of his ministry. See, Paul knew. He knew wherein the grace of God flowed out of his own life.

He knew that it flowed in simplicity. He knew that it flowed in sincerity. He knew that it flowed that way because of the singleness of his heart.

He knew that. Totally set on Christ and only Christ. And because Paul knew that, he was jealous that his converts would also be kept clearly focused on the One where everything comes from, the One where sanctification comes from, the One where wisdom comes from, the One where righteousness and redemption comes from, and many other things.

So Paul, admonishing the Corinthians, pleading with them that they listen to him and not the Judaizers that are coming along behind him, nipping at his heels, trying to undo the work of God. He writes to them, Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you.

And that word jealous means zeal with love. I have zeal with love in my heart over you, he says. With godly jealousy or a sanctified jealousy.

This is one time when it's okay to be jealous. I have a sanctified jealousy over you, Paul says. Why? For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to look at the heart of that shepherd.

That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Corrupted, turned away from the simplicity, the singleness, the sincere singleness of your tender heart toward Christ.

See, Paul knew. Paul knew where growth takes place. Paul knew what happens deep inside the heart.

Paul knew where inspiration comes from. It comes from Christ. For if he that cometh preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit which ye have not received, or another gospel which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

The simplicity of Paul's ministry. Christ. Only Christ.

Paul was like a watchdog here in these verses, watching over his sheep, just like a good shepherd should do. Being a watchdog. Watching over the sheep.

What is he watching over? Oh, I want them to stay right there like chaste virgins who are in love with Jesus, and excited about Jesus, and wanting to walk with Jesus, and having the eyes of their heart fixed singly upon Him. That's all Paul wanted. He knew, if I can keep them there, they'll grow.

So he's like a watchdog over his sheep as he was trying to deal with the Judaizers. You see, they were coming in and saying, Oh, yes, it's Jesus, plus circumcision. It's Jesus plus Sabbath-keeping.

It's Jesus plus keeping the Old Testament law. We could put a lot of pluses in there, couldn't we? It's Jesus plus the Book of Mormon. And it's Jesus plus the seventh day.

And it's Jesus plus all the dietary laws. And it's Jesus plus speaking in tongues. You know, you put the pluses in there, but Paul knew that it's just Jesus.

Nothing else. Amen. There are many other things in the Christian life, and we believe in all of them that are clearly revealed in the Scriptures.

Those Judaizers coming along behind Paul and saying, yeah, it's Jesus, but if you're not circumcised, you won't be able to go to heaven. And if you don't this, and you don't that, and if you don't keep the Mosaic law, and you better watch out what you do on Saturday. I mean, they just came in there and they were confusing the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And brothers, they were confusing the simplicity of that Gospel to the believers that were at Corinth, not the unbelievers. And Paul was like a watchdog. He had a sanctified zeal for the spiritual well-being of those chaste virgins that he brought to Jesus Christ.

All these Jesus pluses, Paul says, it is another Jesus. It is another Jesus. If you follow the context of these verses.

These are days to stay close to the Word of God, brethren. There is much deception turning many away from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. There is much deception.

Paul said it this way in Colossians 2. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after. For in Him that is in Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Look at that.

This is not a shallow, though it is a simple message. All the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Christ. And then he went on to tell them, and ye are complete in Him.

Have you got that yet? Have you learned that lesson yet? You know, back in Bible school, a young man came up to me at the book table and he said, Brother Denny, here is 150 books in here. He said, Brother Denny, which book should I read? And I said, well, young man, let me ask you a question. Have you learned how to simply walk with Christ yet? I mean, where you just walk day by day and you know how to get your conscience clear and keep the heaven open over your life.

Have you learned to do that? He kind of put his head down. He said, no. I said, here, take this book then.

Read it every month until you learn how to do it. I gave him Andrew Murray's Abide in Christ. Simple, basic Christianity.

And Paul knew if they turn their attention away from that simple, basic walk with Christ, all kinds of other things will come in and they'll lose their way. Maybe you lost your way. Maybe you could put yourself in the shoes of that young man who asked that question.

And maybe you would have to hang your head and say, no. No, I haven't. Well, brethren, take heart.

That's what this week is all about. Get your feet squarely on the ground and go forward from here. And learn how to exercise yourself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.

