

Acts

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 May 1998

Preacher: Stehouwer, Jay K (1924 - 2019)

[0 : 00] As the Lord helps me, I would seek to direct your attention to some thoughts found in the Acts chapter 26 and verse 18.

That's the Acts of the Apostles and chapter 26 and verse 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 amongst them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts 28, 6 and verse 18. To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.

I feel this chapter which I've read, friends, is one of the most beautiful chapters that we can find in God's Word. Here we have again Paul, as it were, brought before the government of that day.

And he was given an opportunity to testify there before them that how he ever came under the power and the influence of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 49] He says, He says before them, of course, is called by grace. As much as say, this is what the Lord hath sent and granted unto me.

And therefore, this religion of which I speak is something not after the teachings of man, but after the teachings of God. And certainly, friends, this is the most important thought.

Is our religion something after the tradition of man? Or is it something that the Lord has taught us in our own soul? We may be very straight and very clear upon the doctrines of grace or upon what we believe as a church or as a denomination.

And yet, friends, with all of our knowledge of the scriptures, we may be as dead as the man, as it were, is walking to the street to this evening hour.

We need that all-quickening power, the work of God to the Holy Spirit in our heart, to apply these precious truths to our own soul. And what a mercy if the Lord has ever given you that living desire and place within you that longing that you might know something, or put it this way, that you might come to this place to have a hope for eternity, centered in the work and in the worth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 22] And as we look upon to this chapter to begin with, we see once again of the wealth of man, dead in his trespasses and his sins, steeped in the religion of his day, a marvelous knowledge of all of the old scriptures' prophecies.

No doubt he could quote many portions out of Isaiah, the Psalms, through to all about the sacrifices, and yet remained there dead until it was the time of the Holy Spirit to come and quicken him into divine life.

If we rightly understand that is that conversion of the Apostle Paul, we can understand his language as he quotes it often there in the book of Philippians, how he tells us there how he once stood as were firm into his belief and out of the Lord as it were came, ripped him out of all of his religion, had overturned all of his preconceived ideas of salvation and brought him as a poor, humble suppliant there at the throne of grace.

Now, I realize we may not always look for a conversion like the Apostle Paul in that respect, but friends, if the Lord ever quickens us, we'll know something of what he went through.

Do you know, friends, there's possibly no conversion in the Word of God which is so repeated as we find in the occasion of Paul, three times in the Acts, in almost every one of the epistles, he relates something of what God hath done, calling him out of nature's darkness, and therefore, friends, there's something we might well take heed.

[5 : 11] In this way, there is no impossible case under the Gospel. Here was a man filled with hatred, filled with enmity, sanctioned all those who were put to death for the name of Jesus, and yet we see something of the aboundings of God's grace over the aboundings of all of his sins, and we have to know the same.

We may thank God that we never, as it were, if this is the case, that we have done, as it were, great harm to the Church of God, and spoke unadvisably with our lips against the servants or against those who are in possession of grace.

But nevertheless, friends, we need that divine teaching. It's interesting, as it were, as I was seeking to meditate a little bit upon to this text and upon to the surrounding verses, we notice there how the Lord, here in verse 16, says, 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 which I will appear unto thee.

Do you see there that Paul also knew something of that growth and grace? First, the things which had appeared unto him, and then, excuse me, those things which he was a witness of, the things which he had both seen, and also the things which I will appear unto thee.

And when we think of the Apostle Paul, we may believe how he was matured as a word in the things of God, well established into the truth.

[7 : 03] And yet, when we look into the Philippians, we find him there in his prison, having now preached the gospel for many years, and was able by the Holy Spirit to write many of the epistles of which we have on record today.

And yet, how he breathes out, oh, that I might know him. Oh, he knew him. But he felt that there was so much more to know about him.

In other words, it seems as if he could never get to the end of coming further into the knowledge of Christ. And then you realize then how the Lord gave him this commission to go forth and to preach the gospel.

Further in verse 17, he says, to deliver thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee. In other words, the Lord told him that he would maintain him and deliver him.

And we know that the apostle Paul knew far more suffering for the cause of Christ possibly than any man from the time, from that time even on to this present time.

[8 : 18] Because the Lord says, I will show you how much he must suffer for my name's sake. And it is blessed to notice in the book of Acts how that the apostle went here and there and to begin to preach the word of God.

Beginning, as it were, for the most part among the Jews and then to the Gentiles. And it was by the rejecting of the Gentiles, you remember how Paul then turned to the Gentiles and he says, and they shall hear.