This simplicity flows from a simple message. Hear the words of the Apostle Paul as he speaks about his message in 1 Corinthians 1, 18 and 19. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

But unto us which are saved it is the power of God. Imagine that! The same message! To the one, it's foolishness. To the other, it is the power of God.

The preaching of the cross, just the simple message of preaching that Christ Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead the third day, and is ascended and is seated at the right hand of the Father this very day making intercession for the saints this very moment He's doing that. Preaching of the cross to them that perish, oh, it's foolishness. But the same message is the power of God to those who believe.

For it is written, God says, I, God, will destroy the wisdom of the wise. I, God, will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. How will you do that, God? By changing lives through preaching.

That's how God will do it. For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks they seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified under the Jews a stumbling block, under the Greeks foolishness, but under them which are called both Jews and

Greeks, Christ, or the preaching of Christ, is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The simplicity of His ministry was based on the simplicity of His message.

Did you get that? It pleased God to save souls by the foolishness of giving that simple message again and again and again in the power of the Holy Ghost, by the way. Acts 1, verse 8. You can't just go out and throw a bunch of words around and think that things are going to happen, but it pleased God. God looked down, looked at the whole situation, saw the wisdom of man, saw the foolishness of the wisdom of man, and decided He would confound the foolishness of the wisdom of men, and He decided He would save souls.

That is, change them. That is, transform them. I mean, take them from the guttermost and save them to the uttermost.

How? Oh, just by a simple message. The message of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He changes them.

Oh, brethren, do you believe that? I mean, if you can't believe that, you might as well forget the rest of the ministry of the Apostle Paul, because these are the foundation stones underneath all of his ministry. Remember, he was a real smart guy, you know. I mean, he was.

He went to school. He had lots of learning. He laid all those things aside and went from one city to the next to the next.

What did he do? Oh, same old message. Same old message? No. Sweet old story! Hallelujah! That's what it was to him.

And it was sweet, because every time he gave it, souls were totally changed right before his very eyes. That will make that sweet old story sweeter, won't it? You give that message out by the unction of the Holy Ghost and see somebody's life get changed, yeah, that will put a spring in your step. I agree with Brother Moe's.

Nothing boring about the Christian life when you get busy for souls. Amen? Nothing boring at all. Alright, let's move on to number 3. And I'll go real fast.

The fragrance of his ministry. 2 Corinthians 2 we see the fragrance of his ministry. These verses that we're going to read in 2.14-17, these verses speak of influence.

You cannot hide a godly, anointed man. You may think you can, but you can't. You can't snuff out his life.

You can't snuff out his ministry. You can't shut him up. You can't do it.

You can't hide a godly, anointed man. Just like the Bible says that you cannot hide your sweet-smelling ointment that is in your right hand because its influence reaches out everywhere and everyone can smell it, so also you cannot hide an anointed, godly man. And Paul was one of those.

He gives his testimony here. What a testimony! Now thanks be unto God, which always, always causeth us to triumph in Christ. Brethren, in Christ.

He always causeth us to triumph. And that word triumph, that's a beautiful word. I mean, it's like marching down the city when you're coming home from a victory.

And I mean, the people are cheering and all of that. That's what he's saying. Always causeth us to triumph.

And when you think about the life of this man, and we'll be looking at some of his life, I mean, he didn't have an easy life. Paul's life was not a bed of roses. I don't think anybody in this room could come anywhere near the difficulties and the trials and the tribulations that this man went through.

How can he say this? Always causeth us to triumph. There's only one way he could say it. In Christ.

That's the only way he could say it. In Christ. And maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.

For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are, the savor of death unto death. And to the other, the savor of life unto life.

And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many which corrupt the Word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. Always causeth us to triumph. You know, I can't say that.

I can't. I'm sorry. But I can't say that.

Although I must testify as I get older and I learn. I can say that. But there's a lot of failures.

There's a lot of things that I face that I have to look back and say, I did not triumph in that. But look what Paul said. By grace through faith, we can conquer every obstacle.

Do you believe that? Look at the manifested savor that Paul is speaking about. This fragrance of Paul's ministry was a sweet savor. This word savor means fragrance or a sweet smell.

It speaks of the sweet influence of a holy, anointed life. It speaks of the knowledge of what God is like in action and in spirit in the life of a believer. That was Paul.

His life was a fragrance. His life was a sweet smell. His life was an influence.

His life affected people, whether he spoke to them or whether he didn't. Some in a positive way. Some in a negative way.