The gospel will never, as it were, have none effect. The word of God shall either be a savor of life or a savor of death.

But what a mercy. If you this evening hour can testify in your own heart, the gospel once was a savor unto death in a measure and now proved to be a savor of life.

I might want to clarify that first portion of what I said. A savor of death. If you will bear with me, when it comes to my own experience, I felt the gospel would condemn me more in that respect than the law.

[9 : 45] I knew I was a sinner. By being brought under the truth, brought up in the most godly home, I had felt I had sinned against the gospel.

And to me, that was the greatest sin anyone could have committed. And if it had not had been for the God's grace, Satan might have, as it were, had said to me, as it were, over hopeless, as much as to say, cast it all aside, you were never intended to find grace after all.

Oh, what a mercy to find that powerful, irresistible work of God, the Holy Spirit, upon our soul.

Satan will do everything he can to discourage any seeking soul. But what a mercy once again it is. There is nothing in the word of God to discourage any seeking soul.

But there is everything in the word of God to encourage anyone who seeks salvation. Now as we look upon the words of our text, to me we see something of a great marvel, a great wonder.

[11 : 10] We find, and to begin with, looking upon what man is by nature, we certainly see man's depravity here. For what is man by nature?

Their eyes are blinded to the truth. They are walking in darkness as to the need of the gospel and to the truths of the gospel. They are in possession under the powers of darkness and under the powers of Satan and this world.

Their sins lay there upon them and therefore their sins will testify against them in the solemn day of judgment. And by nature they are not brought in, they have no inheritance in God.

I know there is a secret decrees and thank God, but yet they know nothing of that inheritance which is found in the gospel, the precious truths of it.

and therefore they are without God and without Christ in this world. Then we see the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit to work into the heart of his people.

[12 : 24] And certainly we see this something of discriminating God's grace. Here Paul spoke about his conversion. He spoke about what he was called to do.

And yet we find in this same chapter, there was one who cried out, saw Paul, Paul, thou art mad, thou art beside thyself. Much learning hath made thee mad.

Made thee mad. And another one says, thou almost persuadest me at least literally to believe or to be a Christian. But we may believe they were left there in nature's darkness.

And when we think of the apostle Paul as well, speaking as a word to the Jew and to the Greek about the one and the only true God, yet we see there were those who believed the ministry of the apostle and there were those who believed him not.

And we see that same discriminating grace today. Now what can I say to anybody here who may say, well, I feel I'm outside.

[13 : 32] I hope you're honest with your soul. Don't try as a word to claim something that the Lord has never given you. And grace will make you honest, which is true.

But don't be careless in it. But rather, may you ask the Lord that he might quicken your soul into divine life. and that he might call you by his grace.

And that he might make you one of those true individuals who are found in the Lamb's book of life. I realize it's not in our hymn books, but possibly you know the hymn.

I can, of course, I just want to get mentioned to you, you know, I wasn't brought up with a Gatsby hymn book. We didn't know about it many years ago in my youth.

It was later coming to our hands and we began to use it, of course, a little later. So we had some more or less general hymns we would call. And often the servant of God would select those hymns which he felt were sound and we had to leave some of them behind.

[14 : 39] But anyways, there was one which is good. You possibly know it. And I might mention this to anyone who feels in my outside.

Pass me not, O gentle Savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.

Oh, a good prayer. A good plead with the Lord that he might have mercy upon you. Now let us notice in our text something of which we would say the effect of the gospel.

Something of which is the evidence and the marks of the work of God to the Holy Spirit. First of all, let us try then to define some of these thoughts which lays before us to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light.

What is it then to have our eyes closed? It is closed to the nature of our sin and we could sum it up very simply into the need of the want of Christ.

[16 : 00] What a mercy when the Lord opens up our eyes and we are brought to see something of the corruptions and the evils of our heart. opening up our eyes to see that we are in that wrong path and of the path which leadeth to destruction.

Opening up our eyes to see that we are lost and undone sinners in the sight of God. Open up our eyes to see the corruptions of our evil nature.

But here's a mercy. The Lord never opens the eyes of one to leave them as it were to see and to revel in their corruptions and their sin. He has a purpose in it all.

I fully know that in those early days when the Lord begins to open up something of these things before us we can never believe that God could ever dwell in such a heart as this.