But his life was an influence. The fragrance of his life. This sweet smell goes three ways.

Notice in these verses. The sweet fragrance of Christ's life influences three ways. Number one, unto God.

Number two, to the saved. Number three, to the lost who are perishing. To God.

Oh, how He loves a sanctified life! Amen? And it's a sweet smell to God. When God looks down on a godly anointed life, it's a sweet fragrance to God! He loves it! To the saved. A fragrance.

Is there anything sweeter than a Christ-like life? A sweet fragrance. That was Paul. He smelled good to the believers.

Amen? And lastly, to the lost. His life, His words, His testimony, His influence in the lives of those that were lost around Him witnesseth doom and destruction upon them. A savor of death.

Oh, that our life would be so clear that the world around us smells judgment day when they are around us. They may not know what's going on. They may not be able to figure it all out.

They may not understand why they are irked with us when we walk through the store and go through the line to buy some groceries or whatever. They may not understand what's going on, but oh, that the world would smell the doom of judgment when they get around us. That's the way it was with Christ.

Jesus said in Acts 1, verse 8, He shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem. And on and on and on the verse goes. But you see, the witness is this way.

And the witness is also this way. That's the beauty of a fragrant life. Paul is thanking God for two things.

One, we triumph over everything we face. And two, that triumph also manifests the fragrance of Christ everywhere we go. Now think about it.

Let's go look at his life for a minute. Remember there at Philippi when they threw him and Silas in jail? I mean, pretty tough situation that he was in there. But his life, oh, his life, it smelled so good that the Philippian jailer and all of his house was converted.

Just because Paul and Silas were singing and praying at midnight, the Philippian jailer and all of his house was converted. Perfect example. Triumph and influence all in Christ.

Ah, that's the fragrance of Paul's ministry. Yes, Paul. He's right when he says, and who is sufficient for these things? And we know that.

No man can do that. No man can crank that kind of a life out. No man can put all of that on.

Or you might be able to put your clothes on, and you might be able to put your religious conversation on, and you might be able to put your religious forms on and raise your hands and all those things, but no man can put that on. Who is sufficient for these things? This kind of triumph. This kind of fragrance.

No one. It's only in Christ. And then verse 4 in closing is a challenge to all of us as we find ourselves preaching and teaching the Word of God here and there.

Verse 4. Paul uses the phrase corrupting the Word of God. Corrupting the Word of God. Or, making it mean something that it doesn't mean.

Using it to prove something that I want to prove. Taking the Scriptures and resting them a bit so that they mean what I want them to mean to prove the point that I'm trying to make so that everything fits into my little doctrinal box. And brethren, let's not just point at those out there and say, yeah, they do that.

We are not as many which corrupt the Word of God. And in the margin of my Bible it says, deal deceitfully with the Word of God. We are not those, Paul says.

We will not do that. I used to sit in church years ago and hear the preacher expound the Bible. And sometimes what he was saying did not line up with the text that was clearly written.

And as a young Christian, I just kind of looked at that, you know, and I thought, that's not what it says. You know, and they usually do it this way. Now the Scripture, I know what it seems like it says, but if you look into the Greek, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, and they go down the road like that and turn the whole thing

upside down, inside out, and by the time they get done with all of those people that are listening, they've undone something that the Scripture did not undo.

Paul said, we don't do that. We don't do that. Brethren, let's not do that.

We can do that, you know. We also have our points and our positions. It would be very convenient to find a verse or two that we can move around a bit and maneuver and make it prove what we believe.

Let us not be like those who corrupt the Word of God or use the Word of God deceitfully and make it mean something different than what it says. We must be careful. It is not our private interpretation.

Amen? But rather, it is what saith the Word in simplicity and in humility, what saith the Word. May God keep us in that place. And then he finishes by simply saying this.

Sincerely, we preach sincerely as coming from God, and we preach in the sight of God, and we speak in Christ. Let's stand for a word of prayer. Thank You, Father.

Father, thank You for this beautiful biography. A life. A vibrant life.

A life that none of us can gainsay. A life that everyone of us must come to grips with. A life that challenges all of us to the death.

Thank You, Lord. We acknowledge here this morning this God is our God. God of the Apostle Paul is also God of Denny Keniston and all the other men in this room.

O Lord, I fall so very short. Have mercy on me, Lord. Please, have mercy on me.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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