But here's the mercy friend. He makes room for himself. So then when there is the opening of the eyes there is the opening of the eyes to the truths of the gospel to something of its sweet invitations to those things which bring good news.

[17 : 23] Oh it is true often very gradual in my case it was more and more the depths of depravity soon but more and more to know that salvation is outside of self and brought again and again to realize that salvation must be of the Lord.

There are two main points then of the work of grace in the soul. one is we must be saved by grace and the other is we must be saved by power.

This is what you're going to be taught because you're going to realize we neither have any merit or any goodness in self. We have forfeited all right.

We have deeply sinned in the sight of God. we have been willful sheep of going astray and therefore it must be by grace and grace alone coming to the end of all hope in the law or any works of self but come to this place it must be grace and grace is a precious word.

It is something friends of which I may but I feel certainly becomes alive in the work of grace. Grace becomes a precious word but realizing the might and the power of sin and the utter inability of oneself to believe and realizing the might and the power of this world with all of its allurements we realize we must have a power outside of self to draw us unto him and truly I believe this is what the songs the bride felt there in the breathing out of her soul before her bride the bridegroom or the Christ and it was this draw me and I will run after thee she felt the power of sin she felt the power of this world she realized of her own self she couldn't but she wanted the drawings of an almighty

[19 : 50] God oh in other words friends it is an almighty God of which we stand in need we may look upon the might of this world the might of power of unbelief the might and the power of Satan himself but then to realize there was one who is almighty to open their eyes oh what a mercy when our eyes are open and then to see something of the glories of the truth of the gospel to have our eyes open to see there is a savior which came into this world to seek and to save the lost to have our eyes opened up to this little some portion of God's word and to know what it is in a measure to receive it by living faith when such a thing happens friends what is the language well then we will understand the psalmist when he says open thou mine eyes that I may see that I may see wondrous things out of thy law in other words he wanted an enlargement of his eyes to see something more and more of that salvation something more and more of the truths of

God's word and this is what Paul was sent for to preach certainly he knew that himself he couldn't do so but he knew the power of the gospel to open their eyes what else do we see that the opening of the eyes does it turns them from darkness to light I can always remember in school the teacher we were little children I believe it must have been a very low grade the teacher was using some illustrations about light and darkness nothing about the word of God but she was saying she says she reduced a little story she says light and darkness were having a conversation one with another and the darkness was in the cave and the light says unto the darkness come out and see something of the light and the darkness came out and was amazed to see the light well the darkness says come in and see the darkness well the light went into the dark cave and says

I don't see no darkness oh friends this is what light does it dispels darkness darkness cannot hold back light and this is why we need the light now in one respect I realize it is the light of God's word the light of the gospel but here's the truth we never can separate the written word from the incarnate word they come together where there is the light of the gospel it has but one thought in mind of course and that is the Lord Jesus I think it might have been last night yes it was and bear with me if you heard it when the shepherds were upon the hillside and the angels appeared to them they said behold I bring thee good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people the light without a dark was round about them the shining of the angels but there was the receiving of that precious truth into their own heart into their own bosom when the angels went back darkness round about but not in their soul in other words there was something which drew them to the light like a living plant it is drawn to the light of the window and a dead plant has no movement so where there is that divine life in the soul there is that irresistible mysterious drawing of a soul out unto the Lord in prayer and unto the Lord for mercy and also the season the word of God the need of Christ he is the light and he does give light he is the giver of light and where he shines there is the dispelling of darkness oh is it not to the language of a living soul like in the case of Jonah or Job oh that

I might know where I might find him ah friends when the Lord is found then there is the dispersing of the darkness and the soul is brought to the place of believing on one occasion I had a young man come to me in my home and he said to me I want to ask you a question he says what is it to believe well you know it rather drew me back for a moment and I thought how can I explain what it is to believe now in your own mind sometimes try to analyze it ah it is true to believe in Jesus how can you ever explain what it is to believe to someone who is ignorant about grace ignorant to their sins and to their lost and wretched and undone state or to the want of Christ one tries in a simple way to expound what must take place and what it is but friends when that comes to that place of believing well I'll put it this way the day came when I could only wish I could believe

I was jealous over those who could believe to their joy and satisfaction to their soul but when the Lord appears all I can say I was found believing and it can be said be gone unbelief thy savior is near and for my relief did surely appear it is to believe it is well with your soul it is to believe that is Jesus is your portion it is to believe that God hath been merciful unto you it is that joy in peace which cometh with that believing to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light I once heard a man say conversion is just like a person in the service where there is a turning around a marching forward and a turning backward it may not be that sudden but when that light comes it shines upon our path we recognize we are in the wrong path we are on our way to hell and it is that path of which you find the world is well in agreement with but to the time comes when by the grace of God there is that turning yea with all the slips and all the falls and much of the darkness sometimes that goes with it it is like in the case of Jonah looking once again but it is turned from darkness to light let us then try as the

[28 : 16] Lord might help us to look upon something which is found in our next phrase from the power of Satan unto God by nature we ought to if you know something of grace you look back to the days when the world had completely blinded our eyes and we would have willingly and agreedly had been Satan's slave and there was every man by nature but here is a mercy there is a people whom God hath loved from all eternity and by his love he gave him to his son and we can never omit to the spirit as well as to be found in that covenant which was made in the conscience of eternity and it is that blessed covenant of that blessed Holy Spirit who comes and shows us the power of

Satan the recognizing of ourselves as slaves willing servants to his ways and then the Lord shows us what its reward is and to show us our sin and then there is that desire that we would ever turn unto God oh that bondage must be taken away but when the Lord doth appear he brings his people unto himself oh there's a turning unto him in prayer a turning to him in desire turning and from the power of Satan unto God takes away the love of this world willing to know what it is to depart and separate ourselves from our many companions and our friendships drawing us by his love and by his mercy after himself from the power of Satan oh a good prayer is found there in that one hymn take away the love of sinning alpha and omega b oh the power of

Satan we have no might nor power against it oh the prayer of Jehoshaphat he seemed the great host he looked to his own might and to his own power and he found he had none but I like the expression he says but our eyes are unto thee there's the end language of living faith and that's a turning unto God a turning unto God is recognizing that we have sinned against him turning unto God is also to confess our sins and our iniquities before him turning unto him is also seeking of him for salvation and then also turning unto him to know that he is your portion for time and for eternity Satan will ever harass we read there that

Satan is the adversary the word is quite gone for me of the saints of God and one time I thought yes in that way I can take a little comfort he already has the world and doesn't seem to try them and tempt them but he tries and tempts the people of God and it is him to whom we will realize we have no might or power but we beg of God that he might bring us from under his might and not from under his power and so there is a turning of the power of Satan unto God what is the longing and the desire of one who has been quickened into divine life when that

Lord begins to when the Holy Spirit begins that work of grace he shows us something of our sinnership before God we realize that sin hath made that separation between a holy God and a guilty sinner sin lays there upon our conscience sin becomes a reality therefore sin must be dealt with is it not to the language of the cry then that I might know the pardon of my sin that I might receive forgiveness I realize that coming to forgiveness of sins is something of which a child of God often struggles and has tried sometimes for many years put it this way even with a hope believing that the Lord has been gracious and merciful to you but still yet to feel in your own conscience have

[34 : 02] I been forgiven I know it is settled in the court of heaven but an exercised soul wants it settled in the court of conscience because there can be no rest I realize too that we cannot always seem to live in that time of the pardon of our sin but we may look back and know there was a time I felt of a surety there was a pardon and of the forgiveness of my sin sin must be dealt with if we are without Christ our sins lay upon our person to those who have fled to refuge to Jesus and have believed on him their sins are taken from their person and laid upon the surety

I know we want to know more of it but there is only one place that we can find that forgiveness and that is before God in and through the merit of Christ true every favor every little token that is ever given to the soul is upon the ground of the atonement it all stems from that covenant which was made in the councils of eternity but we need light upon it this is why it is it will be the anxiety the burden of every quickened soul I want the forgiveness of my sin do you know what it is to look with holy jealousy upon the man with the palsy which was laid at Jesus feet the first thing

Christ ever said to the man was this son be of good cheer thy sins be forgiven thee I don't know why I want to bring myself in I sorry if it isn't right I for many years looked upon that with a holy jealousy could almost as it were into the man's experience to feel the joy and the peace which came upon his conscience and have often thought of a man never was healed of his body he was content to go home and be submissive under his own sickness but however we know the Lord as it were proof to the man further confirmation but as a witness as it were to the scribes and the Pharisees and to those around about him he also healed him of his body oh but that great thing the pardon and the forgiveness of our sin now this is the purpose of

Christ coming into this world this is the means of the preaching of the gospel to show that there is one who came into this world to seek and to save the lost and to save them from their sin not in their sin but from it in what way then is this from the salvation from sin we've already noticed it is from its power oh to look back upon some of the things we once rebelled in the things which we once condoned as not being terrible sinful or terrible worldly and really nothing wrong with it and yet how he has taken away the love of sin the love of this world because we found it was an offense to God and it stood between us and our never dying between our soul and

God in other words it is coming to the realization what sin is and what sin has done and to know what it is to seek for the forgiveness of it in other words salvation from its power but then is there not also a salvation from the penalty of sin oh what a mercy then to come to the place which is called Calvary and then have a little view of him standing in the place of a sinner true in the place of the church true in the work of redemption but of the very nature of an exercise soul is we want to know it for ourselves we want a personal application of it to our own heart and to our own conscience and to believe that he died for me like one of our hymn writers oh to know then to come to that place that penalty of sin which is due upon my part was laid upon the surety oh but the pollution of sin the vileness of our character realizing what wretched things we are and that all of our best that is our righteousness is only as filthy rags in the sight of a holy and a just

[39 : 54] God but then to come to that precious fountain which was made open for sin and uncleanness oh the blood of Christ we see its beauty as the soldier cast the spear or put the spear into the side of Christ forth with came out blood and water blood to atone water to cleanse blood to justify and water to sanctify there we see the complete work of the atonement all in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ oh to have our eyes on Jesus fixed again we see the same truth I believe I've already quoted it to come to that see that fountain which was made open for sin and uncleanness ah a complete work the forgiveness of sins oh we may well know the jealousy in our heart of

Hezekiah but friends I believe the man had grace there's no question in my mind and I believe he's a gracious character but the Lord had a further favor to his soul this is why we can see where the Lord commences that work of grace he carries it on he will bring you to a place where he'll bring you as it were doubts and fears now be careful I'm not preaching as it were doubts and fears as a ground of religion but I often agree with that part of Phil Pot in his daily portion in the years of the harvested sheaves where he says doubts make room for manifestations a man without doubts is a man without manifestations again I want to clarify that while I think of it it took me a long time to understand that particular portion but we must remember it's spiritual doubts the Lord often allows us to be tried and tempted as were by

Satan and unbelief in order that we might be brought into certain fears and then to cry unto the Lord that again he might renew unto us the joys of salvation or clear up our evidences and it is often in this way of the pardon and the forgiveness of our sin if you'll bear with me once more I felt there was a day when I came to that precious home and I felt the Lord is my portion I came before the church gave my testimony and I was received and was baptized I was a member of the church and then shortly after that something came over me and I thought oh is my sins forgiven I couldn't quite put it all together what was that joy and peace and believing but it drove me to the throne of grace

I began to wonder if I ought never to join the church and then I thought back well I didn't do it on my own and so in that conflict there crying unto the Lord and I can remember I couldn't sometimes get home from work quick enough to go into my room by myself and pour out my heart before God begging of him that he might seal to my portion my conscience if my sins have been forgiven and then to the Lord as it were one occasion led me to that place first of all it was that him end of thy heart for Jesus pine and make it secret moans I couldn't deny it but then it is as if the Lord showed me the sweetness of the stream and then she showed me the fountain head and it was cleared up he did take my sins and my sorrows and he made to them his very own oh he is a sin pardoning

God he forgives sinners and this is what the message of the gospel is this is why he came if there was this is why he became flesh so that he might die in the place of sinners and satisfied the justice of the law and satisfied the demands of the law so that there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus and so there is the gospel that they may receive the forgiveness of sins an inheritance amongst them which are sanctified by faith in me truly there is that inheritance which belongs unto the children of

[45 : 19] God in glory which is true but there is also these tokens of that inheritance of which God's people also appreciate here under the side of the grave those little times of renewing those little times of visitation those little times of the Lord assuring that it is well with our soul those times when the Lord leads us further into the accomplished work of Christ bringing you to more and more to that place to know it is finished to rest in him in his work to be lifted up above our unbeliefs our doubts and our fears and at times to believe it is well with our soul the inheritance friends is precious it belongs to those who belong to God as their father and as Christ as the elder brother an inheritance amongst all those that are sanctified by faith that is in me in the sanctification of course we know that there is that sanctification once it sets forth that separation that

God separates the soul as it were for a divine purpose but that work in the heart I know it is complete in the mind of God we know that help me I'll drink your prayer for the hope to listen take away in and for help finden has been thanks can intentional of Non paragraph being said